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# The Evasion of Segregation in African American Modernist Fiction: Sound and Subjectivity in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and Percival Everett

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by

**Paul Devlin**

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Abstract of the Dissertation

**The Evasion of Segregation in African American Modernist Fiction: Sound and Subjectivity in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, and Percival Everett**

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This dissertation is a study of the representations of sound in relation to the evasion of segregation in works of African American modernist fiction. In the process it explores hitherto unknown or underexplored relationships between texts and suggests a revised periodization within the framework asserted by the influential book What Was African American Literature? by Kenneth W. Warren. Warren argues that õAfrican American Literatureö existed from the 1890s through the 1970s and its creation was governed by segregation. I argue that while that may generally be the case, during segregation there were a variety of attempts to evade representations of it by situating characters within sound-worlds (representing covert publics within African American communities) that amounted to temporary political alternatives. Developing such aural tropes also created the possibilities of aesthetic alternatives for writers not keen to employ realist and naturalist styles. Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray include images of aural engagement in their fiction with the frequent purpose of eliding or subverting political realities and providing counter-information. These tropes underscore communal coherence and resistance. In my first chapter I survey contemporary critical trends in the field and establish the historical and theoretical bases of my argument, while beginning my discussion of Hurston, which will range across chapters. My next chapter, õEllison In Sound,ö makes novel arguments for Ellisonøs influences and goals. The following chapter, õThe Ellison-Murray Friendship and Literary Exchangeö is a reading of the oeuvres of Ellison and Murray that focuses on both history and intertextuality. My two chapters on Murray, õAlbert Murrayøs Fiction: Some Historical and Critical Approachesö and õSound, Subjectivity, and Resistance in

Albert Murrayøs Fictionö constitute the most comprehensive study of his work to date. My chapter on Percival Everettøs *Suder* is a close reading of his first novel and discussion of his career in relation to the issues raised in preceding chapters. My conclusion returns to questions of periodization, curriculum, and canonicity.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Albert Murray.

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Permission to quote without limit from unpublished works by Albert Murray and from unpublished works in Albert Murray's archive has been granted by Lewis P. Jones, III, literary executor of the Albert Murray Estate and trustee of the Albert Murray Trust, on behalf of the Albert Murray Estate and Trust.

# Chapter One: The Periodization of African American Literature in the Twentieth Century

## I. Kenneth Warren and the Periodization of African American Literature

This is a study of a related group of literary texts by African Americans written from the 1920s through 2005 and of the aesthetic choices and processes involved in creating a literature that sought, through an aesthetic concerned with the representations of sound, and the access to, interpretation of, and habitation within sound (or tropes of sound), to recover and recoup elements of African American life and culture that thrived and flourished in spite of segregation and Jim Crow[1], and that may have been obscured by the class anxieties and moralizing tendencies of the creators and promoters of fiction that sought to protest segregation by exposing its horrors and injustices. The texts I am going to examine differ from texts by African Americans that had the specific protest of segregation (or contestation of it through the exposition of its details) and related injustice as their controlling theme and in some cases, their *raisonne d'etre*. Kenneth Warren argues in his influential 2011 book *What Was African American Literature?* (and in subsequent writings clarifying and defending the book) that õAfrican American literatureö was the literature written from approximately 1896 through the early 1970s and was given õcoherenceö by the social, political, and economic fact of segregation (6).[2] He argues that literary works by African Americans during this period were understood as

[1] I understand õsegregationö to mean legal statutes that enforced the õseparate but equalö dictum of the Supreme Courtøs decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. I understand õJim Crowö to include the de jure segregation described in the previous sentence and also to include the non-statutory yet customary and demeaning practices expected by whites of African Americans (e.g., going in back doors, deference in address, etc.) and practiced by the white supremacist regime (e.g., undue harassment, housing discrimination, last hired/first fired, etc.). I understand õJim Crowö to be an umbrella term encompassing both non-statutory customary practices and formal statutes.

[2] As for literature by African Americans written prior to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Warren writes õit was largely in the light of the imperatives determined by the Jim Crow era that antebellum texts were assimilated into the collective project we recognize as African American literatureö (7).

being either õinstrumentalö (as tools for the protest of injustice which may thereby perhaps aid in effecting social change), õindexicalö (if they were artistic achievements they would add to the tally of black accomplishment) or both (10-13). For Warren, literature written by African Americans after the 1970s is not õAfrican American literatureö per se but part of a larger pan-ethnic engagement with the õproblem of identityö (107). The pressures of segregation, for Warren, automatically tethered literary authorship by African Americans in the first two thirds of the twentieth century to the role of race spokesperson. õAfrican American literature,ö for Warren, was thus õstructured by the imperativesö of segregation (96). Warrenøs point is not that all texts were about segregation per se, as a feature of setting or plot (though many if not most were, to some degree), but that real segregation outside the text determined how the text was produced, received, and understood and therefore, conditions its status as a body of literature.

In this study I will identify what I see as an alternative tradition by African American writers that developed under segregation and cannot in good faith be understood in quite the same way or subsumed under the same rubric as the majority of the texts written during the time period Warren claims for African American Literature, that is, 1896-1970s. That is to say, the differences within and between the texts are so great that pressures from outside the discreet, published texts cannot be understood to work upon them exactly as Warren describes and asserts. I will examine works by writers who would have been surprised to learn that their works have been lumped together with those to which they believed they were offering a corrective or were not concerned with at all; writers who also would have understood the general of lines Warrenøs largely accurate and eloquent thesis during their own lives and through contemporaneous debates.

I am not in disagreement with Warren in quite the sense that most of his critics in the *PMLA* roundtable on his book were, with perhaps the exception of Glenda A. Carpio, whose difficult question for Warren about Zora Neale Hurston is discussed and expanded upon later in this chapter. I am not arguing that that segregation never ended practically, due to continued and continuing racism, and/or policies that have had disproportionately negative impact on African Americans. I agree with Warren that a response to segregation shaped much of what can fall under the historically understood term õAfrican American Literatureö ó but not all ó and it is within Warrenøs periodization that I am trying to work and carve out a space for the understanding of a smaller body of parallel works. Nor am I trying to deny the historicity of twentieth African American Literature (or any literature) and argue that literature by an African American writer (or any writer) in the contemporary globalized, digitized world can be understood specifically as part of one or even several unalloyed traditions (if it was ever possible to think such a way in the first place). I do not know how productive it would be to argue the opposite point for literature written today ó unless it was what is typically called õhistorical fictionö or imagined for itself a self-consciously õretroö aesthetic ó because to do so would lead back to questions of essentialism. I think it is more useful to say that from ÷such and such an angle, one these particular pages, in this particular way, the work of Mat Johnson (or Kiese Laymon, or whomever) seems to align with that of previous African American writers.ø To say that õAfrican American Literatureö ended at some point following segregation and that literature written by African Americans today is something else seems to me not as controversial as situating all literature by African Americans during segregation under a rubric of segregation; reducing the imperatives behind its creation and reception to segregation and thereby, in a sense,

re-segregating it. What I am attempting to do is identify a parallel, yet also historically circumscribed and specific tradition within Warrenøs õAfrican American Literature.ö

Warrenøs periodization scheme is a master narrative that seeks to dictate the understanding of that which it encompasses and therefore any argument that tries to trouble it can be subsumed its logic, reduced to its mastery. Therefore, the persuasiveness of my argument (or any critique of any master narrative) will to a large degree be dependent on the skepticism of the reader toward the argument to the master narrative itself. Thus, even if the following study does not persuade someone inherently persuaded by Warrenøs argument, it will still contain extensive original close reading, original research, previously unimagined juxtapositions of critics and texts, while attempting to fill some gaps in literary history.

The denial of life-defining power of segregation within these texts by Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray and others should complicate the assertion of real segregationøs power over how the textøs creation is understood and thus periodized, situated, classified, and ultimately read, taught, and interpreted. I argue that any periodization scheme for African American literature (as the term is broadly understood), whether based on details of text, reception, or intention should have to recognize these texts as exceptional. Among the distinguishing features of these texts are the emphasis of idiom over dialect, the recognition of soundscapes inhabited by (black) covert publics, black communities seen in relation to their own inner workings[3], an often cavalier disregard for rhetorical conventions of victimization,

[3] Here I am echoing the section on literature in Zora Neale Hurstonøs anonymous and unpublished 1938 article õArt and Suchö (published 1995) in which she anonymously writes of herself, quoting a critic I have not been able to identify: õWhen her first book, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, a novel, appeared in 1934, the critics announced across the nation, õHere at last is a Negro story without bias. The characters live and move. The story is about Negroes but it could be about anybody. It is the first time that a Negro story has been offered without special pleading. The characters in the story are seen in relation to themselves and not in relation to the whites as has been the rule. To watch these people one would conclude that there were no white people in the worldö (*Folklore, Memoirs, and*

subjectivity inseparable from engagement with aural phenomena (leading to phenomenological rather than political understandings), lack of representation of classic situations of segregation, lack of embarrassment over slavery and simultaneous employment of African and/or antebellum tropes mainly derived from African cultural forms, and finally, gestures of reconciliation or offers of participation to whites and others.

Warrenøs claim that the details of the texts do not matter compared with outside political and social pressures upon them is undercut by his claim that a different set of works would have been written had there been no segregation. That is to say, if the outside pressures were different then the creative texts would have been different. But what about texts with significant difference that emerged under the same political and social pressures but to varying degrees ignored those pressures? (This shall be discussed at length.) The texts I am concerned with may constitute what this alternative literature would have resembled; a literature that looked back to a coherent and resilient antebellum African American culture and forward to a more culturally integrated world (assuming there still would have been ethnic conflicts of various kinds).

Warren is not the only scholar who has attempted to periodize works based upon segregation. In the introduction to their edited collection *Representing Segregation: Toward an Aesthetics of Jim Crow and Other Forms of Racial Division* (2010), Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams have tried to identify textual features that constitute what they call õsegregation fiction.ö For Norman and Williams the major distinguishing feature of segregation fiction is õthe spatialization of raceö combined with the õspatialization of fear,ö catalyzed by

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*Other Writings* 910). The idea that õthe storyí could be about anybodyö is one that will be of the utmost importance to Hurston, Ellison, and Murray but at the same time, in order to universalize the story (following certain modernist prescriptions and aesthetic ideologies) they will endeavor to sink the foundations of those stories as deeply as possible into African American ethnic and idiomatic experience (often an aural experience) while denying the power ascribed to segregation by their contemporaries (and the life-defining power ascribed to it by Warren in 2013).

cross-racial contact (5-6). They write that õscenes of cross-racial contact that underscore the effects and basic injusticesí of segregated societiesö constitute the õkey deviceö across literatures of segregation written in various societies at various times (6). For Norman and Williams, õJim Crowö is more than a õhistorical backdropö: õsegregation,ö rather, is an õaesthetic writ largeö (7). The overlap between õthe segregation aestheticö and õAfrican American literatureö (as Warren defines it) is not complete, but it is extensive. While Warren would likely agree that there is a segregation aesthetic, he also is keen to note that the details of the texts themselves do not ultimately matter within his schema ó though he does occasionally emphasize just such details that would constitute a segregation aesthetic.

More so than Norman and Williams, whose schema calls for close reading and whose periodization ends well before Warrenøs (with Wright and Hansberry in the late 1950s/early 1960s, as opposed to Warrenøs locating the end of the period in the early 1970s), Warren wants to consider a macro perspective on the production of the works in question. The õcollective projectö of African American literature Warren describes was largely that of an upper and middle class. A closely related analogous (and strongly indexical) project was the desire to have orchestrated versions of the Negro spirituals recognized as one of the major cultural achievements of the world. While exceptions abound, there was a tendency in black middle class cultural circles to simultaneously create and consume fiction in the segregation aesthetic of various stripes while advocating for the status of the spirituals, while looking down upon or at least being somewhat embarrassed by jazz and the blues and other elements of secular black folk culture.[4]

[4] This is described at length in Paul Allen Andersonøs *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (2001). Zora Neale Hurston exemplifies the opposite of the middle class mandarin who would see the spirituals orchestrated and various secular folk forms either suppressed in their original form, or likewise

Warren admits that African American literature was õoverwhelmingly the product of an eliteö (108). In my first three chapters I will examine works by Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, and Albert Murray ó authors who were not from elite backgrounds, who did not think of their work as being shaped by the pressures of segregation in any sort of mechanistic way, and who above all wanted to memorialize communities of their youth which for them were coherent but were not endowed with coherence by a set of policies poorly designed to manage the aftermath of slavery (Jim Crow) but rather by their own orientation to forms of resilience, or structures of feeling, dating back to slavery.[5] This resilience was intricately related to the appreciation of a soundscape. Furthermore, I will argue, their work was not given coherence by the visual, sign-and-color based regime of Jim Crow, but rather by an engagement with aural phenomena, as they often glanced back past 1896 or 1877 and into the antebellum world. The lynchpin here is sound and the positionality of the listener. That positionality both shaped and was shaped by black folk culture.[6] For some, such as the writers whose works I will examine closely here, the imperative to produce literature was occasioned by the desire to bear witness, in

orchestrated. In her essay õSpirituals and Neo-Spiritualsö (discussed later in this chapter), as well as in her letters, Hurston expresses strong distaste for the project. For instance, she wrote to her patron Charlotte Osgood Mason in 1931 about a black ex-lumberjack from New Orleans who was a promising singer whom Hurston thought was being exploited by a prominent circle within the black art music community, which included Melville Charlton: õThis Dr. Charlton is an intimate of Harry T. Burleigh who has less understanding of and sympathy for Negroes than any person I can imagine. You know very well what he wanted to do to the work-songs. Make them into Bach Choralsö (Kaplan 232). The orchestration ó or sanitization ó of the spirituals was more or less completed by Burleigh decades earlier. Hurston now worried about secular folk forms getting the same treatment. Her anxiety here is tied, in a manner that I will later endeavor to untangle, with her long-running critique of W.E.B. Du Bois.

[5] My final chapter is on Percival Everett, who is from an elite background (his father and grandfather were physicians, as is his sister), but began his prolific career with a novel commenting on a tradition that preceded him, particularly on the work of Ellison and Murray, as will be discussed at length.

[6] David G. Nicholls, in his book *Conjuring the Folk: Forms of Modernity in African America* (1999), argues that õthe locations of the folk are multipleö (16). For Nicholls, as reflected in literary texts, there is õnot a coherent tradition but a discordant and engaging conversation on the question of modernity in African Americaö (17). Indeed, there is not one singular black folk culture, or any singular folk culture, just as there is not one singular black middle class, or any singular middle class. But there are widespread folk sayings, customs, outlooks, and practices that have persisted. I am not arguing for a transcendental unity of folk culture, or any culture, but simply contrasting cultures in which formal education and bourgeois professions (or access to them) did not exist, with those that did. Thus, the correspondences between Hurston, Ellison, and Murray (and others) are not exact but are close enough (in some cases startlingly close) to identify as a separate tradition, off the beaten path of the segregation aesthetic identified by Norman and Williams or the instrumental/indexical categories identified by Warren.

fiction, to a worldview, a structure of feeling and experience, mediated through sound and extant in African American communities during and after slavery. The recognition of slavery and its legacy is an important factor in this aesthetic break as well, as it was stridently downplayed by middle class creators and proponents of the literature and aesthetic of segregation (as will be discussed below). It is a significant moment in chapter one of *Invisible Man* when the Invisible Man says õI am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamedö (15).

Warren claims that õany insistence on historical periodization is justified only if it leads to interpretive clarityö (*What Was* 9). Warrenøs periodization does indeed lead to clarity. My goal here is to micro-periodize within his periodization and thereby attain further clarity. I will argue that opposed to the very subtle yet ultimately totalizing master narrative advanced by Warren, the two modes writing (literature that can be thought of as occasioned by segregation and a sound-infused memorialization project that was to flourish during after the 1970s) existed alongside one another as early as the 1920s and through the 1950s, and that lumping them together based on external political realities obscures the texts of the elusive, minor tradition, which has yet to be fully explored and documented. The writers whose work I will be exploring in detail include Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray ó pioneers of this alternative mode, and Percival Everett, who begins his career with commentary on this mode. The alternative mode, grounded in the idea of cultural recovery, which was to flourish in works by writers such as Leon Forrest, David Bradley, Toni Morrison, August Wilson and others did not first emerge in the 1970s, but considerably earlier. This mode is grounded in a representation of sound, and philosophical engagement with sound, which reflects and is reflected by a hidden

transcript of a multifaceted resistance to white supremacy, while also gesturing toward or suggesting blueprints for racial conciliation.

In a 1994 interview Murray makes explicit that he is trying to capture and re-present (in his fiction, through the trope of the blues) an orientation to resilience prevalent among former slaves, some of whom he knew while growing up in Mobile, Alabama in the 1920s and 1930s:

> And I keep hoping against hope that Iøm gonna win, you know, that people will see that our own foreparents had respect for themselves, that they believed in their own humanity and integrity. They could not be torn apart. They werenøt putting on a front. They were for real. In *Gone with the Wind*, when Mammy is fitting Scarlett OøHaraøs corset and she tells her mistress, ÷You done had a baby, you ainøt never gonø be no eighteen-and-a-half inches again,ø itøs because Mammy knows what is behind the façade of the plantation mistress. She made Scarlett into a lady. Our foreparents knew what was behind the myth of whiteness, because they helped create it. Later, Scarlett OøHara sees the devastation of the South, and still she keeps her dignity. Who taught her that? Aunt Jemima. Uncle Ben. (Maguire, *Conversations* 90)

Murray seems to be claiming here that since the slaves of African descent were forced to be complicit in the construction of whiteness, they also would have understood it as a construction and thus, it can be inferred, would have regarded public policies rooted in the myth of whiteness, ironically and with contempt ó as did Murray, Hurston, and others. Murray considered segregation beneath representation; his goal was the recovery and representation of the feeling of the former slaves and this feeling that they tried to pass on to his generation. As the worldview of the protagonist of Murrayøs fiction tetralogy takes shape, the most important feature in that structuring of subjectivity is a soundscape, from train whistles to school bells to Louis Armstrong records to local blues guitarists and barrelhouse pianists, to conversations at the barbershop and fireside. The day to day details or mechanics of segregation do not appear. Murrayøs goal, when *Train Whistle Guitar* was finally published in 1974 (after having been

completed twenty-three years earlier), seems to have been a memorialization of an assertive black folk culture under segregation (not long separated from slavery) that the coming of desegregation may obscure, while creating an image, which he called a representative anecdote, that could simultaneously establish continuity between slavery and desegregation while in effect skipping over the details of segregation; an image grounded in the soundscape of slavery (as will be explained in the chapter on Murray), signifying its complexity and resilience, yet relevant to the new socio-political landscape. In this new landscape, circa 1970, as the world changed and elders passed away, it seemed as if the ephemeral soundscape of African American communities would disappear while the signs of segregation (its physical artifacts) would live on: in photographs and in collections and in a dominant historical narrative. Capturing that soundscape as best he could in fiction was one of Murrayøs goals.[7]

Toni Morrison, in her 1974[8] essay õRediscovering Black Historyö (which will be discussed below) laments that due to the upheavals of the Civil Rights Movement, desegregation, and mass media, a certain particular historical African American õsoundö was in danger of being lost. Parallel to the well-known rediscovery of Hurston that began following the official end of segregation in the 1960s, Murrayøs work of the previous decade was rediscovered as well, and Ellisonøs came to be seen a new light; in the light of the recovery of black culture rather than that of the Cold War. Morrisonøs interest in the work of Ellison and Murray around this time signals

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[7] Hurston and Ellison had already been working along the same lines. The protagonistøs grandfather in *Invisible Man* appears just on the cusp of desegregation in 1952, a freedman designed to counterstate what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Andrew Jarrett have called the õdehistoricized New Negro,ö unmoored from slavery in the world of Jim Crow. And yet before him came Janieøs grandmother in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. If the dehistoricized New Negro (to be discussed later in this chapter) is the chief protagonist of the segregation aesthetic, the historicized subject with roots in slavery will be at the vanguard of a new aesthetic, which flourished at least through the last plays of August Wilson, *Radio Golf* and *Gem of the Ocean*.
[8] In 1972 she reviewed Murrayøs *South to a Very Old Place* in the *New York Times Book Review*. This review will be discussed in the first chapter on Murray.

and is reflective of the interest of a new generation of black writers who embraced earlier black cultural forms in the years following segregation.

Warren would call this post-segregation shift simply a search for identity, common across the literatures of various ethnic groups, but I would prefer to think of it not as a grasping for identity but as more of an assertive project of cultural recovery, recovering what had been obscured by the enforced amnesia of the ideology of the New Negro, under whose sign much fiction in the segregation aesthetic was composed. Early examples of this cultural recovery fiction existed parallel with paradigmatic works in the segregation aesthetic, but they were before their time and either quickly flared quickly and disappeared, were ignored, or actively rebutted in hostile attempts to discredit them, such as in Richard Wrightøs well known critique of Hurston. In 1973 James Alan McPherson (b. 1943) wrote to Albert Murray õBut beyond introducing me to your store of ideas, youøve also exposed me to a certain style, one from down-home that I had almost forgottenö (McPherson 1). Establishing that this concern with sound and recovery first emerged earlier, even if in commercially frustrated works (in the case of Hurston and Murray), or obscured by other textual features (e.g., anti-Communism, in the case of Ellison), is one my goals.[9]

What will make this attempt at micro-periodization so prolix is the fact that the totalizing narrative (Warrenøs) to which it seeks to offer a corrective annotation is so vast, and claims all

[9] Perhaps there may be other texts that I could have examined in addition to those that will be examined here, but considering the enormous real, practical, and institutional influence that the works, ideas, and personalities of Murray and Ellison have had over cultural institutions and the memorialization of African American musical cultures and forms (Jazz at Lincoln Center, Columbia Universityøs Center for Jazz Studies, The National Jazz Museum in Harlem) and a generation of scholars, artists, and thinkers (Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Robert G. OøMeally, Stanley Crouch, John Edgar Wideman, James Alan McPherson, Wynton Marsalis, Gary Giddins, and Loren Schoenberg, among many others), it will be worthwhile to subject their oeuvres to a close scrutiny that aims to contextualize the depth and extent of the literary counter-statements they were creating and counter-tradition they were building, along with exploring why they were engaged with their projects as such. Understanding Hurston as a forerunner of their aesthetic and understanding Everett as following it up and commenting on it will provide a more complete historical perspective.

works as its own, regardless of the features of the texts themselves. The knot of this master narrative of Warrenøs has been tied so expertly that a prolonged disentangling will be necessary.

Warren claims in his defense of himself in the March 2013 *PMLA* roundtable on his book (more explicitly than he does in his book) that his definition of African American literature does not have to do with the content of any texts, but rather with a õpolitico-historical relationö between texts (404). He claims that it would be a õmistake to declare that exuberance, joy, the blues, or some other property makes a text a work of African American literatureö (404). I am not trying to redefine African American literature (as conventionally understood) per se, but rather I am trying to notice that the features of some texts appear to align in ways that others do not, and these so happen to contain ideas and strategies for imaginatively dealing with history and the present that differ from those representing scenes of injustice based on segregation. To so authoritatively periodize texts strictly through their politico-historical relation to one can be counter-productive if it obscures distinguishing features of the texts themselves. If it were to be claimed that all American literature between 1945-1990 was anti-communist ó even works that were pro-communist ó because the authors lived under a generally anti-communist political climate, it would not result in a very productive classification. It would be wrong to essentialize African American literature as being distinguishable by solely containing a particular feature (e.g., the blues, signifyinø, or õsome other propertyö), but putting all weight of classification and periodization on political realities outside the text, which meant more to some writers than to others, can result in a dehistoricization of the literature in question (even as it condescends to the authors themselves).

As he constructs the vast umbrella of his periodization scheme, Warren claims that segregation was õthe very condition that gave oneøs own existence meaningö (18). This is the

sort of claim that can either create a wedge between traditions or lead to one being subsumed or eclipsed by another. Certainly many African Americans felt that Christianity endowed their lives with meaning. It would be hard to argue that segregation gave the life of George Washington Carver more meaning than science, or that segregation rather than music gave more meaning to the life of Thelonius Monk. Why must segregation be the õvery conditionö that gives meaning to life ó and thus, must form a fence around all texts ó but a largely African American rhetorical practice with such a wide distribution as signifyinø not be a condition common enough across texts and in the wider culture to establish a category for classification? Completing the process of historicization involves recognizing the historical existence of texts that are obscured by such sweeping, totalizing claims. Warrenøs periodization works without its extension into totalization. That is to say, it is valid for texts to which its claims apply, which are texts that contest segregation instrumentally, to borrow his terminology, or had to be understood as contesting Jim Crow by being seen as angling for indexical recognition.

Warrenøs master narrative of de jure segregation as the bookends of what constitutes õAfrican American literatureö does, like many master narratives, contain an element of truth. Thus, it is convincing within a particular framework. Yet he admits he can imagine an alternative literature during this period. I intend to argue that an alternative did in fact exist, and I will closely examine its features through a variety of comparative and theoretical approaches. õOne cannot treat African American literature as a literature apart from the necessary conditions that made it a literature,ö Warren writes in his first chapter (17). I would agree and argue that this is the case for all literatures, everywhere, but the question of what actually constitutes those conditions is important. For instance, is listening to the wit and wisdom (and music) of elders who had once been enslaved a more or less important condition than not being able to sit at a

certain lunch counter or in a certain seat to hear Wagner? That rhetorical question is not meant to diminish the injustice of segregation, but to note that fiction took different courses, and that middle class segregation fiction tended to diminish slaveryøs legacy. And for Ellison, Murray, and Hurston, that human legacy of resilience was not something to shy away from. Warren continues, admitting he can imagine a historical alternative to what he has proposed:

> Absent white suspicions of, or commitment to imposing, black inferiority, African American literature would not have existed as a literature. Writers of African descent would have certainly emerged and written novels, plays, and poems that merited critical attention, but the imperative to produce and to consider their literature as a corporate enterprise would not have obtained. The achievement of black writers lay in their having responded creatively to the imperatives that derived from the establishment of a social order on the basis of assumed black inferiority, and not in any transcendence of these imperatives. Black writers, as both creative writers and critics, to paraphrase Marx, made African American literature, but they did not make it just as they pleased, and certainly not under circumstances chosen by themselves. (*What Was* 17-18)

While no writer has worked under circumstances chosen by him or herself, it is clear what Warren is arguing. And yet, reflecting the aesthetic present in many of the works that fall under the rubric he is arguing for, he seems to lack engagement with the legacy of slavery, from and through I would argue that African American literature (as the term is generally understood) was influenced by, in addition to Jim Crow. Was õassumed black inferiorityö really the basis of Jim Crow anyway, or was Jim Crow based upon a fear of black superiority (both practically speaking, in politics and at the polls due to the large black population in the south, and from the point of view of white male sexual paranoia) that resulted in a system that *proclaimed* black inferiority? Was this system not designed to create the economic and psychological conditions of black inferiority precisely because it lived in fear of black superiority? Could not õthe achievement of black writersö be located in their having come from a group that had been

subjected to forced mass-illiteracy for several hundred years, and then mastered the conventions of contemporary Western literary aesthetics and reimagined them as inflected through the aural and oral traditions that developed under slavery? I believe that is where an alternative achievement resides, and parallel to that achievement are alternative orientations and opinions on politics and musical and literary aesthetics.

In Warrenøs formidable defense of his book in the March 2013 *PMLA* he reiterates his claim quoted above with more specificity, writing:

> To be sure, as I make clear in my book, had the Jim Crow regime been throttled in its fetid cradle, African American writers would nonetheless have produced compelling novels, plays, short stories, and other works, but the imperative to regard their work as a literature apart would not likely have emerged. African American literature was the historical relation of literary production by black writers (along with the reception and commentary on these texts) to the social and political fact of black inequality that was codified by the legal regime of Jim Crow. (403)

For Warren, African American literature was a period and its periodization was dictated by the historical time frame of de jure segregation. Warren effectively argues that segregation obliterates the differences between literary texts written by African Americans. But then what is at stake when his iron-clad insistence on the primacy of this periodization re-obscures those differences or denies difference by making its expressions subservient a collection of supra-textual political policies? Underlying Warrenøs assumption, expressed in the first sentence of the quote above, is the speculative hypothesis that had Federal troops not been removed from the South in 1877, or more specifically if *Plessy v. Ferguson* had been decided the other way, then literature by black Americans ó hypothetical engagements with folk culture and/or the legacy of slavery not withstanding ó would not have been regarded and examined as something apart from the main currents of American literature. (To suggest that it always was considered something

apart, of course, is an overstatement, and perhaps a strong one.) Warren appears to be arguing that there would be nothing to distinguish African American literature, no difference to signify on, had forty acres and a mule been equitably distributed among the former slaves. This baked-in assumption seems to deny myriad African American cultural practices and tendencies firmly in place by 1865, the framework of some of which had come from Africa and developed in a specifically American context[10]. And yet, Warren does admit that literary texts still would have been created. I will ask in my investigation here if works by Hurston, Ellison, and Murray are what those hypothetical works Warren imagines may have resembled.

In Warrenøs preceding book, *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism* (2003), he begins to formulate his theory of what he will later call õAfrican American literatureö molded by political forces that impinge on texts that might not necessarily explore those forces as textual features:

> í it is heuristically useful to entertain the idea that if such movements had succeeded, the story of black cultural expression during the post-emancipation era would likely have unfolded differently. Certainly the literature of uplift that gathered momentum during the 1890s might have been drastically refigured, as would some of the assumptions that inaugurated the Harlem Renaissance ó both moments spawned literary schools that took for granted the expectation that unelected elites would speak and act on behalf of blacks generally. The goal of this sort of heuristic exercise, however, is not really to imagine how such literature might have looked otherwise, but to read and hear existing objects of black cultural expression with an ear attuned to their own self-contradictory shadows and whispers, the muttering that says ÷But for the presence of the very injustice that I decry, I would not be standing here before you.ø No such reminder is needed for the literature that is explicitly engaged in political and social protest ó the literature that wears its historical contingency on its sleeve. Rather, the argument here is angled toward that literature ó fictive

[10] That is to say, signifyinø, storytelling, hoodoo, musical styles; a rich aural and oral culture explored in the remarkable book *The Sounds of Slavery* (2006) by Shane White and Graham White.

> and critical ó that imagines its own relative autonomy from circumstances, the literature that imagines for itself the career of a classic (35).

When Warren writes of õhistorical contingencyö and õcircumstancesö he means those terms in the narrow political sense ó the contingency and circumstances resulting from the betrayal of Reconstruction in 1877 and the *Plessy* decision. Warren goes on to cite James Weldon Johnsonøs *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man* (1912) as a text that õhelps make this pointö (35). Warren writes that Johnsonøs novel seeks to use black music as õoverwhelming evidence for black humanity and a powerful argument for black equalityö (35). The texts I am examining and the tradition I am trying to identify do not use sound or music in quite this same way. They imagine a subjectivity partially constructed by engagement with some of the sound expressions that the Connecticut-raised Ex-Colored Man collects, anthropologist-like, in the U.S. south. The narrator/protagonistøs south is quite different from that of Johnsonøs youth in Jacksonville, Florida. The following statement is not a critique of Johnson, but is just to note the difference: Hurston, Ellison, and Murray will create works that will be idiomatically and geographically autobiographical.[11]

Music in *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man* is part of theme, setting, and plot, in addition to being an object cultural-political dispute, but it is not employed in quite the same way that Hurston, Ellison, and Murray will ó that is to say, as a something like, resembling, alluding to or suggesting an autonomous alternative world. Warren writes that õJohnsonøs novel reveals itself as a text that was written only because the quest to create a text of ÷classicø [musical] expression had to be abandoned along the wayö (36). The yellowing manuscripts of the Ex-Colored Manøs attempts to re-package and pay tribute to African American musical traditions

[11] Perhaps this is one reason Murray admired Johnsonøs *Along This Way* (Murray, *The Blue Devils of Nada*, 24-27).

create a certain amount of pathos and form a fascinating foil; an unknown sibling or silent alternative to the text of the novel at hand at hand (suggesting a wider theme in American literature of foreclosed possibility, as in, for instance, A.R. Ammonsøs poem õEaster Morningö) but the manuscripts do not seem to me to be so central to the plot that the narrative would necessarily collapse without them. They add a literary and philosophical dimension to the work but are not essential to the plot.

To suggest that texts either wear their historical contingency on their sleeve or imagine a future canonicity for themselves by not doing so is reductive. But it may be possible to paraphrase Warrenøs claim here with a productive difference through Albert Murrayøs reading of *Native Son* in his book *The Hero and the Blues* (1973). Murray writes:

> In any case, *Native Son* is not a tragedy. It is a social science-oriented melodrama with an unhappy ending. In other words, its plot complications do not represent the inscrutable ÷Olympianø contradictions and humiliations of human existence itself. They reflect only the man-made restrictions of an oppressive political system. They do not adequately symbolize the eternal condition of man. They simply document a very special condition of society and, what is more, they are predicated on the assumption that such conditions can be ameliorated. (95-96)

The õvery special condition of societyö of course is Jim Crow. For Murray, a fiction that is narrowly predicated on something that he views as so specific (or less than õOlympianö) cannot achieve the wide metaphorical applicability that he looked for in fiction. Murray continues: õThe moral of tragedy, [as opposed to melodrama], like that of comedy and farce, is that the essential condition of man cannot be ameliorated, but it can be transcendedö (96).[12] What Warren may

[12] I do not wish to imply that Murrayøs speculations on or claims about genre are the last word on their respective subjects. I am recounting and summarizing his work on this because in *The Hero and the Blues*, his rigorously argued rejection of what he considered to be the narrowness of literature of a particular political slant, there may possibly be found an answer to Warrenøs claims, which move in a similar orbit while using different terminology.

have meant by õfiction that imagines for itself the career of a classicö is fiction that aspires to universality. The Ex-Colored Manøs ambition to create a work of European-style art music out of African American folk forms ó part of a musical project widely supported by the black bourgeoisie for its indexical value in the battle against Jim Crow ó fails, and he must resort to composing a literary work about that failure (a failure of course caused by Jim Crow). Exactly what Warren means is not completely clear, but perhaps it could be said that the novel aspires for the career of a classic by being about an artist who abandons his bohemian vocation for success in business. The abandonment of his art is occasioned by the horrors of Jim Crow, but it ultimately turns on a conflict between art and business that was a common literary theme through the nineteenth century.

Despite Warrenøs claim quoted above that fiction that images for itself the career of a classic, if written by an African American, must ultimately be shaped by the same forces as that which would not exist if not for injustice, denies significant difference between actual features of texts and subsumes them in a way could cloud a clear understanding them, and thus of the actual contours of literary history. Also, the ambitions of writers may move in another direction from that which Warren describes as well: writers who seek to combat injustice may also strive for a wide applicability, a broad claim to validity.[13]

Hurston, late in her career, was thinking along the same lines as Warren, and thinking in similar if not exact dichotomies. In her essay õWhat White Publishers Wonøt Printö (1950), she argues that in õThe American Museum of Unnatural Historyö (a world of stereotypes created by

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Also, since Murrayøs fiction will comprise a large section of this study, an exposition of his theory of fiction here will help set the stage for later explorations and arguments.

[13] I am aware that discussions of terms such as archetype and universality precede post-structuralismøs indictment of their validity and thus sound hopelessly dated. Nevertheless, they were terms that writers employed for much of the twentieth century and still may be useful as shorthand terms for understanding historical positions, and for argumentøs sake.

large media and publishing) there are two black images: a minstrel figure and õa most amoral characterí  mumbling about injusticeö (*Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* 952). Perhaps these figures can be paraphrased as the idyllic and the historically contingent; the ahistorical and the overly-historical. She argues that the antidote to these images would be characters based upon õthe average, struggling, non-morbid Negroö a figure who is õthe best kept secret in Americaö (954). She adds that õhis revelation to the public is the thing needed to do away with that feeling of difference which inspires fear and which ever expresses itself in dislikeö (954). This is a curious essay by a novelist (who by this time had essentially abandoned the novel) who could have created the images she advocates for (and indeed, she did to an extent, with Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*). Hurston, of course, was accused by many of perpetuating the minstrel image earlier in her career[14]. Her categorization is of course glib and reductive itself. She enjoyed being a provocateur. By 1950, she feared desegregation and sought for some form of racial understanding without it ó perhaps through literature.  But the sense it makes to bring it up here is to show the similarity with Warrenøs 2003 classification, and thus emphasize the ongoing nature of the question, and contrast it with Murrayøs consideration of it in *The Hero and the Blues*.

Murray, who (unlike Hurston) favored desegregation[15], was thinking about limited black literary images as well, but he frames the problem as a question of genre. Murray continues in

[14] Perhaps she felt that because of personal circumstances and her literary reputation following modest sales of her white-life novel *Seraph of the Suwannee* (1948), that even if she created wonderful õaverage, struggling, non-morbid charactersö she would not be able to find a publisher. In any event, she turned her last years to studying and writing about the life of King Herod. It could be argued that Scofield and Dupre, who appear during the riot in chapter twenty-five of *Invisible Man* are examples of such characters.

[15] See *Trading Twelves*. In a 1996 interview he referred to Kingøs non-violent strategy as õpolitical ju-jitsuö which was õvery delicate and very sophisticatedö (*Booknotes* interview 19:16-19:58). Inside the front cover of his copy of Robert Penn Warrenøs *Segregation: The Inner Conflict of the* South (1956) Murray wrote õthe part you like least about segregation page 15.ö On page fifteen he underlined õthe instinctive fear, on the part of black or white, that the massiveness of experience, the concreteness of life, will be violated [when attempting to explain the South to outsiders]; the fear of abstractionö (Warren, *Segregation* 15).

*The Hero and the Blues*: õthe very title of *Native Son* implies that the story of Bigger Thomas is the representative anecdote about an archetypical Black Americanö (96). For Murray, the protagonist of a melodrama such as *Native Son* cannot attain the sort of universality that he asserts Wright was aiming for because of the structure and conventions of melodrama. In contrast to the protagonists of tragedy, comedy, and farce, with their fates somewhat rigidly delineated by form, Murray offers what he calls the õslapstick protagonistö:

> The slapstick protagonist, like the jam-session soloist, is either nimble or nothing. Moreover, of all the storybook heroes he is perhaps the most comprehensive as well as the most sophisticated archetype of the ÷successfulø individual. *Indeed, in a very fundamental sense he seems to begin where all other storybook heroes end.* In fact, it is as if he were born with a functional awareness of that which it takes others a lifetime to learn. His aspirations and intentions are comparable to theirs in every way, but his conception of human nature is significantly different. His definition of integrity, for instance, is much more complicated than the tragic hero. Thus he is less vulnerable to the fatal flaw of pride. Somewhat like Jacob in Thomas Mannøs *Joseph and his Brothers*, he values his mission, responsibilities, blessings, or long range aspirations so highly that he can withstand any embarrassment and can even regard humiliation as a passing episode (which gives him useful information about his adversaryøs pride). (99, emphasis added)

Murray is trying to define the protagonist of the narrative without mechanism for resolution; broadly speaking, the picaresque (which will be discussed at length in the first chapter on Murray). This definition is intended to critique not only of the image not only of Bigger Thomas, crushed by circumstances, but also what Murray calls õthe social science fiction research heroí who is very likely to be a Marxian-Freudian deliverer discovering some all-purpose device or magic cureö (100). While Murray created his protagonist along this õslapstickö model (to varying degrees of adherence ó Scooter faces no embarrassment or humiliation as an adult), it could be argued that Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is this very sort of protagonist in a

picaresque farce: she found love, she lost it, found it again, lost it again, and all she can do is to try to make sense of it by recounting the tale, finding her voice in the process.

In short, the distinction comes down not to the work of literature not existing if not for injustice versus the work of literature that imagines for itself the career of a classic, but of the human circumstances that the work of literature seeks to emphasize ó whether viewed as historically narrow (as Murray thought of segregation) or circumstances dealing with more basic questions of existence. And thus, the question arises of how those circumstances regarding basic existential questions were imagined and pursued in the communities in which Hurston, Ellison, and Murray were raised. Often through sound and tropes and sound, as imagined by the folk and often obscured in works adopting the segregation aesthetic, is how broader circumstances of existence were dealt with, and this is what this alternative literary tradition, crafted by those who came from the folk and were later educated, built upon.[16] Much more is involved than the dichotomy between the protest of injustice versus striving for universality, õthe career of a classic,ö or canonicity.

## II. Historical Contexts of õThe Dehistoricized New Negroö

[16] The above discussion was not intended to make a straw man out of Wright or *Native Son*, which in some ways provides a glimpse of the school of writing to come (that I am seeking to identify). Edward M. Pavli  has noticed that at the end of *Native Son*, when Bigger begins õtrusting the sound of his voice,ö õWrightí explores the disruptive capacity of sound to jolt meaning loose from reified social structure (language)ö (Pavli  29). And of course, Native Son begins with the onomatopoeic rendering of the sound of an alarm clock. (In the next chapter I will contrast this with the alarm clock in chapter fifteen of *Invisible Man*.) Wright undoubtedly began to glimpse another form, but perhaps he was ideologically committed to certain themes and procedures. In an essay on Ellisonøs second novel Warren calls *Invisible Man* the õapotheosisö of the õNegro American novelö as a õgenreö (Warren, õChaosö 189). An apotheosis of one form often contains elements of that which is to follow. But perhaps *Native Son* is truly that apotheosis. *Invisible Man*, along with Murrayøs extensive commentary on it in his fiction, not to mention Baldwinøs work, perhaps would not have existed in the same forms without it. Pavli  notes õWrightøs desperate awareness of the importance of sound in black confrontations with modernityö (44). And yet sound seems not to have been his forte. Hurston wrote in her famous review of *Uncle Tom's Children* õ[C]ertainly he does not write by ear unless he is tone deafö (*Folklore* 913). But that is not exactly what I mean to imply. Perhaps he was too committed to the mechanics of naturalism to be able to do surreal or metaphysical experiments with tropes of sound.

I am interested in these other circumstances of existence within the communities in question, other angles of vision informed by wavelengths of hearkening, the understanding of vocal and musical expressions and the interpretations of natural and industrial sounds. I will try to demonstrate that certain texts attempt to reproduce a structure of feeling while suggesting how that structure of feeling was formed. For Warren, the cultural turn in black politics caused by the statutory and violent crushing of black political power from the 1870s through the 1890s made black cultural productions thereafter inescapably and often explicitly political. Political and material realities undoubtedly shape cultural productions to a large degree, but these political and material realities are not static. It could be argued that the first inklings of black northern urban political power during the 1920s has something to with the infusion of blues and jazz into literature, as practiced during that time by Langston Hughes and Sterling Brown, for example. That is to say, the almost certain disapproval of bourgeois õclub women and the Urban League[17]ö that would have been and was doled out for imaginatively weaving contemporary black secular music into literature suddenly might have begun to seem quaint. Likewise, through the 1930s and 1940s, especially after the desegregation of major league baseball in 1947 and the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948, when it may have looked like less segregation rather than more segregation would be the way of the future, it became clear to Ellison and Murray that extending a hand to whites while describing what was personally real to them about the African American communities they knew would be a paramount goal. For Hurston, in her essay õHigh John de Conquer,ö which will be explored below, the enormity of World War II is what caused her to

[17] This is the shorthand that Warren, in *So Black and Blue*, uses to refer to the self-appointed police of black culture (26). The white literary and jazz critic Martin Williams, longtime close friend of Ellison and Murray, wrote to Murray in 1974 (in a letter about Murrayøs *South to a Very Old Place*), õnever again should the head of the Urban League advise you (as he did only ten years ago) to forget your blues and your boogie woogie in favor of Bach and Beethoven so white people will respect youö (Williams 2). He is referring to Whitney Youngøs statement, quoted in Nat Hentofføs column in *Down Beat* 32, 1965, (snippet available on Google Books and cited in various places) that African American children should be taught that the ballet is more important than the jitterbug and Bach is more important than the blues.

imagine conciliation through exposure of the sound-driven hidden transcript of black autonomy; the aural phenomena and spaces of resistance in and yet beyond both slavery and segregation.

The creation of African American literature (as the term is conventionally understood) is inextricably connected with the creation of the õNew Negro;ö not just the 1925 anthology of that title edited by Alain Locke, but as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett argue (in their introduction to a 2007 anthology also called *The New Negro*), with the formation of the dehistoricized post-Emancipation African American subject. Gates and Jarrett claim that Reconstruction yielded little in the way of literature: two novels from 1866-1877 (4). The betrayal of Reconstruction and inception of Jim Crow seems to have created a boom in literary endeavor (and also, thus, a market for those productions). Gates and Jarrett write õBetween 1892-1938, however, African American writers published close to seventy-five novelsö (4).[18] A major feature of this period, for Gates and Jarrett, was the elision of slavery: õA paradox of this sort of self-willed beginning was that its [the New Negro projectøs] ÷successø depended fundamentally upon self-negation, a turning away from the ÷Old Negroø and the labyrinthine memory of black enslavement and toward the register of a ÷New Negro,ø an irresistible, spontaneously generated black and sufficient selfö (4). It is a return to this õlabyrinthine memory of black enslavementö and its manifold legacy that characterizes the initial stages of the later tradition that I see beginning with Hurston, Ellison, and Murray.

Formal education seems to have generally been the process through which the post-Emancipation African American subject in fiction was õdehistoricized.ö An important question

[18] Though the time spans are forty-six years versus eleven years, the ratio is about two per year versus one every five years. Gates and Jarrett do not mention the 1877-1892 period. Incidentally, it is curious that Du Bois did not notice this boom or mini-boom as it was happening (and in which he was participating). In the midst of it, in 1913, a year after Johnsonøs (anonymous) publication of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Du Bois wrote (in his essay õThe Negro in Literature and Artö), õThe economic stress is too great and the racial persecution too bitter to allow the leisure and the poise for which literature callsö (Gates and Jarrett 301-302).

in African American literary debates was how should the educated protagonist of the segregation aesthetic ó the New Negro ó be represented. If the goal of education was to eradicate idiomatic blackness (idiomatic signifiers), then would the New Negro be able to speak for or represent the black masses from whom he or she has been separated by the gulf of education? *Invisible Man* may be thought of as a novel about a dehistoricized subject ó stripped of his folk consciousness (for lack of a better term) through immersion in the image-conscious ideology of the college ó who rehistoricizes himself through a circuitous journey (and through his interactions with Peter Wheatstraw, Mary Rambo, the yam salesman, Primus Provo, Brother Tarp, Scofield and Dupre, and finally, if at the beginning, through Louis Armstrong). One of Albert Murrayøs accomplishments is to have created a balanced protagonist, equally at home with his folk heritage and upbringing and with the world of higher education, who integrates his folk consciousness into his formal education and vice versa. As Bernard W. Bell has noticed, Murrayøs protagonist õseeks to reconcile his Southern African American vernacular tradition with his literacy as a college graduate to attain wholeness as a cosmopolitan contemporary jazz musicianö (Bell 274). Bell claims (discussing the first three of out of Murrayøs four novels) that õthe main theme of the protagonistøs quest [is to] affirm both the vernacular and literary traditionsö (274). This is attained without any apparent tension, while the soundscape Murrayøs protagonist inhabits means much more to him than segregation ó the reality of which is acknowledged but its details are never represented or explored.

This affirmation of education and the vernacular is in sharp contrast with John Jones in the parable õOf the Coming of Johnö in *The Souls of Black Folk*. As if almost indicting the segregation aesthetic while creating one of its salient examples, Du Bois implies that the education of John Jones does dehistoricize him, separates him from his ancestral traditions, and

makes him morbidly obsessed with the politics of the present as he becomes unmoored from the strengths of the past (173-74). After returning to his small Georgia town after years at college and in New York, John is no longer the cheerful fellow he had been when he left town, but is now rather a sullen figure so focused on abstract political questions that he cannot appreciate basic human gestures. When his little sister asks him õdoes it make every one ó unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?ö he replies õI am afraid it doesö (174). Education has not only alienated him from the people and idiom of his youth, it has endowed him with a false sense of superiority over them, even as he seeks to improve their social and economic situation. This could be read as an indictment of the sort of thinking that would create such a rift if were not for Du Boisøs investments in education, culture, and a ruling elite (pre-1930s at least). Still, the story is mysterious as it makes the educated, cultured elite look somewhat ridiculous compared to the folk.

This was not an isolated portrayal. A dilemma that kept arising in debates about the representation of African Americans in literature was the question of how to create images of educated African Americans so that they would seem different from educated whites and, relatedly, how to represent lower-class African Americans without indulging in stereotypes about them or without making õThe Raceö look bad. As Gates and Jarrett claim, the goal in these decades was to create the New Negro. But if the New Negro was not simply a dark-skinned white man (as several critics seemed to believe he was), then by what details would he or she be told apart; from what difference would narrative traction be created? And if folk characters were sometimes eccentric and entertaining (if not criminal), how could this be rendered accurately without crossing into the territory of racist propaganda? This is one of the outside pressures on the text, generated by Jim Crow, which Warren would identify as one of the boundaries of the

period of õAfrican American Literature.ö Such anxiety was expressed about jazz and the blues as well. But what of the writers who said, in effect, let us step back from such metonymic hysteria and appreciate the diversity in our communities?

In 1926 *Crisis* sent out a questionnaire asking prominent literary figures seven questions about the state of African American (Negro) literature. The introduction and questionnaire are unsigned, but from the context it can be discerned that it was probably written by Du Bois[19]. Several respondents (mostly white respondents) expressed exasperation with question number three, which asked:

> Can publishers be criticized for refusing to handle novels that portray Negroes of education and accomplishment, on the ground that these characters are no different from white men and therefore not interesting? (Gates and Jarrett 190)

H.L. Mencken replied: õI know of no publisher who sets up any such doctrine. The objection is to Negro characters who are really only white men, i.e., Negro characters who are falseö (191). White NAACP activist Mary W. Ovington responded õPublishers will take books dealing with the educated Negro if he can be written of without our continually seeing his diploma sticking out of his pocket[20]ö (192). Alfred A. Knopf wrote cryptically õThis question seems to me to be senselessö (195). Benjamin Brawley wrote that publishers õare engaged in a business and not in a missionary enterpriseö (197). Charles Chessnut, creator of the trickster-hero Uncle Julius, replied õEducation and accomplishment do not of themselves necessarily make people interesting ó we all know dull people who are highly culturedö (203). Sinclair Lewis offered a statement with

[19] For example, the anonymous introducer refers the stories of Octavus Roy Cohen, written in a style reminiscent of a minstrel aesthetic, as õmonstrosities.ö In õCriteria of Negro Artö Du Bois describes Cohenøs stories as õmonstrositiesö (259). Several of the respondents address a õyouö in a way that implies they know who the õyouö happened to be.

[20] Ellison perhaps signifies on this statement in *Invisible Man*: the protagonistøs diploma stays in his briefcase from the first chapter until the last, when he must burn it for light underground.

much to unpack at the end, which seems to foreshadow his brilliant employment of the segregation aesthetic to critique housing discrimination and restrictive covenants in his 1947 novel about the construct of race, *Kingsblood Royal*:

> Of this alone I am sure ó you cannot, all of you, go on repeating the same novel (however important, how poignant, however magnificently dramatic) about the well-bred, literate, and delightful Negro intellectual finding himself or herself blocked by the groundless and infuriating manner of superiority assumed by white men frequently less white than people technically known as Negroes. (196)

This question of how to portray an educated black character in a novel who did not seem like just another white character in a novel was apparently a major literary question of the time. Lewis also hints at a new trope that attentive readers of *The Great Gatsby*, published the year before the questionnaire would have been aware of: it was not just light-skinned people with some African ancestry who were passing for white, as in so many novels of passing, but people entirely of European ancestry were passing for ÷culturally whiteø as well. It would seem that Lewis perhaps had Fitzgerald in mind in his reply, where he implies that whiteness is not only a construction but a fragile and farcical one, and stories that revolve around its demands, however unjust, are becoming tiresome. There are other opinions in the response to the questionnaire that I did not list here, but I wanted to list these because they seemed to be the most unsentimental and do not aim for political correctness (such as Vachel Lindsayøs) or humor (Jessie Fausetøs) and seem to have reflected widely dispersed opinions about the state of mainstream African American fiction.

On the other hand, Rudolph Fisher, who had been valedictorian at Brown University in 1919 and earned his M.D. from Howard in 1924 had little interest, at first, in representing educated characters. Fisher is a forerunner of the tradition I am trying to identify. Carl Van

Vechten replied to the *Crisis* questionnaire: õThank God, it [sensitivity about portraying lower-class African Americans] has not yet harmed Rudolph Fisherö (191)! Van Vechten also notes that õPlenty of colored folks deplore the fact that Fisher has written stories like ÷Ringtailø and ÷High Yaller[21]øö (191). A year earlier, in his essay õUncle Tomøs Mansionö (a review of *The New Negro),* Van Vechten had written that õDr. Fisher, however, has had the courage to treat his subject with the same objectivity that he might if he were dealing with Australians or Hindus. It is not likely that his work, for some time to come, at least, will be widely popular among members of his own race[22]ö (224). Van Vechten was prescient and knew what the black middle class market wanted.

Fisher was an accomplished physician and medical researcher, and eventually had a private medical practice in Queens, New York, freeing him from the need to rely on book sales or patronage. Thus, he had comparatively more freedom to explore different corners of African American life and cultural legacies. In his first novel *The Walls of Jericho* (1928) he features an educated protagonist and adopts some of the themes of the segregation aesthetic. He changes direction dramatically with his next and final novel, *The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem* (1932). This novel features characters that span the entirety of society, from the formidable Dr. Archer and the Harvard-educated statistician-mystic and African prince, NøGana Frimbo, to numbers runners and middle class business people, and the memorable Bubber Brown, a comic figure but a sincere holder of folk superstitions and beliefs. The social strata of Fisherøs Harlem are no less diverse than that of Balzacøs Paris. Fisher seems to revel in the

[21] õHigh Yaller,ö despite the general sense in the historical record that the middle class black intelligentsia tended to disapprove of it, first appeared in *Crisis* and went on to win the Spingarn Medal. The history of these politico-aesthetic developments is winding and complex. Tastes and ideologies sometimes contradict and/or overlap.

[22] Hurston wrote to Dorothy West in 1934: õIød love to be in the issue [of *Challenge*] with R. Fisher. He is greater than the Negroes rate him generally. That is because he is too honest to pander to our inferiority complex and write ÷raceø propagandaö (Kaplan 297).

diverse voices of the community. At no time does the story strive to make a political point or contest segregation.

*The Conjure-Man Dies* is an early example of fiction by an African American in which segregation is not represented at all. None of the major characters are white (there is one unimportant white police officer), yet diverse characters from all walks of Harlem life appear. The novel does not fit easily into Warrenøs dichotomy of works that either say *'But for the presence of the very injustice that I decry, I would not be standing here before you'* or strive for the career of a classic. Like Murray would later theorize, Fisher figured out that the way out of the representational traps created by segregation is through other genres that had been underemployed by black writers. Indeed, despite the tight plotting of detective fiction and the loose plotting of the picaresque, Murray understands the genres, in *The Hero and the Blues*, as being closely related as both employ what he calls the slapstick protagonist (101). *The Conjure-Man Dies* is a tightly plotted murder mystery with an unexpected twist in the middle, but beyond that, beyond the conventions of genre, it seems to be more about Harlem ó an elaborate murder mystery designed to pay tribute to an array of Harlem characters and voices ó and it was through the detective genre that Fisher was able to do this.

Fisher was also tuned in to jazz and the blues and understood the way it both reflected and helped form the rhythms of urban life. As *Invisible Man* will do two decades later, *The Conjure-Man Dies* opens with a recording by Louis Armstrong: õIøll Be Glad When Youøre Dead You Rascal Youö[23]. It also closes with that song. Like Hurston, Ellison, and Murray,

[23] A blue-bordered handkerchief is a crucial clue in the murder mystery at the heart of *The Conjure-Man Dies*. Ellison superfluously includes a blue-bordered handkerchief in *Invisible Man* (137). Pascal Covici, publisher of Ellisonøs friend Saul Bellow, also published *The Conjure-Man Dies*. It seems to me that Fisherøs õConjure-Man,ö NøGana Frimbo, is most likely the primary model for Bellowøs King Dahfu in *Henderson the Rain King* (1958). Out of step with protest fiction of the 1930s, Fisherøs influence seems to reappear in the 1950s.

secular vernacular music was to become a central metaphor for Fisher as he attempted to portray black life as he understood it: complicated, multi-faceted, richly heteroglossic, and not actually dominated by segregation.

Fisherøs short story õCommon Meterö (1930) is a significant milestone in the preliminary history of the alternative tradition I am attempting to identify. It takes place in ballroom almost identical to Harlemøs Savoy and features a battle of big bands. The bandleaders are vying for the affection of the ballroomøs new hostess, who will present the winner with an award. The villain has his men slice the skins of the drums of the heroøs band, thus rendering them useless in the battle. As a result the hostess, who favors the hero bandleader whose drums have been sabotaged, suggests that he should play the blues as a shout (Fisher, *The City of Refuge* 182). The band proceeds to play õSt. Louis Bluesö in the manner of a shout, a musical form dating back to slavery[24], and the band members stomp their feet to keep the beat. õIt was not a mere sound,ö the narrator explains, õit was a vibrant throb that took hold of the crowd and rocked itö (182). The sound transports the audience to an alternative world ó a world they share through previous knowledge of similar sounds:

> They had been rocked thus before, this multitude. Two hundred years ago they had swayed to that same slow fateful measure, lifting their lamentations to heaven, pounding the earth with their feet, seeking the mercy of a new God through the medium of an old rhythm, zoom-zoom. [í ] The rhythm persisted, the unfaltering common meter of the blues, but the bluesness itself, the sorrow, the despair, began to give way to hope. [í ] The deep and regular impulses now vibrated like a nearing thunder, a mighty, inescapable, all-embracing dominance, stressed by the contrast of

[24] In her 1934 essay õShoutingö Hurston calls the shout an õemotional explosionö that features õfoot-patting or hand-clapping that imitates very closely the tom-tomö (*Folklore* 851).

> wind tone; an all-pervading atmosphere through which soared wild-winged birds.[25] (182-83)

The audience here is õinö music ó a concept I am adapting from the philosopher Günther Anders and which will be discussed in my chapter on Ellison and will be important to aspects of my readings of the texts in question going forward. Music has not entered them; they have gone to it, to another place, an alternative if temporary world. The allusion to slavery and to time prior to slavery underscores the commonality of the sonic experience. Adopting a language of sublime totality (õall-embracing dominance,ö õall-pervading atmosphereö) the narrator wishes to emphasize the somewhere-elseness of the experience. Like Ellison and Murray would explain decades later, Fisher understands that the feeling of being blue is undermined by the form and feeling of blues music.

And yet, there is something contrived about the story. The sublime transport through the form of the shout, accentuated by the stomping in lieu of drumming, would not have occurred but for the sabotage of the drum skins. Murray explains as much, and why he did not care for the story, in a 1991 letter to the scholar Camille Pierre Laurent, then at the University of Nice. Murray was writing to Laurent to thank him for his hospitality on a visit to France in 1990 and to comment on a book proposal for õBlues and Jazz in American Fictionö that Laurent had given him. In one of the very few letters to someone other than Ralph Ellison that Murray preserved, he writes to Laurent: õAs for the Rudolph Fisher account of the battle of the bands, I donøt think it is useful at all. It does not really capture the atmosphere of the time and placeí .And certainly

[25] Hurstonøs 1928 essay õHow It Feels To Be Colored Meö features a description of the impact of jazz not on a crowd but on herself: õI dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head, I hurl it true to the mark *yeeeooww!* I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow, and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drumö (*Folklore* 828). By 1950 she would disown this metaphor, calling õridiculousö the idea that õUnder a superficial layer of western culture, the jungle drums throb in our veinsö (953). In any case, Hurstonøs description of the musicøs effect from 1928 seems more like a homage to Whitman than anything else, and more so than Fisherøs will in 1930. David Yaffeøs *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing* (2005) begins by quoting a parody of this kind of poetic description of jazz: Donald Barthelmeøs õKing of Jazzö (1).

bands did not try to cheat in the manner that the story suggestsö (Murray, Letter to Laurent 1). The habitation in an ancestral communal sound and the attendant transport that occurs among the musicians and audience only occurs because of the slashing of the drumøs skin, an action which for Murray is a contrivance that unsuspended his disbelief. Indeed, the story is far from Fisherøs best work. It romanticizes and simplifies the musicians as well as their interactions, procedures, and desires, while rendering them cartoonish. For Murray, such transport and feeling as occurs via the contrived slashing of the drum could occur via contemporary musical forms, not those that seek to conjure a folk memory in such a strained manner. Murray does not say so in the letter, but he must have been bothered by the dehistoricizing of the blues in õCommon Meter.ö The blues did not exist in 1730 or 930, as the narrator suggests. In his book *Stomping the Blues* and elsewhere, Murray emphasizes the historicity of the blues, its historical grounding in Reconstruction and after (even if it built on attitudes of resilience that developed during slavery), and its parallel development with the locomotive and in onomatopoeic imitation of the sounds of the locomotive.

In any case, Fisherøs story is an important, if not entirely successful early example of the tradition I am trying to identify ó in which õsomething different, something moreö (to paraphrase the original title of Murrayøs essay on James Baldwin) is found in aural phenomena than had previously been thought ó indeed, another world might reside there, a world that can be ventured into through hearing. Fisherøs story also clearly anticipates Ann Petryøs story õSolo on the Drums,ö which will be examined at length in my chapter on Ellison for its probable influence on him. Had Fisher lived and kept writing (he died at 37), African American literary history might be very different today. As part of the post-segregation trend of the rediscovery of fiction that did not employ the segregation aesthetic (which will be explored in detail below), õCommon Meterö

was republished in the anthology *Black Voices* in 1968. In 1971, two years after *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was reissued by Negro Universities Press, *The Conjure-Man Dies* was reissued by the Arno Press after having been out of print for thirty-nine years. Like Hurston, Ellison, and Murray, Fisher, along with other early musically inflected writers such as Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Jean Toomer, engaged in a project that sought to capture the vibrant diversity of African American oral expression and aural engagement while at the same time creating literature that aimed for more than exposing the cruelty of segregation.

The alternative mode of literary expression that I will explore here has five connected salient features 1) the representation of sound (especially locally idiomatic secular music, especially the blues and jazz) in African American communities as being critical to the formation of subjectivity and representation of structures of feeling and shared experience 2) the obfuscation of de jure segregation and, to a lesser extent, Jim Crow 3) resistance to the obscured Jim Crow system/white supremacy in general through the representation of assertive black characters and resistance to white domination (as opposed to moralization or complaint about Jim Crow practices) and 4) resistance to the theories and opinions of black middle class cultural mandarins through the combined representation of the vernacular through modernist literary form combined with declining to represent segregation as it had conventionally been done in realist and later naturalist forms, especially from the 1890s-1940s 5) an attempt at racial conciliation; an extension, an offer to metaphorically partake in the experiences described in the fiction through describing or mapping the positionality for listening. When read as such, this fiction becomes a lesson in hearkening. My goal is to expand the understanding of literature by African Americans through a close reading of how various portrayals of soundscapes function; how aurality, orality, and black music are situated within fictive worlds in which racial

oppression is real but its workaday details obscured, and what social, political, and critical overtones and interventions are thereby suggested.

To simplify my argument while recapitulating some of what has been covered above: if cultural elites of the black upper middle class circa 1920 formed the market for segregation fiction, while distrusting images of lower class black life in vernacular musical expressions (early jazz, the blues), and at the same time sought to base a foundation of black cultural glory (i.e., respect from the white world) on orchestrations of Negro spirituals, then those of a subsequent generation and from a lower class (perhaps a õblues-collarö) background sought to downplay the importance of segregation in black life, did not shrink from vernacular traditions, and valorized vernacular music over the politically-inspired re-imaginings of the spirituals. W.E.B. Du Bois exemplifies the former: he wrote paradigmatic examples of segregation fiction (e.g., his 1927 novel *Dark Princess*), promoted and inflected his work with academicized versions spirituals (in *The Souls of Black Folk*), and had enormous anxiety about the representation of black vernacular cultures. Hurston and Albert Murray exemplify the latter, both coming from poor yet strong black communities (Eatonville, Florida and Magazine Point, Alabama), suspicious about the claims of Jim Crowøs totalizing dominance, and immersed in a soundscape that they hoped to render into modernist literary form. Ellison is closely related.

Du Bois, for instance, loved and appreciated sacred black musical creations, and included their transcriptions in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois is an important, complicated, in some ways contradictory figure in this story. From different perspectives he is both ancestor and antagonist. The Du Bois of 1903 appears in many ways to be the forerunner of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray. The Du Bois of the 1920s and beyond seems like their antithesis. Murrayøs caustic, occasionally hilarious, somewhat over the top disdain for Du Bois is well known among scholars

who knew him. A Tuskegee alumnus with loyalty (though not blind loyalty) to Booker T. Washington, and an Air Force officer, Murray could not abide what he felt were the anti-U.S. positions of the later Du Bois, from circa 1940 through his death. Hurston sought Du Boisøs help early in her career but later came to refer to him as õDr. Dubiousö and disliked his aristocratic mannerisms and equivocating ways (Kaplan 17). But perhaps her most incisive critique of Du Bois came in her 1934 essay õSpirituals and Neo-Spirituals,ö particularly with the following statement directly confronting *The Souls of Black Folk*: õThe idea that the whole body of spirituals are ÷sorrow songs[26]ø is ridiculousö (*Folklore* 870). What Du Bois attempted in *The Souls of Black Folk* may represent, from one point of view, a tradition that died and did not develop or from another, the seed of one that lay dormant for decades before flowering. In any case, perhaps his middle class Yankee background made him blind to something in Southern black folk culture that made Hurston recoil: that the spirituals were not a cultural-political football, or a form of cultural capital, while their authenticity, in Hurstonøs opinion, shriveled when subjected to the kind of polishing and re-packaging (through the arrangements of Harry T. Burleigh; through Fisk Jubilee singers and others) that Du Bois favored (871-3). Hurston claimed õThere has never been a presentation of genuine Negro spirituals to any audience anywhereö (870). The problem as Hurston sees it is not just with the texts themselves, but with their interpretation.

Eric Sundquist, in his 1993 book *To Wake the Nations: Race in The Making of American Literature*, explores the subtleties of the contrasts Du Bois offers between the transcribed music and his own prose. Sundquist claims that õThe Sorrow Songsö in *The Souls of Black Folk* õdisplays the means of Du Boisøs deliberate immersion in the world of the ancestors, his mastery

[26] According to Du Bois, the õSorrow Songsö were sung by those who õwere weary at heartö (180). This contradicted Hurstonøs own experience and offended her sensibility.

of a language capable of creating a pathway to Africa and establishing the coherence of African American culture as a set of values and expressions that were not annihilated by slavery but rather nurtured and sustained by itö (527). Du Bois seems to fluctuate here between ancestor and antagonist, as indeed he is both for Hurston, Ellison, and Murray. And yet in the years and decades that followed, following the formulations of Gates and Jarrett, the proliferation of the spirituals seems to have paradoxically evolved parallel to a dehistoricized New Negro: as if a freeze-dried, somewhat mythical antebellum black folk culture became an ideal while actual black folk culture (and its contemporaneous music), derived from that antebellum culture, became something to be ashamed of and avoided in bourgeois cultural circles. A certain connection seems to have been established between the polished spirituals and the segregations aesthetic: both were engines of pleading for equality.

Sundquist compellingly claims that Du Boisøs õown intellectual labor links his cultural work, not in comparison but in tribute to the cruel toil of the slave generationsí .[I]n doing so, he recovers, preserves, and celebrates both the killing labor in cotton and rice fields and the creative labor in song makingö (539). And yet, as admirable as this is, it appears undercut by other aspects of the text, particularly õOf the Coming of Johnö: the tragic story of John Jones, alienated from black music and culture. This story presents interpretive conundrums. Jones, a southerner, whose experience in higher education has made him dour and edgy, yearns for high culture, which he associates with the music of Richard Wagner. Being thrown out of a concert of Wagnerøs music in New York for being black is a traumatic experience for him. It also costs him a significant sum (five dollars, circa 1903), which, incredibly, he does not attempt to recuperate (170-2). The didactic tale is meant to emphasize how unfair segregation is, while also suggesting, elsewhere, by the presence of the transcribed spirituals, that fine art music is not only

composed by whites and played in New Yorkøs concert halls. It is impossible to imagine such a wretched time being had by a character created by Hurston, Ellison, or Murray, particularly because it hard to imagine any of their characters paying top dollar to hear Wagnerøs music performed. John Jones runs from African American folk culture and becomes frustrated, by Jim Crowøs presence even in the north, in his desire for what he imagines to be European high culture. Hurston, Ellison, and Murray attained education but their education did not make them embarrassed by black folk culture ó on the contrary, it made them extend Du Boisøs project in a way that John Jones could not have imagined and Du Bois did not do himself. (His *Dark Princess* will be discussed below.) Formally fascinating, *The Souls of Black Folk* may be closely related to other black cultural forms such as the patchwork quilt, the remix, sampling, and so on, but õOf the Coming of Johnö would appear to disqualify it from being a part of the next generation of works that sought for a fictive space beyond segregation, which I am trying to identify. Hurston went about her project in another way by reaching back into aural and oral traditions that dated back to slavery, as well as those vernacular traditions practiced in the current day by those whose ancestors benefitted little from Emancipation, in order to create literary works that were not pre-determined by the need to counter-state segregation, but rather aimed to reflect a lives that had other dimensions than the protestation of public policy and opinion.

In *Invisible Man*, the protagonist is being groomed to become the sort of black cultural elite wracked with anxiety about the performance of black stereotypes; about eating a pork chop in front of whites, for instance. His rediscovery of his vernacular identity and the slow unraveling of its mysteries in relation to his vision of democracy and pluralism in the Epilogue is one of the central themes of the novel. After the encounter with the representative of the folk tradition (Peter Wheatstraw) the outset of chapter nine, the protagonistøs feelings reflect his

liminal state between outlooks: õGod damn, I thought, theyøre a hell of a people! And I didnøt know whether it was pride or disgust that suddenly flashed over meö (177). His inability to accurately name his feeling results from being attracted to the jolly good cheer and inventive wordplay of the Harlem cart pusher while knowing that that path inexorably leads away from the staid State College for Negroes to which he still hopes to return to at that point in the narrative. Though the protagonist later receives a monetary settlement from Liberty Paints, he does not use it to seek out allegedly high culture.

Hurston and Murray do not explore this particular ambiguity in the same way. In 1980, the title of Stanley Crouchøs landmark essay on Murrayøs work in the *Village Voice* captured the subtraction of anxiety from discourse about black vernacular cultures and their lower class origins barely separated from slavery, with the celebration of those cultures at an epicenter of global culture. Crouch titled his essay õChitlins at the Waldorf: The Work of Albert Murray.ö The phrase came from a 1952 letter that Ellison wrote to Murray, in which Ellison commends Murray for being willing, hypothetically, to eat chitlins at the Waldorf Astoria hotel (Callahan and Murray 29). (Ellison added, õand I would too.ö) Vernacular, idiomatic comfort, refracted through a soundscape of a people long-subjected to enforced orality, is a feature that appears to be tied to the elision of segregation in the fiction of several of those writers who emerged from such communities and along the way became enamored with literature, particularly modernist literature, which provided the forms and techniques to mythologize the past in a way that memorialized it, rather than trying to render it along the conventions of realism or naturalism.

## III. Cultural Recovery Projects From Hurston Through Toni Morrison

With the idea of cultural recovery in mind, it will be valuable to examine Toni Morrisonøs 1974 essay õRediscovering Black History.ö This essay, published in the *New York Times*, is her reflection on working as press editor of *The Black Book*, an anthology of documents relating aspects of the African American experience that were, by the early 1970s, thought to be slipping away. In this essay she perfectly illustrates many issues and attitudes of the time regarding the preservation of black history, which was in turmoil in the wake of the general turmoil in society, which included desegregation and the rise and fall of black power movements. Much of what she says regarding the creation of *The Black Book* could serve as a précis for the element of my argument that seeks to contextualize the intellectual climate of desegregation, into which works that presaged that climate reemerged.[27]

Morrison opens the essay with a discussion of ornamental statues depicting black jockeys in a Chicago hotel that hosted the 1963 NAACP convention. The NAACP arranged to have the lawn jockeys removed prior to the convention. Morrison notes that many African Americans did not necessarily consider these statues to be racist, as they first and foremost commemorated the substantial achievements of black jockeys in the world of horse racing circa 1900. She resented being told what was and what was not racist by elites of the NAACP, many of whom were white. By the early 1970s, she is keen to recover a point of view on race in the United States ó a non-

[27] Morrisonøs fiction is of course related to the works I am exploring as well, but I am focusing on a group that I see as the earliest practitioners (during segregation) of the tradition I am trying to identify (Hurston, Ellison, Murray), along with Everett who seems to have commented on them specifically. Morrison, circa 1974, was in contact with Ellison. She convinced him to write the foreword to another book for which she was the press editor, Leon Forrestøs first novel *There is a Tree More Ancient Than Eden* (Rampersad 487). She was also reading Murray, and wrote about two of his works in the *New York Times Book Review* in previous years. In short, Morrison was not only aware of the climate of thought of Ellison and Murray (and certainly of their friend and protégé, Forrest) but was an equally important figure in that climate. Her fiction would be an integral part of this project if it the project were to be greatly expanded and its focus broadened to the next phase of African American literary aesthetics, which I argue grew out of what Hurston, Ellison, and Murray pioneered.

elite and therefore obscured point of view ó that could appreciate the lawn jockeys (and *Amos and Andy*, and so on) and still be pro-black. A new regime of interpretation of the tropes of African American representation had been developed and imposed from the top down, and Morrison was eager to rescue previous modes of interpretation from the clutches of patronizing elites. I am not making the argument that lawn jockeys or *Amos and Andy* can be redeemed. The elite opinion Morrison resented won the day on those scores. But her point was that another mode of interpretation, another worldview existed and must be memorialized and understood for a properly contextualized understanding of history and heritage. Morrison writes:

> The point is not to soak in some warm bath of nostalgia about the good old days ó there were none! ó but to recognize and rescue those qualities of resistance, excellence, and integrity that were so much a part of our past and so useful to us and to the generations of blacks now growing up. í .For larger and larger numbers of black people, this sense of loss has grown, and the deeper the conviction that something valuable is slipping away from us, the more necessary it has become to find some way to hold on to the useful past without blocking off the possibilities of the future. To create something that might last, that would bear witness to the quality and variety of black life before it became the topic of every Ph.D. dissertation and the focal point of all the mindlessness that seems to have joined the smog of Californiaøs movie world. (1, 3 of PDF[28])

Morrison was concerned with images perpetuated by the social sciences (it would not seem that she meant humanities dissertations at that early stage in black studies) on the one hand and the thriving Blaxploitation film genre on the other. Along with the listed editors of *The Black Book* (she was the press editor) Morrisonøs goal was to assemble an array of texts that would reflect the diversity, richness, and positive and negative experiences of black history. Her controlling metaphor was õsoundö:

[28] The way the *New York Times* has digitized and made a PDF of this article is confusing in regard to page numbers.

> Like every other book, it would be confined by a cover and limited to type. Nevertheless, it had to have ó for want of a better word ó a sound, a very special sound. A sound made up of all the elements that distinguished black life (its peculiar brand of irony, oppression, versatility, madness, joy, strength, shame, honor, triumph, grace, and stillness) as well as those qualities that identified it with all mankind (compassion, anger, foolishness, courage, self-deception, and vision). And it must concentrate on life as lived ó not as imagined ó by the people: the anonymous men and women who speak in conventional histories only through their leaders. The people who had always been viewed only as percentages would come alive in ÷The Black Book.ø(3)

It is this idea of sound and soundøs importance as an organizing theme, a phenomenon to be described, a metaphor for experience, and a catalyst for the experiences of characters based on õpeople who had always been viewed only as percentagesö that would initially inform the work of Hurston, Murray, Ellison and others, as part of a strategy for mapping and signifying on all the qualities and elements of life Morrison lists above, bearing witness to aspects black life under the Jim Crow system that were resistant, dynamic, and ensconced within a soundscape that was enmeshed with attitudes of resilience and resistance ó a model that could serve as a post-segregation blueprint as well.[29] Morrisonøs thoughts here reflected numerous goals and concerns of the early 1970s, but were related to earlier, more obscure yet quite similar projects.

Hurston had been thinking about sound in relation to African American culture decades earlier. Daphne A. Brooks has advocated for the recognition of õthe centrality of sound as an epistemic tool in her rich, lively, and diverse career as a cultural workerö (Brooks 617). Brooks is specifically referring to Hurstonøs own recordings for the Works Progress Administration, but the centrality of sound as an epistemic trope is an excellent way to characterize representations of auditory phenomena in most of her major texts.

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[29] To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze, the following idea of whose will be discussed in the first Murray chapter: it was a way to write for a people who were missing and a people to come.

Hurston has figured prominently in the ensuing debate prompted by *What Was African American Literature?*. In the March 2013 *PMLA*, Glenda R. Carpio asks of Kenneth Warren:

> I wonder too what he makes of a writer as slippery as Zora Neale Hurston, whose works do not fit easily into the indexical or instrumental categories that Warren uses. Hurstonøs complicated political views might suggest otherwise. In 1954 she opposed the Supreme Courtøs decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* because she did not see it as a productive way of combatting Jim Crow. Yet her joyous sense of humor and willingness to experiment with form (at the risk of producing uneven results) reveal a writer who did not always fix on Jim Crow, though this exposed her to the scorn of writers like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. [í ] Hurston rejected what she called the ÷sobbing school of Negrohood,ø famously declaring that she did not feel ÷tragically coloredø (827). While such statements were often forms of posturing, Hurston was on to something missing in Warrenøs account of African American literature: a sense of freedom and joy. In the context of Warrenøs arguments it seems impossible to think that African American writers could and did write for pleasure and that African American readers could and did read for beauty, because everything seems to have been funneled through the all-consuming power of Jim Crow. (387)

Such statements by Hurston were indeed õoften forms of posturingö but not always. A polemicist and a provocateur of great panache, she backed up her posturing with her fiction. It will be necessary, in a venue with more space (more space than *PMLA*, that is, here), to look beyond tangential statements and closely read the imaginative texts themselves to ascertain just how segregation and Jim Crow appear or do not appear in the texts. Literary manifestos were an important part of literary production by African Americans in the twentieth century. To some extent, both the formal manifesto and the informal non-fiction statement or interview statement must not necessarily be tethered to the fiction. The imaginative literature of Wright, Hurston, Baldwin, Ellison, and Murray did not always live up to what their writing about fiction called for and valorized. Yet Hurston went far beyond simply declaring herself apart from õthe sobbing school of Negrohood.ö While õthe sobbing school of Negrohoodö is catchy and well-phrased, her

work must not be reduced to such a moment in a polemical essay. The phrase appears in her 1928 essay õHow It Feels To Be Colored Me,ö in which she also offer a more profound idea: that when she sets õher hat at a certain angle and saunter[s] down Seventh Avenueí The cosmic Zora emergesö (*Folklore* 829). In numerous interviews Murray echoes many of the claims made in this essay. There is a strong echo of õthe cosmic Zoraö in õthe Cosmos Murrayö ó Murrayøs term for his eclectic array of interests and influences. Certainly both phrases are related to the idea of cosmopolitanism. In the next paragraph she counter-states Du Boisøs concept of double consciousness, writing õI have no separate feeling about being an American citizen and colored. I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundariesö (829). Again echoing Whitman and perhaps Emerson (as she will do in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*), Hurston reaches not just for pre-segregation black models but omni-American pre-segregation models of both being and writing. Thus, it is a shame that the most useful exchange in the *PMLA* debate revolves around another cherry-picked phrase rather than the entirety of the essay. Warren replied:

> Indeed, *pace* Glenda R. Carpio, Zora Neale Hurston presents no problem for my argument because Hurstonøs complaints about the ÷sobbing school of Negrohoodø and the like exemplify my point that even for authors who insisted on writing ÷without reference to the political or social status of the black raceí the mere insistence was an acknowledgement of the pressureø to write on behalf of their race (13). (404)

But Hurston does present a problem for his argument. I find much to admire in all of Warrenøs works, including his *PMLA* reply, but in this case his argument is too totalizing, and should be interrogated and perhaps adjusted through a deeper engagement with Hurstonøs work. It seems to me that õacknowledgement of the pressureö to write on behalf of their race is different from actually writing on behalf of their race. Pressure to do anything can be

acknowledged without actual action being occasioned by that pressure. And yet Hurstonøs comment about the õsobbing school of Negrohood,ö along with her many other controversy-courting comments, may have indeed been a form of posturing, as Carpio suggests. Or, such statements may not have been a form of posturing and may have sincerely underwritten Hurstonøs aesthetics. In her 1938 essay õArt and Suchö she directly rebukes the form and content of the segregation aesthetic and announces her dissatisfaction with it:

> In literature the first writings have been little more than the putting into writing the sayings of Race Men and Women and champions of ÷Race Consciousness.ø So that what was produced was a self-conscious document lacking in drama, analysis, characterization and the universal oneness necessary to literature. But the idea was not to produce literature ó it was to ÷champion the Race.ø The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments got some pretty hard wear and that sentence ÷You have made the *greatest* progress in so and so many yearsø was all the art in the literature in the purpose of the period. [í ] But one finds on all hands the weakening of race consciousness, impatience with Race Champions and a growing taste for literature as such. (*Folklore* 910-11)

Hurston exaggerates of course, as was her way, but after cutting through her (clearly anti-Du Bois) rhetoric and self-promotion (earlier paragraphs in that anonymous piece praise her work in the third person) it becomes clear that she and Warren share a concern with periodization and both offer periodization schemes. She is also aware of Warrenøs õinstrumentalö and õindexicalö categories, which she identifies by other names in the passage above. She imagines the beginning of the end of the segregation aesthetic approximately in the late 1930s, not altogether inaccurately, with the advent of her own oeuvre. Warren claims that African American Literature continued into the õearly 1970s,ö (*A Reply* 407). But if Hurston did not enjoy reading such works of õRace Consciousnessö and also did not write them, while understanding their instrumental and indexical utility and the social pressures on them, it seems both high-handed and incorrect to place her among such works instead of saying well, perhaps there was another tradition quietly

developing at the same time and outside the framework of the one that encompasses most of the works by African Americans during segregation.

For Hurston by the late 1930s and a few years later for Ellison and Murray, õimpatience with Race Championsö was to merge with new interest in the buried and obscured cultural artifacts of the idiom developed by the former slaves (many of these being artifacts of sound, often tied to assertive resistance) and the extension of a hand across the color line. Ross Posnock, in his book *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (1998), in a chapter on Locke, Hurston, Ellison, and Murray, brilliantly paraphrases Ellison with an admonition against becoming õ[M]arooned in the *ethnos*ö (207). Hurston, Ellison, and Murray took great joy in idiomatic expression, coupled with almost equally intense admiration for the expressions of other ethnic groups. But it is through this genuine pride in expression (rather than a belief in what Ellison, and then Posnock will call õblood magicö) that they avoided becoming marooned in the ethnos.[30]

It is through assertions of black strength coupled with describing for outsiders the positionalities of black listening that they were able to establish a foundation to extend a hand of inter-ethnic friendship and cosmopolitanism rooted in idiomatic variation. At the outset of *Invisible Man*, the protagonist relays how his grandfather wishes he had never given up his gun in Reconstruction. His death-bed words startle the entire family. By the end, in the epilogue, having long since defeated Ras the Destroyer, the protagonist has come to understand what his grandfather meant, perhaps metaphorically regaining the gun while theorizing a post-war

[30] Murray goes a step further, denying the õethnosö entirely. He claimed in numerous instances that culture was not genetic. In a notebook entry (c. 2000), he compares ethnic difference to geographical difference and argues that ethnic difference should be understood in much the same way as geographical difference: õMy so-called blackness should be considered as a matter of idiomatic variation (nuance and sample), much the same as is William Faulknerøs southerness, or Fitzgeraldøs mid-western Ivy Leagueness or Hemingwayøs mid-western internationalism.ö

pluralism designed to resist õtyrant states[31].ö In an initially omitted section of *Dust Tracks on a Road*, later added as an appendix, Hurston wrote (in the midst of World War II), õWhat the world is crying and dying for at this moment is less race consciousnessö (784). Out of idiomatic materials an anti-fascist cosmopolitanism was being developed that could be read in various lights at various times beyond the narrow confines the protest of segregation or its successor, the Black Arts movement. With this in mind, I will now turn to Hurstonøs õHigh John de Conquer,ö which I believe anticipates the suggestion of the Invisible Man that he may õspeak for you.ö

Hurstonøs 1943 article õHigh John de Conquerö (which appeared in *The American Mercury*) sought to introduce non-African American readers to the African American folk hero High John de Conquer, for whom an important Hoodoo root is also named. High John de Conquer was a supernatural character who was thought to help enslaved African Americans in moments of dire need. Hurston portrays him as a hero who worked with sounds, indeed, whose very being was composed of sound. Hurston writes, õHe had come from Africa. He came walking on *waves of sound*. Then he took on flesh after he got hereö (Hurston 923, emphasis added). Eric Sundquist has insightfully and significantly observed that õWhat is most notable about Hurstonøs theory of survivals is that it often dwells especially in the world of the phenomenal rather than the concreteö (Sundquist, *The Hammers of Creation* 69). Entering into this world of the phenomenal, particularly the aural, will be what spells out a critical difference in fictional scenes: entering into sound, into somewhere other than segregated society, if only for the moment, and also, within this sound, being part of an interpretive community. Certainly there are Christian echoes or allusions in the idea of õwalking on wavesö (even of sound) and sound

[31] In *Wrestling with the Left*, Barbara Foley claims that Ellison initially wrote õHitler statesö (339). Like Hurston, his concern was with diagnosing fascism, but he gave in to the post-war tendency to lump fascism and communism together (as did say, Hannah Arendt when she hastily tacked a chapter on Communism onto *The Origins of Totalitarianism*).

becoming flesh, but that does not appear to be the thrust of the article; Christian analogy is not her goal. She is concerned with private, African American sounds (that is, off limits to whites): evocations and proclamations of sounds off limits to whites (until õnow,ö that is, until her article) and power thus derived from them is much closer to her aims than any religious allegory or syncretism. õThe sign of this man,ö she writes of High John, õwas a laugh, and his singing-symbol was a drum-beat. í .It helped the slaves endureö (922). Hurston claims that High John de Conquer would walk õthe sweat-flavored clods of the plantation, crushing out his drum tunes, and giving out secret laughterö (922). Establishing the secretiveness of these sounds, and their total inaccessibility to whites, is crucial for Hurston in this piece: õIt is no accident that High John de Conquer has evaded the ears of white people. They were not supposed to know. You canøt know what folks wonøt tell youö (923). Hurston relays several tales of John tricking õOld Massa,ö and includes one about John leading a group of slaves in search of a song, leading them all over the world, then to Hell, and then up to Heaven, where the group was given õnew and shining instruments to play on. Guitars of gold, and drums, and cymbals and wing-singing instrumentsö (929). Hurston concludes the piece by recognizing the national anxieties that existed during the darkest days of World War II, and asserts that High John de Conquer will now be working on behalf of all Americans just as he once worked for the slaves: õEven if you hair comes yellow, and your eyes are blue, John de Conquer will be working for you just the sameö (931). Hurston concludes on a note that will be echoed at the end of *Invisible Man*: õWhite America,ö Hurston writes, õtake a laugh out of our black mouths, and win! We give you High John de Conquerö (931).

Readers of this unusual piece perhaps would not have been surprised, nine years later, by the somewhat startling ending of *Invisible Man*, in which the narrator suggests to the reader

(who, statistically speaking, was probably white) that he may õspeak for youö on the lower frequencies. The Invisible Man is offering his considerable eloquence as an orator to speak for the equally anonymous reader, just as Hurston invites the reader of her article to õtake a laugh out of our black mouths.ö

Closely tied to the idea of the recovery of a culture of assertiveness and resilience through its phenomenological apprehension of sound is the idea that this culture is not genetic, but shareable. Cultural magnanimity and generosity is a prominent feature in the work of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray. Ellison told Robert Penn Warren, in his interview in Warrenøs *Who Speaks For the Negro*? (1965):

> And with our cultural expressions we have been quite generous. Itøs like the story they tell about Louis Armstrong teaching Bix Beiderbecke certain things about jazz. It was a joyful exchange and that was the way Negro jazzmen acted when I was a kid. They were delighted when anyone liked their music ó especially white Americans ó and their response was, ÷You like this? Well, this is a celebration of something we feel about life and art. You feel it too? Well, all right, weøre here together; let the good times rollø! (346)

Seen from the perspective of this quote, perhaps the narrator of *Invisible Man's* suggestion that he õspeaks for youö derives from the musicians Ellison knew in his youth. Or, perhaps he noticed that same spirit in Hurstonøs article (if indeed he read it). In any event, there is continuity between the attitudes of the jazz musicians of Ellisonøs Oklahoma City youth, Hurstonøs conclusion of õHigh John de Conquer,ö and the famous ending of *Invisible Man*.

To varying degrees Ellison, Murray, and Everett are literary descendants of Hurston. Ellisonøs work bears her strong influence, though he criticized her in print in 1941. Ellison seems to have labored under the anxiety of Hurstonøs influence, which I will examine. Albert Murray claimed (in conversation) to have known and talked with Hurston when she visited his

neighborhood, two miles north of downtown Mobile, Alabama in 1928, when he was twelve. A boy who looks uncannily and unmistakably similar to a twelve-year old Murray appears in a film Hurston shot on that trip, which has been preserved by the Library of Congress and for a time was on Youtube[32]. Murray claimed (alas, in conversation) to have read Hurstonøs books as they came out, but did not keep them and did not remember the details of them. (Everett was too young to have had a personal connection to Hurston, but his irreverence and humor are similar to hers.) That Murray and Ellison scarcely mention Hurston is curious. She is clearly their forerunner in many ways. Ellison may have had a problem giving credit to female writers. Murray had no such problem, often mentioning his debts to Constance Rourke and Edna St. Vincent Millay. The critic R.W.B. Lewis, close mutual friend of Ellison and Murray (and one of the most astute early critics of *Invisible Man*), was surprised by Ellisonøs lack of appreciation of Hurston. Arnold Rampersad claims, quoting Lewis, õThe fact that Ralph ridiculed the folk comedy of Zora Neale Hurston puzzled Lewis, because ÷I wouldøve thought they were made to get alongø (Rampersad 452). She pioneered the aesthetic direction that Ellison was to pursue, and perhaps that resulted in some type of formal evasion or repression, or anxiety of influence.

õHigh John de Conquerö effectively provides something like a condensed blueprint for the literary tradition I will try to describe and explore. õHigh John de Conquerö contains abundant tropes of sound, it notes that the sound is private and restricted to African American audibility and understanding, and it combines this with varying moments of resistance to white

[32] After studying this film with care, my personal conclusion is that it is much more likely to be Murray in the film than it is to be someone else. The boy who I would argue is almost certainly Murray appears from 4:19-4:24 and his face is very clear. The resemblance of the boy to the next known photograph of Murray, his 1939 Tuskegee yearbook photo, is undeniably very close. It could not have been Murrayøs half-brother (a baby at the time), nor could it have been a first or second cousin. (Cudjo Lewis, one of the last captive Africans brought to the United States, whom Murray knew when growing up and whom Murray and Hurston both wrote about, is also in the film, from 0:02-0:41.)

hegemony, while at the end, after relaying non-annotated elements of African American folk culture, extends a hand of friendship to whites and others.

Katrina Hazzard-Donald has claimed in her book *Mojo Workin': The Old African American Hoodoo System* (2013) that õthe sacred High John the Conquer mythö offers a õvision of hope, resistance, rebellion, and triumph that had no stronger expression in Hoodooö (68). Like Hurston, Hazzard-Donald is an anthropologist who has been initiated into Hoodoo. It is thus significant that she would call the myth õsacred,ö and likewise significant that Hurston would offer up this sacred myth to white Americans through the pages of *The American Mercury*, which by 1943 was no longer edited by its founder H.L. Mencken, but was associated with him (as he still contributed to it).

Hazzard-Donald has established that the High John de Conquer root is the *Ipomena jalapa* root and is native to the Xalapa-Xico region of Veracruz, Mexico (69). After wondering why and how this Mexican root became such an important part of African American southern folk culture, she discovered, and speculates convincingly, that High John de Conquer (the folk character) may thus be based upon Gaspar Yanga, the Afro-Mexican leader of a slave rebellion against the Spanish in 1570 (75). The root, in turn, may be named for Yanga, as Yanga and the root came from the same region of Mexico. She then establishes that the story may have entered the southern United States through the importation of Afro-Mexican slaves into New Orleans in the late eighteenth century (79). This would explain, though Hazzard-Donald does not say so, why the appellation is õConquerö and not õConquer*er*.ö õConquer,ö she lets the reader surmise, is a corruption of Yanga. Later, Hazzard-Donald notes, stories of õJuan el Conquistadorö developed in Afro-Latin communities outside of Mexico, but it would seem to make sense that the linguistic path went from õYangaö to õConquerö to õConquistador,ö since õthe Conquerö

sounds so unusual in English. From everything known about Hurston, Ellison, and Murray, it can be safely surmised that they would have been glad to know of this historical lineage between Gaspar Yanga and High John de Conquer ó the root and folk character.

And yet, intertwined with their approval of past acts of resistance, rebellion, heroism and defiance, is their pluralism. Hurston offers High John de Conquer to all Americans, Ellison offers to speak for õyouö while not intruding on anotherøs diversity, Murrayøs Omni-American culture is õincontestably mullatoö and available to all; indeed all participate in it and are influenced by it one way or another. Posnock repeats a phrase by Alain Locke that nicely encapsulates this point of view: õreciprocity rather than identityö (191). But since there must be something to reciprocate, history must be recovered (as the spirituals as rendered in the concert hall did not feel right to Hurston and secular forms had more immediacy for her, Ellison, and Murray). And the history of a group with a history of enforced orality was recovered through sound, while the striking issue of the present was undermined through a refusal to represent it particularly because it could tip over into õidentity.ö Posnock writes:

> í this orgy of ownership [ethnic ownership over culture, of many, from the KKK to Horace Kallen] hardly characterizes the whole of American modernist thinking about race and culture. At least one alternative tradition has provided a sustained counterpoint of critique directed at cultural pluralism. Starting with Du Boisøs ÷kingdom of cultureø (1903), including Deweyøs dissent from Kallen (1915-1916) and Lockeøs rejection of ÷cultural purismø and theorizing of cosmopolitanism in the twenties and thirties, this lineage creatively appropriates an antiseparatist Jamesian pluralism whose byword is ÷reciprocity rather than identityø (Locke *Philosophy* 101). Ellison and Murray drew on this rich counter-tradition, and they, in turn, have influenced contemporary skepticism of racial/ethnic absolutism. (207-8)

Such skepticism is a critical feature of the school of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray. That it derives, in Posnockøs genealogy from Du Bois (whom they all read, if they didnøt agree with him

on each and every point), John Dewey (whom Murray read assiduously), and Alain Locke (whom they all read and who published Hurston and Fisher in *The New Negro*) speaks to the dual strength of its foundation, folk and educated. (It is unclear if Hurston, Ellison, or Murray ever read Randolph Bourne.) Posnockøs quote above might also shed new light on Ellisonøs short story õIn a Strange Countryö (to be discussed below).

Focusing on works by Hurston, Ellison, Murray, and Everett, I will explore the contours of this alternative tradition in African American literary history and investigate the epistemological allure of the representation of sound within African American communities and in the narratives of African American protagonists. By õsoundö I mean music, songs, speech (from barber shop banter to sermons), natural sounds and industrial sounds (e.g., train whistles) listened to and understood through an African American folk positionality: the aural contexts, or soundscape of a what was in the early twentieth century still largely an oral culture. Certain industrial noises, such as train whistles, were also manipulated by humans into crude musical forms, thus becoming musical instruments. I understand the folk to mean the poor and working class without multi-generational educational opportunities. Hurston, Ellison, and Murray were first-generation college-attendees. All sought to bear witness to social worlds and structures of feeling that they did not feel adequately described in the novels of middle class African Americans such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Walter White, and Charles Chessnut, or in the work of Richard Wright, who was from a similarly impoverished socio-economic background but chose a different mode of literary expression. As black literacy was generally forbidden under slavery and systematically and institutionally under-encouraged following emancipation, the soundscapeøs importance must be recognized. Recognition of the soundscapeøs central importance to gleaning an image of the world and oneøs place in it is among the literary goals of

the writers whose work I will interpret here. This soundscape forms an aesthetic scaffolding within works that resist, subvert, or challenge conventional representations of segregation in literary works by African Americans. Hurston, Ellison, Murray and Everett are not the only writers who moved in this direction. Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Jean Toomer, and Ann Petry, followed to varying degrees by James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Leon Forrest, Ishmael Reed, Michael Harper, Thulani Davis, and August Wilson, to varying degrees, and others, are part of the larger narrative of the development of a black ludic aesthetic. I will discuss some of these writers and their works in the course of my exploration here, but the texts of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray that I will examine contain exemplary instances of the aesthetic features I am trying to describe and contextualize, and seem to comprise a core around which a larger discussion could possibly be built in the future. In the process of my project I hope to also shed light on the under-commented upon influence of Hurston on Ellison and Murray. Percival Everettøs relevance to this study is through his choosing to begin his career with a commentary on this tradition that preceded him and a commentary on the fictional representation of life under de jure segregation, which he did not experience as an adult, contrasted with life under desegregation and consequent differences of aesthetic approach.

I will identify and explore this alternative tradition that developed partially as counterstatement to the õcorporate enterpriseö of African American literature but also, I believe, would have developed without it, as the desire to bear witness to the affirmative elements of culture developed by African slaves in the United States would have obtained on its own as that culture receded into the mists of time, due to both deaths of its members and the march of modernity. It also appears as if several writers realized that desegregation would hasten this process. Thus, Hurston opposed desegregation. Ellison and Murray favored it while

understanding that there could be a tradeoff. In a 1997 interview Albert Murray explained much of what has been said above (almost paraphrasing Hurstonøs quote above from õArt and Suchö) and suggests what will be discussed as this study proceeds:

> We [Ellison and I] could deal with the idiomatic particulars in terms of the whole world of literature that we knew aboutí .We didn't think that other writers had exploited all the universal possibilities in our idiom ó what I call the blues idiom. They were simply interested in civil rights and justice and injustice and so forth. If I were that interested in that I would have been a lawyer. But I was trying to make images out of this experience which show what our take on human life is. Now that's what the musicians did ó that's why we dominate the world of music[33]. It's not because the music fights a battle of civil rights. It simply seduces people into wanting to move and sound like us, like the idiom that we grew up in. (Murray, õInterview with Susan Pageö)

õThe whole world of literatureö Murray refers to literally means the whole of world literature, but also specifically the modernist writers that had such a strong influence on him and Ellison. Kenneth Warren has claimed that õIf *Invisible Man* has been at all successful in helping to undermine the authority of white paternalism, it presumably has done so not by marshalling the stylistic resources of novelistic form but rather by appropriating the resources of black musicö (*So Black and Blue* 26). His use of õifö and õpresumablyö speaks to the tentative nature of the claim, as it is a bold claim. I would add that the noveløs success has to do with the stylistic resources of black music and high modernism on a scale that had not been attempted before. As Murray claims above, black music is so dominant because it often adequately expresses õa take on human lifeö that much of literature composed in the segregation aesthetic was not able to achieve. For Ellison, as for Murray, the grim, relentless logic of naturalism was incompatible

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[33] Music was of immense importance to Murray, but as a novelist who infused music into his work intermedially, he ultimately champions the power of fiction. In his *The Hero and the Blues*, Murray is keen to differentiate music from fiction. He writes õ[Fiction] can also function as an activating force which at times may be capable of even greater range and infinitely more evocative precision than musicö (10).

with the swing in the music, thus partially leading to experimentations with modernist form, which in some senses, such as Warrenøs claim above, becomes subsumed in the musical tropes.

## IV. The Hurston-Ellison-Murray Continuum of Vernacular Modernism

Modernism, broadly defined, is the means through which sound met writing in Hurston, Ellison, Murray, and Everett. It is the aesthetic orientation that guides their respective approaches. Michael Northøs influential *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Literature* (1998) demonstrated how important African American culture was to canonical modernists. Building on the research of North, as well on insights by Ellison and Murray, Kevin Young has convincingly demonstrated in his essay õThe Black Mask of Modernismö that considerable formal and philosophical overlap exists between early blues artists and canonical modernists. Ellison and Murray, as young readers at Tuskegee Institute, recognized and appreciated numerous aspects of modernist practice. (For instance, Ellison famously noticed that Eliotøs pastiche in *The Waste Land* was analogous to Louis Armstrongøs use of musical quotation.) The line of influence went from African American culture to white modernists such as Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and Stein, and then flowed back the other way to Ellison and Murray. Critics such as Leigh Ann Duck, Edward Pavli , David Kadlec, and Phillipp Schweighauser among others have noted the modernistic elements in Hurstonøs work.[34] Speaking very generally, if realism and naturalism tended to be the formal vehicles for the largely middle-class segregation fiction aesthetic, then modernism was a vehicle for its õblues-collarö

[34] Pavli has claimed that Hurstonøs õCharacteristics of Negro Expressionö õhas never been adequately recognized as a crucial modernist theoretical textö (32).

alternative. Critics recognized this early on regarding the work of Ellison and Murray. Robert Bone, in his classic study *The Negro Novel in America* (1958; revised edition, 1965) writes:

> In repudiating naturalism, Ellison turns to the broad tradition established by Joyce, Kafka, and Faulkner. Like them, he finds the shattered forms of postimpressionism most effective in portraying the chaos of the modern world. But Ellison apprehends this chaos through a particular cultural screen. It is precisely his vision of the possibilities of Negro life that has burst the bonds of the naturalistic novel (198).

Ellisonøs õvision of the possibilities of Negro lifeö that burst the bonds of naturalism ó and thus one of the primary forms of exemplary segregation fiction, such as *Native Son* ó is rooted in the aural, in music and in what Bone calls õthe sheer delight of verbal play, in pure *sound*ö (199). W. Lawrence Hogue, in his 1986 book *Discourse and the Other: The Production of the African American Literary Text*, claims that õThe literary tradition and values of Joyce, Mann, Faulkner, and others become the context Murray uses to reproduce the blues idiom style from the Afro-American historical pastö (131). In numerous essays and interviews Murray would claim as much, particularly regarding the way Thomas Mann structured fiction along the lines of European art music, which inspired Murray to do so with the blues[35] (Maguire, *Conversations* 87, 131).

In a 1954 notebook entry on *The Waste Land* Murray also equates the exposure to modernism with a rejection of certain type of black pedagogical attempt to replicate whiteness. The note is somewhat facetious, as Murray knew much more about the poem than can be

[35] For instance, Murray said in an interview: õit was out of Mann, out of Thomas Mann, that I got the idea that you could find a basis, an aesthetic model in your [own] musical idiom for literature. So when he started talking about dialectic orchestration and leitmotifs and things like that, I started thinking about riffs, breaks, and things like thatö (87).

gathered from the note[36], and yet he left it for scholars to find and it is in the spirit of other comments he would make later on. It reads:

> I read the very same copy of The Wasteland [sic] that Ralph Ellison read. But what I go from it was significantly different. I realized that the underlying assumption of my teachers was wrong. Most of them seemed to assume that the function of Education was to make you more and more like white people. Well, *The Wasteland* made me realize that white people were in very bad shape indeed, had problems that I'd never dreamed of. (Whereupon I began to wish that Negroes really were as simple as they had been pictured.) (Murray, õNotebook Entry on *The Waste Land*ö)

Curiously, Murrayøs startling critique of black education here seems to dovetail with Tess Slesingerøs 1928 critique of Du Boisøs *Dark Princess*. Echoing H.L. Mencken in *Crisis*, Slesinger writes õ[Du Bois]í has unfortunately adopted white ideals, which he confuses with dress shirts and a parlor knowledge of the artsö (Aptheker 21). Herbert Aptheker, who unearthed this quote for his introduction to *Dark Princess*, disapproves of it without going into detail, as if nobody would need to be told why Slesinger is wrong. And yet, Slesinger hews closely to the text. The narrator notes, when the protagonist Matthew Towns is at a gathering of international aristocrats: õAgain Matthew felt his lack of culture audible, and not simply his own culture, but all of the culture in white America which he had unconsciously, and foolishly, as he now realized, made his norm (*Dark Princess* 24).ö Shortly thereafter, Towns bursts into an impromptu rendition of õGo Down, Moses,ö in order to prove to the diverse aristocrats at the gathering that people of African ancestry were capable of creating art (25).

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[36] Murrayøs M.A. thesis, completed at New York University in 1948, is a comparative and careful close reading of *The Waste Land* and *The Sun Also Rises* which argues, essentially, that because of the influence of Frazerøs *The Golden Bough* on both Eliot and Hemingway, *The Waste Land* becomes an important intertext for *The Sun Also Rises*, as they are illustrative of crucial aspects of one another and could and should thus be profitably read alongside one another.

This perfectly exemplifies what Ellison, Hurston, and Murray were working against: the cultural insecurity of a black elite that continually falls back on the spirituals to argue for black cultural achievement. The narrator of *Invisible Man*, of course, refuses to sing õGo Down, Moses,ö when asked to do so (to Brother Jackøs chagrin) by a drunk white guest at the Brotherhoodøs party at the Chthonian (312).[37] Ellison may have been alluding to this moment in *Dark Princess*, signaling an ideological and generational break between Towns and the Invisible Man, as well as between Du Bois and himself. The case of Matthew Towns seems to illustrate just the sort of problem that bothered Murray in his note on *The Waste Land*. Murrayøs high school, Mobile Country Training School, was ideologically oriented along the õtalented tenthö model. The note is also of interest because if demonstrates that as early as 1954, Murray was trying to subtly differentiate himself from Ellison.

For Murray in particular, the tensions in balance in modernist aesthetics became an attractive model for his attempts to hold then tensions of African American culture and history in balance. In *The Hero and the Blues* Murray writes:

> James Joyce, who has become for so many students of literature an archetype of the twentieth century literary cosmopolitan, always wrote out of a sensibility that became more and more sophisticated about the world at large only to become more and more Irish[38] at the same time, even as it embraced the idea of timelessness in order to remain up to date (69).

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[37] In chapter forty-seven of *Kingsblood Royal* there is a similar scene, in which a black intellectual refuses to sing a spiritual for drunk whites at a party (277).

[38] For Murray, the achievement of his other artistic model, Duke Ellington, was analogous to that of Joyce. In a notebook entry titled õDuke Ellingtonøs American Dithyrambicsö Murray wrote: õEllington, whose music is as avant-garde as it is traditional, as cosmopolitan as it is vernacular, and is no less functional (nitty gritty) than it is stylishly elegant (even if exquisite).ö In his essay õRegional Particulars and Universal Implicationsö Murray writes õBeneath the idiomatic surface of your old down-home stomping ground, with all of the ever-so-evocative local color you work so hard to get just right, is the common ground of all mankindö (Murray, *Blue Devils* 12). Earlier in the essay he claims that idiomatic details õmust be *processed* into artistic statement, *stylized* into significance (11).ö In the next paragraph he notes that in this approach he is following André Malraux in *The Voices of Silence*.

The apparent modernist paradoxes of reaching for universality while becoming more idiomatically particular and reaching for contemporaneous relevance while adopting mythic forms may have held attraction for their rejection of realism. If the rigid signs of segregation (õwhites onlyö) themselves were a sort of realist fiction, a modernist attempt to go deeper than them (into the complexity of American identity) and beyond them (imagining an intervention into a global republic of letters) through the more elusive world of sound would become the multi-decade project of Ellison and Murray. Against the visual and sign-based regime of segregation they attempted to render the epistemological and ontological importance of African American aural experiences into literary fiction; intervening in debates about politics, literary and musical form, and history in the process.

This development is related to the expansion of tropes and images of jazz and the blues in literature, begun in the 1920s and 1930s by Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown and others, and appropriated or marshalled into the service of another direction by Hurston, Ellison, and Murray, who grew up poor and had a different take on representing the folk than the well-meaning middle class writers who published before they did. In these texts, a different sort of protest is enacted that declines to name or represent segregation very explicitly, yet asserts African American strength, dignity, and resistance through relation to a soundscape best appreciated through an understanding of the context in which it was heard in African American communities.

This difference is exemplified, for example, in the way sound affects the representation of black resistance to white law enforcement in Richard Wrightøs story õBright and Morning Starö in *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and the õStagolee Dupasö chapter of Albert Murrayøs *Train Whistle Guitar* (drafted by 1951, published 1974, which will be examined in detail in the second chapter on Murray). In õBright and Morning Star,ö the protagonist, Sue, sings an

impromptu spiritual (408). It gives the title to the story and serves as a kind of leitmotif. For the no longer religious Sue, the spiritual has become a cultural rather than religious artifact (410). In the end, she has the opportunity to kill the villainous white sheriff but instead kills a white Communist organizer (Booker) when instead had been aiming for her own son (440). In Murrayøs õStagolee Dupasö chapter, the barrelhouse pianist Dupas[39] kills a white sheriff because the sheriff has threatened a piano that does not even belong to him. Wrightøs story suggests confusion and bumbling, not to mention ingrained fear of whites. On the other hand[40], Murrayøs story, published in 1974, suggests: ÷this is how we defended ourselves, our community, and our property fifty years ago ó so how do you think weøll defend ourselves today?ø Indeed, as he told *Time* magazine in 1976, Murray was worried about a white backlash to the Civil Rights Movement (which will be discussed below).

The representation of the õfolkö in African American literature is closely related to the representation of folkøs vernacular music. Whereas representation, promotion (and orchestration on a European model) of African-American religious music (e.g. spirituals) was advocated by some (e.g. Du Bois) as the proper way to use music to try to advance Civil Rights, as the twentieth century moved along writers began to celebrate vernacular musical forms once thought improper or unworthy of representation. Langston Hughes, for instance, weathered harsh criticism in the African American press once he began to write and write about the blues[41]

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[39] Dupas composes, practices, performs, and in a sense inhabits music; it doesnøt seemingly burst out of him naturally as spirituals do for the protagonists of Wright and Du Bois.

[40] Attempting to differentiate literary periods ultimately involves hair splitting to separate finely wrought works of literature from one another. Wright of course had modernist influences as well. õBright and Morning Starö ends with an unmistakable allusion to the famous ending of Joyceøs õThe Dead.ö

[41] This is not unlike the criticism Philip Roth was subjected to by conservative Jewish publications when began to treat less-than-uplifting themes in the late 1960s. Anderson claims that Hughes had õcharmed the black literary eliteö with õThe Negro Speaks of Riversö in 1921 (170). But they had turned on him by 1926, because of *The Weary Blues*. Similarly, Roth ÷charmedø the respectable Jewish literary world (*Commentary*, etc.) in the 1950s, but they turned on him with the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*. In each instance, the ethnic cultural establishment viewed these promising young writers with high hopes for attaining literary recognition from WASP elites, while

(Anderson 168-70). By õvernacular musical formsö I mean jazz and the blues, as broadly understood. Ronald A.T. Judy offers a dynamic definition of the blues that I would like to adopt as a kind of working definition. This is found in his book *(Dis)Forming the American Cannon: African-Arabic Slave Narratives and the Vernacular* (1993): õ[the blues comprises] the manifold complexity of narrative strategies and rhetorical operations through which Afro-Americans subverted the nihilistic aspects of their enslavement, creating a rich culture of human endurance, and which comprehends a wide range of musical form of expression from shouts to jazz and rock and rollö (54). While Ellison and Murray might have quibbled with aspects of this definition (particularly the inclusion of rock and roll), it forms a useful umbrella definition. Murrayøs definition of õthe blues idiomö is flexible enough to include Judyøs: for Murray õthe blues idiomö is õan attitude of affirmation in the face of difficulty, of improvisation in the face of challenge. It means you acknowledge that life is a low-down dirty shame yet confront that fact with perseverance, with humor, and above all, with eleganceö (Maguire, *Conversations* 127).

I am aware of how Jeffrey B. Ferguson, in his formidable article õA Blue Note On Black American Literary Criticism and the Bluesö (2010) has cautioned against the over-application of the blues in the study of African American literature (700). He has also questioned the continued widespread existence of a blues-based philosophy among younger African Americans, at least not as reflected in pop culture. I understand his position and to an extent, I agree with him. For Ferguson:

> To add to the case for demise, as mentioned above, black audiences have for the most part abandoned the blues, though they do enjoy such blues-derived music as soul, rap, and rhythm and blues, which emphasize the more ecstatic, polyrhythmic, love-,

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simultaneously painting positive pictures of ethnic life. Hughes and Roth had, in each case, in the eyes of the respective establishments within their ethnicities, squandered their talents by exploring impolite corners of life.

> sex-, braggadocio-., and crime-obsessed themes of the blues tradition rather than its more tragically introspective ÷jagged grainø and ÷trouble in mindø dimensions. The reasons for this seem clear. As the years pass, fewer black Americans can recall personal memories linked to northern migration, and thus fewer need a form of music to remind them of ÷home.ø Also, to borrow from Albert Murrayøs nomenclature, the civil rights movement inspired among black Americans a much deeper embrace of the Frame of Rejection, or the sense that the race problem could be overcome through direct oppositioní .Although many problems remain, therefore, the blues, conceived as a method for making a troubled life livable by entering into its terms, no longer addresses the predominant way most black Americans think of their needs, though a simple glance below the poverty line or into the racially skewed population of a prison block might suggest to an outside observer the continuing relevance of a blues sensibility. (711)

This is complicated, and though Ferguson may overstate the case a bit above, he does temper his observation at the end of that quote. It might be said that nihilistic adolescent black pop culture ó driven, shaped, and to a large extent created by the culture industry of course ó may obscure the depths of the blues ó both the feeling and the interest in the music, that people might slowly ease into in middle age. That demographic tends not to have a voice in pop culture as it does not lend itself to the buying patterns of the 18-34 demographic. Ferguson recognizes the nuances of this situation, but it would appear safe to say that the blues idiom is not as widespread as it was fifty or thirty years ago. Ferguson recognizes that there is a blues sensibility; a blues idiom (just as Alexander Weheliye recognizes that there is a structure of feeling that can be called õthe bluesö in an African American context, apart from the sad feeling of õthe bluesö). But Ferguson advises maximized clarity and historicity when employing the blues critically, and also notes the myriad complexities involved with actually tethering a blues sensibility to the enormous and sometimes contradictory body of historical blues recordings. The term õblues fictionö has been over-applied and misapplied in various instances. I also do not wish to create a false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. As Albert Murray points out in his book *Stomping the Blues* (1976), the

õSaturday night functionö and õSunday morning serviceö were both of paramount importance in African American communities in the South. Many individuals enjoyed both forms of music, while religion most certainly also helped African Americans to subvert the õnihilistic aspects of their enslavement.ö I do not wish to dehistoricize the blues by over-reading into history or trying to see its residues where it does not exist in the present. But in the case of modernist African American literary fiction, the blues is a primary portal for a full contextualized understanding of its form and spirit, since a championing of orchestrated versions of the spirituals became closely associated with Du Bois and other elites (such as the early Locke), the valorization of the blues idiom thus became part of a strategy for re-appreciating the folk on the folkøs own terms, and in turn representing the sometimes crude and violent yet equally vibrant and resilient ó yet hitherto largely voiceless ó black underclass that was not far removed from the cultural dynamics that had existed under slavery.

My intention here is not primarily to explore or identify a õblues aesthetic.ö To do so would be to unearth well-ploughed terrain of the late 1980s and 1990s. My goal here is partially to take such an existential understanding of a blues aesthetic a step further and help use it as a kind of frame to understand representations of sound in relation to segregation via close reading. In the process of such an exploration, blues music and the philosophy of the blues becomes indispensable, but I am not focused entirely on the blues.

One of the first scholarly attempts to identify a particular õblues aestheticö as practiced by Ellison and Murray is Robert Boneøs preface to the 1988 edition of his 1975 book *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story*. Bone, a pioneering white critic of African American literature, describes in his õPreface to the Morningside Editionö how he was made uncomfortable by the anti-white rhetoric coming out of the Black Arts Movement in the late

1960s and early 70s. He explains how the pluralist vision in the work of Ellison and Murray helped him persevere in the field of African American literature and see *Down Home* into print.[42] Boneøs goal in his preface is to elucidate the aesthetic of Ellison and Murray, which he sees as one of the most important developments in African American literary history, and also to critique Houston Bakerøs *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature* (1984). Bone wished to õset the record straightö vis-à-vis Bakerøs claim that the Black Arts Movement õwas the first to develop a literary theory of the bluesö (xv). He adds that in making that claim, Baker bestowed õan accoladeí rightfully belonging to Ellison and Murray. It amounts to badmouthing oneøs ancestors in order to affirm oneøs generational identityö (xv). Boneøs summary and paraphrase of Ellisonøs and Murrayøs careers is accurate as is his understanding of their aesthetic goals. Bone sees Ellison and Murray as antidotes to what he viewed as the counterproductive hostility and extremism of the Black Arts Movement.

I believe that their work is at odds with the Black Arts Movement because it was first, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, at odds with the aesthetic to which the Black Arts Movement became the philosophical and literary successor. Murray even championed a kind of black militancy (which will be explored in depth in the chapter on his work) but recoiled from any work that exploited identity politics or predicated militancy on victimhood. Bone hints in this direction but does not explore it fully.[43] He writes that õ[Ellisonøs and Murrayøs] conceptual

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[42] Bone does not mention in his preface that he was close to both of them socially. The Bones and the Murrays were particularly good friends (closer than the Bones and the Ellisons) and sometimes vacationed together in the 1970s. Numerous letters from Bone are in Murrayøs files and Bone wrote two unpublished essays on Murrayøs *South to a Very Old Place*. Some of these letters are of scholarly interest. Boneøs understanding of Murrayøs *Train Whistle Guitar* is particularly astute.

[43] Kenneth Warren uses the history of the circle surrounding Addison Gayle (author of *The Black Aesthetic*) and the controversies about black studies CCNY in the late 1960s to illustrate a point about the end of African American literature in *What Was African American Literature?* but he leaves Murrayøs concrete role in the orbit of these issues and personages out of his narrative. Murrayøs role within this moment (and thus another point of view on Warrenøs narrative) will be explored in the first of the two Murray chapters.

mode, which is best described as a blues aesthetic, was older by three decades than the Black Aesthetic currently in vogue [in 1975], emanating in fact from the Tuskegee campus in the mid-1930s, when LeRoi Jones was a child of twoö (viii). Bone is keen to describe their aesthetic as emerging from Tuskegee, but what he really means is that they were both influenced by their teacher (and later friend) Morteza Drexel Sprague, a proponent and advocate of literary modernism in the classroom and outside of it. Partially through Spragueøs influence, Ellison and Murray were able to mesh their deep understandings of jazz and the blues, imbued in them through their musical hometowns of Oklahoma City and Mobile, with the latest literary innovations. They had grown up immersed in one modernist form ó the blues, and its orchestrated form, jazz ó and so in a sense their ears were open to the recent innovations in other art forms. The comparisons they would later famously make between the creative procedures Louis Armstrong and T.S. Eliot (Ellison), and Hemingway and Count Basie (Murray) can perhaps be partially traced to Spragueøs influence. But Ellison and Murray were at odds with other persons on the Tuskegee faculty, particularly sociologist Robert Park, and other aspects of the Tuskegee ideology and experience (so incisively satirized in *Invisible Man*).[44]

Bone does not view Hurston as part of the same continuum. He locates Hurstonøs expertise in the pastoral (114). But not unlike Hurstonøs õHigh John de Conquer,ö Bone claimed that the õblues hero,ö specifically for Murray, is õnot an exclusive ethnic propertyö (xiv). That is to say, the blues hero in an African American context has numerous analogues in the history of literature. That is not to make a statement along the lines of õOdysseus was a blues manö but rather to say that nimble, improvisational, Odysseus-like heroes in an African American context will come out of the blues idiom, which is to say a secular, existentialist, affirmative idiom. The

[44] Much more of a Tuskegee loyalist than Ellison, Murray nevertheless vents to Ellison about various aspects of the institution in their 1950s letter exchange.

idea of a blues idiom trope becoming a non-exclusive non-ethnic property (after its ethnic context has been delineated) perhaps originates with Hurstonøs õHigh John de Conquer.ö

In *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (2001), Paul Allen Anderson notes that the project of orchestrating and formalizing the spirituals was considered key to racial uplift in educated African American cultural circles. Related to the promotion of sanitized spirituals was a distancing from vernacular musical forms, such as jazz and the blues. There is a connection between the promotion of the spirituals the promotion of fiction that contests segregation, along with the denigration of jazz in connection with literature that seeks to portray the black lower-classes and that, perhaps, does not focus on contesting the morality of segregation. Certainly Hurston and Ellison, for instance, did not oppose the spirituals per se ó but they did object to elements of discourse around the spirituals. Hurston outlines her objections explicitly in her article õSpirituals and Neo-Spirituals,ö in which she expresses skepticism toward the attempts to take the spirituals out of the church and put them in a concert hall ó an approach to attaining respectability analogous to the segregation aesthetic in fiction (*Folklore* 870). As mentioned above, she also refers to Du Boisøs categorization of the spirituals as õsorrow songsö as õridiculous.ö More subtly, Ellisonøs critique of out of place spirituals occurs in march following Tod Cliftonøs funeral in *Invisible Man*. Kenneth Warrenøs brilliant reading of the singing of õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö as synecdoche for the imagined community of the nation in *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism* will figure in my chapter on Ellison. I will extend Warrenøs analysis there and contrast this communal scene with the private listening to Louis Armstrongøs record in the Prologue. Representing the educated, those who would most come into contact with the world of professional whites, was a key feature of segregation fiction. Representing the poor inched toward representing the legacy of

slavery ó a legacy that Gates and Jarrett argue had been papered over by the ahistorical õutopianö thinking of the New Negro project (5). Some of these generalizations may not stand up to close scrutiny, but they form reasonably accurate generalizations which can function as the large, clumsy, and imprecise tools to break ground on a buried tradition in African American literature. These generalizations can open up a new way to read these writers and assist in giving shape to the alternative tradition that existed aside segregation fiction, and alternative to the practitioners of the segregation aestheticøs worthy instrumentalist goals.

Despite the pernicious and pervasive policies that still limit black economic opportunity and oppress black communities, the changes brought about by the Civil Rights Movement, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, and the bills signed by Lyndon Johnson in 1964 and 1965 still effected enormous change. These changes were practical and largely positive and resulted not just in symbolic desegregated lunch counters, but less visible policies such as Affirmative Action and the acceptance by municipalities of bids by minority contractors, among other new institutional practices. As a result of changes in policy, and due to increased awareness, organization, and assertiveness brought about by the Civil Rights Movement, the imaginative literature written by African Americans began to change immediately and changed further in the subsequent decades.

With the drastic changes that occurred and were occurring, from positive developments such as the creation of the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission in 1965, to sad developments, such as the decimation of small black businesses and once-thriving black business districts (such as U Street in Washington, D.C.[45]), new anxieties began to develop, particularly

[45] My understanding of this has been informed by Eugene Robinsonøs 2010 book *Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America*, which I reviewed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 7, 2010).

concerning the retrieval of a past that was on the verge of being lost ó a past that both segregation literature and the anti-segregation New Negro movement had sought to suppress. The process of discovering, rediscovering, memorializing, and bearing witness to what was good, and what there had been to be proud of, in African American cultures and communities during and in spite of segregation and the legacy of slavery became of paramount concern among many thoughtful people. Thus, there arose an effort to resurrect works from the past such as Hurstonøs oeuvre, which itself had engaged in a cultural recovery project thirty to forty years before the vogue for such projects.

In her profound chapter õZora Neale Hurston and the Chronotope of the Folkö in her book *The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism* (2006), Leigh Ann Duck claims that õ*Their Eyes Were Watching God* seeks to imagine and inscribe a way to manage the losses that social change must entail. Paradoxically, it retains a vision of folkloric pleasure, typically associated with social performance and sharing, within a bourgeois form given to individual consumption ó that of the novelö (132). Hurston herself was part of the folk. But she also read novels as a young person and traveled up and down the east coast with a Gilbert and Sullivan troupe. Hurston understood that the õfolk,ö as she knew them, were going to disappear someday. (Ellison and Murray were to understand that desegregation, which they favored, would paradoxically speed up this trend and alter the communities they found so enriching while growing up.) As an anthropologist and literary artist, Hurston knew that folk expression lost some of its energy in the process of collection, just as spirituals lost some of their energy in the concert hall, or when performers became self-conscious (*Folklore* 871). She arrived at the conclusion that the novel was indeed a good way to õmanage the losses that social change must entailö ó a project not on the radar of those who would simply yearn for those losses

to get lost already. Duck has incisively observed just how, with her trained anthropological eye, Hurston is able to subvert segregation through her technique:

> In representing this transition [in which õblack southern cultureö becomes õincreasingly influenced by U.S. bourgeois ideologyö], Hurston provides for the preservation of folkloric values by incorporating them into the modern self-fashioning of her individuated protagonist. Through this logic, however, the novel displaces the enforced racial segregation of the South with the voluntary isolation of the folkloric practice.[46] (116)

Hurstonøs work was subjected to numerous egregious misreadings (Richard Wrightøs being among the best known). Yet it is Hurston who is perhaps the more astute critic of capitalism and by extension, of segregation even if she will not fully represent it. Philipp Schweighauser has noticed that Janieøs second husband, the simple capitalist, Jody Starks,

> was at least partially successful in curbing Janieøs participation in her acoustic community, her newfound embrace of the role of storyteller [following Teacakeøs death] which crucially is also the role she occupies within the framing narrative ó represents her liberation from these constraints, not unlike the way in which Hurstonøs introduction of black vernacular into her writing represents her liberation from some of the constraints of the novelistic form. í .Jodyøs disdain for the lively oral culture of Eatonville and his inability to grasp its community-building function gradually turn him into a stranger in the very town he is supposed to govern. (101)

It is also a town from whom he extracts a daily profit at his general store. Following Schweighauserøs startling suggestion that there is an analogy between Starks himself and the form of the novel from which Hurston was eager to break free, that is to say, the novel of straightforward realism and naturalism, there may be a further analogue between the gambler

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[46] Where Murray will extend and elaborate on Hurstonøs Eatonville is in his similarly autonomous (if less centralized) idiomatic black civic space of Gasoline Point in *Train Whistle Guitar*, where not only the protagonist is individuated, but many others are as well. They are also not an isolated community. Through proximity to the port of Mobile (and assuming traffic through the Panama Canal) several adults have mysterious and unexplained connections to San Francisco and Reno. *Train Whistle Guitar* may perhaps owe a debt to Hurstonøs õThe Eatonville Anthologyö (1926). Both perhaps owe a debt to Sherwood Andersonøs *Winesburg, Ohio*.

Teacake and the literary form to come that I am trying to identify: one grounded in and electrified by chance (which shall be described at length, particularly in relation to Murray and Everett). Narratives of chance, for Gerald Vizenor (who shall be discussed later as well) can function to subvert the master narratives of social science that often seek to describe or identify minority communities mechanistically (187). For Vizenor, the particular social science to be subverted, the real villain (especially regarding Native American history) is anthropology (187). But Hurston, of course, was an anthropologist who recognized the limitations of the field and its problematic aspects ó its occasional deafness, as it were ó and became a major literary artist.

Her critique of capitalism (which will be discussed further in the Ellison chapter), along with its assumptions about temporal registers of the folk, is rich and subtle. Both due to its incongruous relationship the socio-political climate and due to the harsh judgments of male African American literary elites who allowed myopic political ideology to color their aesthetic preferences, even if those ideologies differed somewhat (as in the case of say, Locke and Wright, who both disapproved of Hurstonøs work). These male writers, such as Wright, Locke, and (pre-war) Ellison (writing in *New Masses* under Wrightøs influence) favored using literature as a vehicle to protest segregation and injustice. Today these men are widely understood, vis-à-vis Hurston, as not being receptive to or able to comprehend a womanøs voice or point of view (which is true), but also they certainly and explicitly did not appreciate that Hurstonøs work lacked sufficient engagement with racial public policy issues for their tastes.

Yet this discussion can quickly become slippery. Hurston was not always out of step. There was a window in which she was in vogue. Following Barbara Foley, Gates and Jarrett admit that Lockeøs politics moved from left to right by 1925, claiming that õRomanticized as

ahistorical, lower-class, and authentically black[47], the folk served as a metonym or synecdoche of the African American community, lubricating Lockeøs turn from racial antagonism to racial ameliorationö (9). It could be easily argued that racial antagonism is more of a feature of rightist politics while racial amelioration tends to be a feature of leftist politics, but perhaps the romanticization of the folk at this time was a reaction to decades of their vilification, dismissal, or obfuscation. Locke included Hurston in *The New Negro* in 1925, but became a harsh critic of her when he swung back to the left and began once again to regard representations of the folk with skepticism by the mid-1930s. Lost in the mapping of the shifts in Lockeøs opinions of Hurston is the fact that unlike Locke, Hurston was from the folk. Locke, of middle class Philadelphia, followed by Harvard, Oxford, and Berlin, might have felt obliged to pass judgment on Hurston, of Eatonville, Baltimore night high school, Morgan State and Howard (prior to Barnard) ó but she was consistent. There is no real reason why Hurstonøs expression of the ÷vision of the life she knewø (to paraphrase Ellison) should have to be be subsumed as a metaphor for Lockeøs (or anyoneøs) politics.

Running parallel to the rediscovery of Hurston in the 1960s that increased with exponential speed thanks to the work of Alice Walker and others in the 1970s was second life achieved by Albert Murrayøs early fiction, which made a much smaller splash than Hurstonøs, and disappeared immediately, for roughly the same reasons, but went through a similar process of re-discovery in the late 1960s and early 1970s, for roughly the same reasons ó namely, its representation of an assertive, coherent African American community at a moment when the market for that, to the extent that there ever was one, evaporated due to the upheavals of the Civil

[47] As if re-intervening in these debates of the 1920s (which were to re-emerge in the 1960s, and now every so often on õBlack Twitterö), a black Native American shaman says in Ellisonøs second novel: õThere are many ways of being black. There are the ways of the skin, and the ways of custom, and the way a man feels inside himö (*Three Days Before the Shooting…* 775).

Rights Movement. The narrative arc of the reception of Murrayøs fiction is on a smaller scale than Hurstonøs and on a compressed timeline, but both arcs are of similar shape, and their work shares much in common, in terms of style, goals, outlook, and reception. It might be argued that the second phases of the appreciation of Murrayøs work and Hurstonøs work both began in 1966[48], when stories by both appeared in John Henrik Clarkeøs anthology *American Negro Short Stories*. Since the story of Hurstonøs fall into obscurity and rediscovery (largely facilitated by Alice Walker) and reappraisal in the 1970s is well known, I will narrate the history of Murrayøs early literary to career in order to suggest that Hurstonøs fall into obscurity and rediscovery was not a fluke, and nor was it just because she was a woman misunderstood by men (though that is certainly part of it). The low-point of the careers of Murray and Hurston was the late 1950s-early 1960s, when there was simply no market for blues-inflected work that ignored segregation. *Invisible Man*, which does deal with segregation but not like the segregation fiction that preceded it, initially achieved great success partially due to its anti-Communism theme. Its theme of black cultural recovery helped give it a second wind throughout the decades of desegregation as the urgency of the anti-Communism theme has faded.

By late 1951 Albert Murray had drafted an image of a wholesome, yet realistic, strong, and defiant black community under segregation in the 1920s through the impression of its sonic contexts on his protagonist, while at the same time worrying, around the time of publication in the 1970s, that the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement may be erased. When asked about the contemporary situation in the south, Murray told *Time* magazine in 1976: õI hope the changes are permanent, but there could be a counterthrust. These things always go up and downö

[48] 1966 was a crucial year for the re-emergence of Hurstonøs and Murrayøs work, and curiously enough, it was also the year that Don Ihde published his landmark and widely anthologized essay õSome Auditory Phenomenaö in *Philosophy Today*. Ihde, a phenomenologist, argues that auditory phenomena have been õneglected in philosophical investigationö (493).

(Murray, õTime Essay: Other Voicesö). Murrayøs novel of growing up in Alabama in the 1920s was fully drafted in 1951 and not published until 1974, partially because it could not find market traction in the 1950s, but also because of Murrayøs anxieties about a õcounterthrustö in the 1970s. (Alas, it seems as though a black president was what was needed to muster the political will and focal point for the counterthrust, which is happening in the 2010s.) That is to say, getting the novel into print must have taken on new urgency for Murray by the early 1970s. It was after the publication and success of his first two books that he received a contract for the novel from McGraw Hill in 1972[49]. Wide anthologization of the noveløs centerpiece story in the late 1960s and early 1970s did not seem to attract publishers until 1972. Meanwhile, Murrayøs visit to Mobile in 1969, and his viewing of a Scott Paper Towel factory standing where the neighborhood where he grew up once stood (*South to a Very Old Place* 145) had to (along with larger changes in society) prompt him to make another attempt at getting the novel into print.

Aside from seeking to preserve a world of the past, Murray is also pushing back against images of the present. Like Toni Morrison, he was concerned with the image of African Americans promoted by the social sciences, and considered it a false one. This is what prompted Robert G. OøMeally, in his foreword to a 1989 reprint edition of Murrayøs *Train Whistle Guitar*, to write õthis is a novel of counterstatement, and in this sense, a novel very much not just of the twenties, but of the seventiesö (xv). That novel, which to OøMeally, seemed to align so well with the post-segregation climate of the seventies was completed, in a form resembling the 1974 version, by late 1951. This observation by OøMeally has been crucial to the formulation of this study. What does it mean for the periodization of African American literature if a novel about the 1920s, drafted into close to its final form in the 1950s, and published in the 1970s *seemed* like a

[49] The contract also called for an õUntitled Book on Africa,ö never written. *Stomping the Blues* was the second book that fulfilled the two-book contract.

novel õvery muchí  of the seventiesö (even if just in the sense of its counter-statement) in the seventies, to OøMeally (b. 1948), who was very much in tune with his times? OøMeallyøs claim here helped me to formulate my initial question (as I was pondering Warrenøs work) and ultimate conclusion, which is that an aesthetic that became popular in the 1970s was in fact brewing much earlier. But I wanted to expand the question by trying to prove something that Iøve also been pondering for years: the alignments between Hurstonøs work and that of Ellison and Murray. I wanted to ask how and why this might have been and how my findings might become an intervention in the periodization debate.

Murrayøs 1951 manuscript no longer exists. Most of what is known about it comes from a long 1952 letter to Murray from Ralph Ellison.[50] An excerpt from this manuscript was published in a prestigious venue. Like Hurstonøs work (but on a much smaller scale), and other works published into a reading climate not adequately prepared for them, it flamed brightly for a moment before flickering out and fading into cold obscurity. This excerpt, õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö was published in the highly regarded anthology *New World Writing: Fourth Mentor Selection* in an initial print run of 100,000 copies in September 1953. A few weeks later, an additional 40,000 copies were printed (Porter, Letter to Albert Murray). The volume featured the work of many prominent and up and coming writers along with one of the first stories by Jorge Luis Borges to be translated into English. It circulated widely, but it did not lead to any further assignments for Murray. In 1954 Professor Margaret Young Jackson, then at Morris Brown College, wrote to Murray: õDear Murray, I was quite delighted to hear Prof. Sterling Brown quote from a novel of yours when he delivered a series of lectures here in Atlanta. He seemed to

[50] But it was also very much a novel of the 1950s, as Murray was just as furious with Abram Kardiner and Lionel Oveseyøs *The Mark of Oppression: Explorations in the Personality of the American Negro* (1951) as he was to become with Daniel Patrick Moynihanøs *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (1965). Murray wrote to Ellison in 1952 regarding *The Mark of Oppression*: õPersonally I find it just about the worst thing on the Negro since, well, since they were trying to justify white supremacy with the Bibleö (Callahan and Murray 26).

be very much impressed with your abilityö (Jackson, Letter to Albert Murray). This is should not be surprising, as Murray was building on the work of Brown, along with Langston Hughes, Hurston and Jean Toomer, who, a generation earlier, made the first inroads in combining African American vernacular traditions such as the blues with contemporary literary sensibilities. What makes Jacksonøs letter interesting is that it shows that Murrayøs story had indeed circulated, working its way into Sterling Brownøs lecture, but did not garner more publication opportunities for Murray.[51] In short, due to the political climate, the literary marketplace (and its gatekeepers) could abide neither Hurston nor Murrayøs work in the 1950s. The second half of Murrayøs unpublished 1951 manuscript (which became the second half of his second published novel, *The Spyglass Tree*), which featured a racially motivated beating and the possibility of the clashing of white and black armed groups, is what appealed to an anonymous reader commissioned by either an agent or publishing house. Judging from the entirety of the report, it seems almost certain that the writer is either white, or at least not black. The anonymous reader writes of second half of the manuscript, charged with racial conflict: õhere is where our real sympathy and interest lies: with the people who, in the last half of the book, are the victims of injustice based on race and with those who perpetrate the injustice. This portion is a bitter, well-written, well-paced story standing quite apart from the rest of the novelö (Anonymous Readerøs Report 2). Indeed, though the published version elides segregation per se, it still adopts the segregation aesthetic ó as if a segregation novella had been inserted for purposes of counterstatement (just as Ellingtonøs musicians might riff on another, earlier aesthetic ó such as a theme from John Philip Sousa or *La*

[51] Sterling Brown was not on the advance copy list that Murray sent to *New World Writing*. The ten people on the list Murray submitted were: H.J. Kaplan (of *Partisan Review)*, Rene Leibowitz (a symphony conductor Murray had met in Paris), Ralph Ellison, Joseph Campbell, Oscar Cargill (of New York University), Erika Teutsch, Maya Deren, Luther Forster (Tuskegeeøs president), I.A. Derbigny (Tuskegeeøs vice-president), and Morteza Drexel Sprague, Ellison and Murrayøs erstwhile mentor and professor, and by that time, Murrayøs colleague (Murray, Advance Copy List).

*Marseillaise*, during a jazz performance). I do not mean to put too much pressure on one anonymous report, but it seems to a large extent to be representative of the literary world and literary taste at the time (and for decades beyond), in which black victimhood was a more attractive image and topic of interest for literary gatekeepers and much of the reading public, rather than black strength, resilience, and resistance. The investment in black victimhood by white critics would hobble Murrayøs reception even into the 1970s and 1980s, as my later discussion of readings of *Train Whistle Guitar* by Vivian Mercier and Wolfgang Karrer will demonstrate.

Before turning to a body of work without which it is impossible to fully comprehend Murrayøs ó that is, that of Ralph Ellison, I would like to engage in a brief thought experiment. I have been thinking about the antithetical relationship of capital and the power of the nation state, particularly the United States, and segregation as a means of social control. The work of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray may be said to critique and resist both the forces of capital and segregation. At first glance it may seem that monopoly capitalism and segregation are co-dependent upon one another, but I would like to suggest what it might mean if they were imagined as antithetical to one another.

In his essay õTwo Regimes of Madnessö Gilles Deleuze distinguishes between the õparanoidö and the õpassionalö sorts of madness. Each corresponds to two regimes in conflict (the state and capital). õThe paranoid regime of the sign,ö he writes, could õjust as wellö be called the õdespotic or imperialö regime (14). The other regime of signs is the regime of capital (8). The paranoid regime, as the õimperial formationö emanates from the state: õthere is the great signifier, the signifier of the despot; and beneath it the infinite network of signs that refer themselves to one another.ö If the signifier of the despot (i.e., the state, which draws its

legitimacy from archaic states even if may be democratic[52]) is seen as segregation (a regime firmly, perhaps unequivocally based on paranoia) then the image of the strength of the state in relation to the force of capital becomes more clear.

The Invisible Man resists both regimes, living in a whites-only building while stealing from Monopolated Light and Power. Bledsoe had previously warned him about the interconnectedness of the regimes (142). Perhaps they did connect precisely at the nodes of schools such as the one Norton funds and Bledsoe controls. Surely they also connected at the nodes of prisons. If Invisible Man is a narrative about a protagonist in the grip of paranoia, and the events through which that grip is removed. Murrayøs protagonist (Scooter) and Hurstonøs best-known protagonist (Janie) will be among the least-paranoid imaginable. Murrayøs Luzana Cholly and Old Evil Ed Riggins are thought by many whites to be mentally disturbed, but in fact they simply regard both systems with unequivocal contempt, thus making them appear crazy.

Capital is not in favor of segregation or desegregation; it is in favor of more capital. The state is in favor of control and its competitor is capital. Capital found the opening to run wild and grow exponentially during and after the fissure of the United States, from 1861-1865. Deleuze, in õTwo Regimes of Madnessö (14) and Wallace Stevens (in õLife on a Battleshipö) curiously converge upon the idea that the weakening power of the state is an inverse relationship to the rise of assassins (and thus, the assassinations of Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley). Subsequently the state was to enter a subservient position to capital (reflected metaphorically perhaps by Ulysses S. Grantøs catastrophic personal losses on Wall Street). It could be argued that the low ebb of state power came with the Hayes-Tilden Compromise in 1877, when Reconstruction was

[52] What I mean by this is that while the United States may claim that its power stems from the people, the thirteen states which ratified the Constitution drew their initial legitimacy, prior to imagining that legitimacy coming from the people, from the crown of England, which dates back perhaps to the 9th century C.E. and is based upon older forms of kingship.

abandoned and Federal troops were withdrawn from the former Confederacy. The state traded military force as a method of control in the south for the regime of signs known as segregation; reflecting the new alliance of northern and southern whiteness. The desire for õreunionö ó really the northøs ideological surrender to the south (and the huge body of literature on it) reflected the weakness of the state and its desire to bolster itself, as monopoly capitalism ran amok. The state could not control capital so it settled for controlling ethnic difference based upon African or non-African heritage. This was enshrined as the law of the land by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The apex of the power of capital and low point of state power was followed by Theodore Rooseveltøs attempt rein in the power of capital on behalf of the state through his attempts to break up monopolies and trusts. (Roosevelt also hosted Booker T. Washington at the White House; a practically irrelevant gesture for the lives of most black Americans, but symbolic of incipient, if glacial, movement in the direction of desegregation.) The power of segregation began to crack just after the state asserted enormous control over capital from 1933-1945, and reached its apex of power following World War II. Once capital was under control, desegregation could proceed. The U.S. Armed Forces began to be desegregated in 1948, a year after what might be called the shadow or metaphorical war machine of the state, Major League Baseball, was desegregated in 1947. *Shelly v. Kraemer* in 1948 barred restricted housing covenants, paving the way for the end of segregation. In the meantime, Jim Crow had become entrenched as custom. Perhaps white supremacy was a product of state weakness that then became violently opposed to state power after decades of sedimentation. Perhaps there is more to Louisiana governor Earl Longøs well-known joke about yielding to Federal power on racial matters because of Federal possession of the atomic bomb. It could be that Long understood that the Federal government, possessed of the ultimate power known to humanity, was serious about dismantling an older form of power,

asserted in its moment of weakness, and of which it was now embarrassed. When the forces of capital began to surge to the fore again in the 1970s and 1980s (for a variety of complex reasons), the state responded with the War on Drugs, largely aimed at African Americans (but also at Latinos and poor whites).

In the meantime, Hurston, Ellison, and Murray created protagonists that weave their way out of the world in which the state and capital battle for power, while weaving their way into alternative sound worlds or counter-worlds reflective of covert publics in African American communities, with all that entails in terms of history, and aural/oral traditions. In the next chapter, the Invisible Manøs aural journey, from the resonating world of power and human affairs to a private experience of being in music, in which he accesses (hallucinatory) elements of a communal in his surreptitious basement dwelling, while looking forward to the possibility of a different future.

## Chapter Two: Ralph Ellison In Sound: Zora Neale Hurston, Günther Anders, Ann Petry, David Sarser and Ellison's Representations of Aurality

> The trumpet of morning blows in the clouds and through
>
> The sky. It is the visible announced,
>
> It is the more than visible, the more
>
> Than sharp, illustrious scene. The trumpet cries
>
> This is the successor of the invisible.
>
> -Wallace Stevens, õCredences of Summer,ö VIII

### I. Ellison and Theories of Aurality

In this chapter I will investigate the hitherto unexplored influence of Zora Neale Hurston on Ralph Ellisonøs work while arguing for the influence of the philosopher Günther Anders on his work, particularly, in both cases, relating to their influence on Ellisonøs representations of aural phenomena and engagement, in *Invisible Man* and in his second novel. I will also examine Ellisonøs relationship with the sound engineer and inventor David Sarser and argue for the influence of Ann Petry on his second novel. It may be the case that Anders provided Ellison with new ways to think about the act and implications of listening and Hurston and Petry provided him with models for how to portray this in fiction, while his friendship (and professional

relationship) with Sarser kept him up to date on the latest in audio technology. This is reflective of what I am calling Ellisonøs õaural turnö of the late 1940s, which was integral to his break with earlier experiments with realism and naturalism, as he infused his work with modernist and surrealist elements that he felt better represented the complexities of life in the United States while attempting to subvert the segregation aesthetic.

Representations of aurality play critical roles in Ralph Ellisonøs mature fiction; in some of the most enigmatic moments of *Invisible Man* and the most polished sections of his second novel (including an excerpt published in 1965). Ellisonøs representations of aural phenomena are intertwined with his post-war employment of high modernism, which is intricately connected with his desire to elide the pernicious effects of Jim Crow by providing counter-information about the African American experience while opening new channels for pluralistic dialogue and understanding. In *Invisible Man* high modernism becomes the vehicle through which to render idiomatic oral/aural folk traditions[53] of African American culture that the Invisible Man ultimately recognizes as a component to an alternative to (or counter-statement of) the dehistoricized subjectivity (the dehistoricized õNew Negroö) that had been his youthful model in high school and college. In the Prologue the Invisible Man establishes the depths of his aural engagement with this cultural matrix (playing, I believe, on a concept analogous to Andersøs õnon-resonant egoö). The story he tells in chapters one through twenty-five (beginning õsome twenty yearsö earlier) is a narrative of a personal evolution of approach to sound that parallel the narratorøs rediscovery of an African American cultural formations suppressed by the adoption of an ideology that tethered õsocial responsibilityö (or apologetics for segregation) with regarding

[53] A concrete example is when Peter Wheatstraw expresses his association with Hoodoo traditions and black culinary traditions to the Invisible Man by employing the sort of õthunder wordö (õIømaseventhsonofaseventhsonbawnwithacauloverbotheyesandraisedonblackcatboneshighjohntheconquerorandgrea sygreensö) that James Joyce uses throughout *Finnegans Wake* (176).

those forms with shame. The Epilogue, a manifesto for Cold War liberal Democracy, picks up again in the present of the Prologue and offers a model for a pluralistic society in which õmanö may õkeep his many partsö (577) yet benefit from resonant exchange with the other.

When considered in this manner, it almost appears that Ellison may have synthesized the work of Günther Anders (1902-1992) with the wide and deep tradition of resonance-based models of hearing and subjectivity that Anders sought to overthrow. Ellisonøs concerns in the late 1940s and 1950s will dovetail, decades later, with those of musicologist Veit Erlmann, Endowed Chair of Music History at the University of Texas, whose 2010 book *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* (and subsequent articles) will figure prominently in my investigation as well, as Erlmann is the paramount explicator in English (or anywhere, as far as I can tell) of Günther Andersøs approach to the aural. In *Reason and Resonance*, Erlmann seeks to complicate assumptions and revise selective history about the primacy of the visual in the West since Descartes. Descartes is considered the one of the most important figures in the promotion of the ocular paradigm and all it entails (science, observation, rationality, order), but Erlmann complicates its origins through a close reading of Descartesøs neglected works on aurality, in which resonance becomes a foundation of reason.

The visual has been widely understood to be the dominant paradigm of modernity in the West. Racial segregation in the United States was but one literal manifestation of this visualist paradigm, and an aspect that Ellison sought to subvert by not representing it directly, and by looking to cultural forms preceding it and imagining those beyond it.[54] *Invisible Man* contains extensive commentary blindness, illusion, and the problems of visual perception, but it is also

[54] The doctor at the Golden Day says of his separation from medicine due to the forces of racism: õIt is an issue I can confront only by evading itö (93).

invested, critically, in debates about hearing and listening[55]. Lurking, stalking, or perhaps tarrying alongside the visualist paradigm is the aural; present all along in the modern Westøs modern philosophical tradition, beginning with the neglected aural investigations of Descartes, or so Erlmann argues compellingly (*Reason and Resonance*, 14-18). Erlmann quotes the claim of Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno (Andersøs sometime-friend and sometime-antagonist) that hearing is õarchaicö and has õnot adapted itself to the bourgeois rationalí orderö (16).[56] Perhaps, as Erlmann argues, hearing has been tracking the visual all along. Thus when Ellison and Hurston take pains to elide segregation and counter-state white supremacy through the aural, they are not resorting to an appeal to a primitive or exotic aurality, but providing critique within Western frameworks[57] that simultaneously allude to African survivals and African American antebellum orientations to the aural, which in turn mirror approaches by Anders.[58]

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[55] I do not mean to discount or ignore Ellisonøs interest in photography and work as a professional photographer, or to ignore the overwhelming quantity of visual tropes and discussions of visual perception in *Invisible Man*. On the contrary, I believe that a deeper engagement with the aural and visual were an intertwined part of Ellisonøs creative process. But perhaps his most significant commentary on modernity occurs through his commentary on aural engagement.

[56] Adorno and Eisler continue: õOne might say that to react with the ear, which is fundamentally a passive organ in contrast with the swift, actively selecting eye, is in a sense not in keeping with the present advanced industrial age and its cultural anthropologyö (13). The assumption of the earøs passivity is something that Anders works against, as his theory is a cognate to von Békésyøs wave theory of hearing, which shall be discussed below. Ellison, in *Invisible Man* ó and Erlmann ó seem conflicted about the attractiveness and potential applications of each theory, as shall be discussed below. Also, at least twice in *Invisible Man* the idiomatic phrase õlisten atö is employed instead of õlisten to,ö implying perhaps an active theory of listening within African American vernacular culture (84, 542).

[57] Cf. chapter nineteen of *Invisible Man*, when the unknown woman tells the Invisible Man: õ ÷Itøs [the Invisible Manøs voice is] so powerful, so ó so *primitive!*ø I felt some of the air escape from the room, leaving it unnaturally quiet. ÷You donøt mean primitive?ø I said. ÷Yes, primitive; no one has told you, Brother, that at times you have tom-toms beating in your voice?ø ÷My God,ø I laughed, ÷I thought that was the beat of profound ideasøö (403).

[58] Paul van Dijk, an Anders scholar, wrote an unusual book summarizing Anders work for a scholarly English speaking audience. In this book *Anthropology in the Age of Technology: The Philosophical Contribution of Günther Anders* (2000) which attempts to be a comprehensive survey of Andersø work, van Dijk includes an unfortunately very short chapter on music. In it van Dijk writes: õIn his imposing study, *Abendlandische Eschatologie* (Western Eschatology), Jacob Taubes writes in 1947: ÷Just as Hellas is called the ÷eye of the world,ø so Israel might be called the ÷ear of the world.ø In the revelation, Israel hears the voice of Yahweh. [í ] The reality of Israel swings between hearing and not-hearing the Voice.øö [van Dijk again]: õMusic receives a different dimension with Anders. í It becomes revelation; it opens up the listener. Music reveals a new dimension of existence, called with a double meaning ÷becoming-Anders,ø becoming different ó with a capital letter and a hyphen, an apparent allusion to the writerøs name changeö (72).

For Ellison, after 1949, his sharp turn toward the aural is about diving deep into the idiomatically particular in order to attain and offer ó to the other ó images of universal applicability. Movement in this direction may perhaps be seen as early as his 1944 short story õIn A Strange Country,ö but a sharp turn is identifiable after 1949, concurrent with the end of his self-imposed hiatus from music in the middle to late 1940s. As a first time novelist Ellison took a risk (of losing the reader upfront) in the disjointed hallucination scene in the Prologue to *Invisible Man*. Ellison took this risk to try to show what it was like to be õinö the music of Louis Armstrong. The Invisible Man says that he õentered into the musicö (9). He only wished it was playing simultaneously on five record players instead of one (8). I will suggest a possible source for the unusual image of the five simultaneously playing record players and the concept of being õinö music, both of which I believe can be traced to Anders, particularly his 1949 article õThe Acoustic Stereoscope,ö which Ellison may have read. Furthermore, *Invisible Man* shares wider affinities with other aspects of Anderøs thought.[59]

In *Reason and Resonance*, Erlmann rescues and explicates the little-known and mostly forgotten and difficult-to-access work of Günther Anders (who was born Günther Stern and sometimes published under the names Günther Stern, Günther Anders-Stern or Guenther Anders-

[59] The rejection of õnihilismö is one of the Andersø goals in reimagining of the act of listening. Erlmann writes that Andersø father, the philosopher William Stern (1871-1938), conceived of two basic responses to modernity, which Anders followed. They were õthe nihilistö and õhistorical Manö (*Reason and Resonance* 323). The nihilist is õunable to identify with himselfö and is thus õin constant pursuit of powerö (323). õHistorical Man,ö on the other hand, õmitigates the shock of contingency by maintaining a sense of continuity with his former self, the I of the previous dayö (323). The Invisible Man begins as an incipient nihilist, more or less untethered from his past, and in pursuit of power (in pursuit of Bledsoeø job as college president). After unpleasant encounters with a series of nihilists more ruthless and savvy than himself (Bledsoe, Norton, Brother Jack, Ras, Rinehart, et al) he begins to understand that they have each wandered down blind alleys, and he begins to understand himself as õhistorical Man.ö Along the way he encounters other õhistoricalö personages (Peter Wheatstraw, Mary Rambo, Primus Provo, and Brother Tarp, each representing the depths of African American history and experience) who function as counterpoint to or provide counter-information about experience that would be alien to the cohort of nihilists. I would like to connect this reading of *Invisible Man* with jazz and blues through Ronald A.T. Judyø definition of the blues, quoted in the first chapter: õthe manifold complexity of narrative strategies and rhetorical operations through which Afro-Americans subverted the nihilistic aspects of their enslavement, creating a rich culture of human enduranceö (Judy 54).

Stern). Anders scholar Paul van Dijk cites one claim that õmore than two thirds of [Andersøs] writingsö remain unpublished (25). Most of his published and unpublished work is in German. But Anders did publish a few articles in English. I believe that Andersøs 1949 article õThe Acoustic Stereoscopeö (not mentioned by Erlmann or van Dijk), written in English and published in New York, may have been a source for (or inspiration for) the hypothesized five phonographs that the narrator of *Invisible Man* wishes to listen to in the Prologue of the novel. Ellisonøs return to music after a self-imposed hiatus, which I will relay below, was also in 1949. Ellison started to write *Invisible Man* in 1945 and published it in 1952, but the Prologue, in which the Invisible Man recounts entering into the music of Louis Armstrong, was one of the last sections Ellison wrote. According to Barbara Foley, õthe entirety of the prologueí came to Ellison only late in his compositional processö (157). Foleyøs implication is that it was written at least after 1947 and perhaps after 1948. Ellison revised the novel through late 1951. In the January 1948 issue of *The Magazine of the Year*, in which the Battle Royal segment was published as a short story, a biographical note at the bottom of the first page says that õ*The* [sic] *Invisible Man*ö was õto be published later this yearö (15). As Barbara Foley has demonstrated in detail, Cold War politics played a large role in the three year delay; essentially necessitating a re-write of the second half of the book. This is undoubtedly true. But Ellisonøs re-embrace of music might have been part of the delay as well. I believe it is plausible and likely that Ellison read or heard of Andersøs article and was influenced by it accordingly. If he did not read it or know of it, then the coincidence is uncanny and therefore still worth investigating. At the same moment Anders and Ellison were both contemplating what it meant to be õinö music as opposed to being passively impacted by it, and both drew similar and significant philosophical conclusions from the reorientation of listening.

I will briefly summarize Erlmannøs explanation of Andersøs engagement with sound in order to most fully contextualize the article that may have influenced Ellison. Perhaps best known today as a critic of nuclear proliferation, Anders was an accomplished critic and philosopher. Erlmann goes to great pains to separate the thought of Anders from his teacher, Martin Heidegger (of whom he was critical), from his one-time friend and competitor, Adorno, and from his ex-wife, and one-time scholarly collaborator, Hannah Arendt. Arendt was an acquaintance of Ralph Ellison and close friend and neighbor of Ellisonøs close friend, the artist Romare Bearden (Schwartzman 175). If Ellison heard of Anders, or there was a personal connection of any kind between Ellison and Anders, perhaps it was through Arendt. On the other hand, Ellison led a busy social life in New Yorkøs intellectual circles and could have encountered Anders and/or his work through other channels.

Paul Gilroy has asserted that black music is productive of a counterculture of modernity (36). Andersøs theories are analogous as they constitute an alternative to how that modernity imagined itself aurally. Like monopoly capitalism and imperialism, racial segregation was a salient feature of the apex of that modernity, which crested circa 1900. Comparing the works of Ellison and Hurston with the thought of Anders might also create a standpoint from which to try to get a better sense of what is happening when sound is represented in these works, and how that representation of sound (and subjectivity) thus may constitute a critique not just of bourgeois democracy (an ideal version of which Ellison hoped for) but also left and right totalitarian reactions to it.

Erlmannøs project has been to identify and explicate the buried aural alternatives in modern thought. His approach ties the scientific and biological to the philosophical. It is a project grounded in the history of science as well as the history of philosophy. In his final

chapter he presents what seems to be an admiring and approving recovery of Andersøs work and unique position, marking the clearest break with all that came before in the previous three centuries; with what Erlmann calls õthe resonant ego.ö And yet in his 2011 article õDescartesøs Resonant Subjectö he tries to rehabilitate the resonance model. Just as the scientific jury is out about which model of the hearing process is correct, Erlmann ó and Ellison ó seem conflicted at first glance about which metaphor based on the hearing process is the most attractive. In *Invisible Man*, the Invisible Manøs conflicted position about the positionality of hearing is reflected in the contradictions of his physical position and stated positions on that position in the Prologue and Epilogue. He says he wants to and intends to leave the basement ó so why doesnøt he? In the process he offers hibernative hearing models (closely akin to Andersøs), and, at the very, end, an assertion that implicates a resonant model, for venturing abroad, if only with oneøs voice.

The hearing process remains a mystery. The resonance theory (having numerous iterations from Ancient Greece through today, focusing on the earøs cochlea as the site of hearing) and the non-resonant wave theory (of Georg von Békésy in 1928, focusing on the earøs basilar membrane) both maintain adherents. According to a well-cited 2004 article by Andrew Bell of the University of Newcastle in Australia, the wave theory õhas the weight of von Békésyøs extensive experiments behind it,ö but cannot account for different perceptions of pitch between individuals, among other things (Bell 1). Resonance theory is more fully explanatory but less empirically verifiable. Each theory has philosophical cognates. There have been many theorists of resonance, from Descartes and Diderot through Heidegger and Jean-Luc Nancy.[60]

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[60] Here, for instance, is Nancy, in *Listening* (2002):

> Timbre can be represented as the resonance of a stretched skin (possibly sprinkled with alcohol, the way certain shamans do), and as the expansion of this resonance in the hollowed column of a drum. Isnøt the space of a listening body, in turn, just such a hollow column over which a skin is stretched, but also from which the opening of a mouth can resume and retrieve resonance? A blow from outside, clamor from

Andersøs idea of inhabiting music, of musical space as separate from the world, is the cognate of Békésyøs theory ó a theory of an active, participatory listening by a non-resonant ego. (What was discovered later, as Bell explains, was that participatory resonant models are possible as well.) The question for the purposes of this investigation is not which is scientifically correct, as that remains unknown, but what are the implications of the theories of subjectivity based upon each theory of hearing and, when apprehended in a literary text, how might noticing the work they seem to be performing influence trajectories of interpretation. In the case of the Invisible Man, he seems to want to have it both ways: he is comfortably nestled in his basement anonymity but

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> within, this sonorous, sonorized body undertakes a simultaneous listening to a ÷selfø and to a ÷worldø that are both in resonance. (42-3)

Contrast this idea of the õlistening bodyö as a drum-like õhollow columnö receptive to resonance, with Hurston, in *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, describing a subject more actively participating with music, having, perhaps as Anders would say, formed an enclave with it. Here is the narrator of *Jonah's Gourd Vine*:

> They called for the instrument that they had brought to America in their skins ó the drum ó and they played upon it. With their hands they played upon the little dance drums of Africa. The drums of kid-skin. With their feet they stomped it, and the voice of Kata-Kumba, the great drum, lifted itself within them and they heard it. The great drum that is made by the priests and sits in majesty in the juju house. The drum with the man skin that is dressed with human blood, that is beaten with a human shin-bone and speaks to gods as a man and to men as a God. Then they beat upon the drum and danced. It was said, ÷He will serve us better if we bring him from Africa nameless and thing-less.ø So the buckra reasoned. They tore away his clothes that Cuffy might bring nothing away, but Cuffy seized his drum and hid it in his skin under the skull bones. The shin-bones he bore openly, for he thought ÷Who shall rob me of shin-bones when they see no drum?øí So he groaned aloud in the ships and hid his drum and laughed. (29)

Hurston locates a psychological if not political resistance at the site of the musically aware subject who can turn the body into a musical instrument via transmitted tradition. Hurstonøs subject is a producer of sound and not a passive consumer, as in Nancyøs formulation. The drum made of human body parts seems like a metaphor for the rhythmic orientation of a culture that can hide itself or express itself accordingly. Rather than passively battered about and shaped by the sounds of the world, the slave, in Hurstonøs formulation understood metaphorically, has taken sound, hid it õunder the skull bonesö and brings it out, through the body, at secret moments unknown to the oppressor. To be õinö music in this sense is to access a place within, in which music provides a means for endurance and survival. This seems quite different from the õhollowö blank slate that passively receives strikes and that has impressions, ideas, and societal norms beamed into it through resonating sounds.

also wishes to leave it soon in order to engage in social action. His voice leaves it ó and he hopes, resonates with the other ó but he still wishes to inhabit the music beaming from the five (imagined) simultaneously playing records. In his second novel, Ellison will suggest ways in which a community of individuals may inhabit sound together or, depending on the angle of interpretation, how resonance may work upon each individually (thanks, I argue, to a model provided by Hurston). Both possibilities are plausible. But what is certain is that, for Ellison, the power of sound is the definitive, active variable unaccounted for the by visual paradigm.

For Anders, according to Erlmann, to be õinö music is to form an õenclaveö with music (326). Erlmann writes:

> Andersøs project, I claim, constitutes nothing less than the end of the concept of the resonant ego. For centuries, scores of illuminati, savants, philosophes, and Naturphilosophen had taken resonance as more than just the physiological mechanism responsible for audition. Resonance was inextricably linked with presence ó the presence of an idea, emotion, or object ó and as such, it was key to a definition of reason as the key vehicle of modern self-fashioning. In fact, it was not the interplay of consciousness and aesthetic experience so fundamental to the nineteenth-century German philosophical tradition that defined the bourgeois subject, but reasonance [sic], the strange coupling of reason and resonance that had enthralled even the most stubborn champions of the cogito, from Descartes to Nietzsche. [í ] Where are we when we think, and where are we when we listen to music? [Andersøs] answer, vaguely reminiscent of the philosophical schooling he had received in Freiburg, is perplexingly simple: When listening to music we are out of the world and in music. Yet the plain elegance, or perhaps the sheer Romanticism of this hypothesis should not deceive us. As we will see below, the concept of ÷being in musicø takes the authorí through a dense series of ruminations in which listening emerges as the key vehicle allowing Anders to dismantle the central position in modern Western thought of the Cartesian *fundamentum inconcussum*. (311-12)

If Erlmann takes the position that Andersøs critique of listening becomes his route to õdismantle the central position in modern Western thoughtö then perhaps, Ellisonøs exploration of listening

is part of his path to dismantling a central product of that modern Western thought: the concept of race, racial thinking, or what Ellison called õblood magicö and õblood thinkingö (*Collected Essays* 509). Erlmann writes: õBeing in music ó or being in hearing, as Anders and Arendt had put it in their Rilke essay ó are modes of being that seek fulfillment not so much in cavity resonance, as in Sloterdijkøs or Heideggerøs uterine theory of music, but in separation, in obstetrics. í The *ars bene movendi* of musical situations is the art of coming into the world[61]ö (338). Sound, for Anders, does not passively shape the subject by striking the body and resonating within the body cavity[62], but rather, by allowing the subject to temporarily jettison the body, to be out of oneself in order to return more fully to oneself (as õoneselfö is colloquially understood); to form an enclave with music, thereby becoming more in touch with oneself at the end of the process (becoming and maintaining the õhistoricalö personhood mentioned in the note above).

[61] *Dark Princess* (1928) by Du Bois, cited above as an example of segregation fiction *par excellence*, opens with the protagonist, black medical student Matthew Towns, angrily throwing õhis marks, his certificates, and commendationsö in the face of the white dean of the medical school of õManhattan Universityö who tells Towns that he will not be allowed to study obstetrics (4). The dean claims that a white woman will not want a õnigger doctorö to deliver her baby. But if blacks are not allowed to study obstetrics, who will deliver babies in õseparate but equalö black hospitals? That question had to arise for Du Bois and/or his editor(s). The novel begins with Towns leaving medical school because of this affront. But even if the dean of õManhattan Universityö medical school in the 1920s was such a committed racist who publicly used terms like õnigger doctor,ö he would still presumably understand that black obstetricians were required specifically because of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Du Bois thus risks alienating the thoughtful reader with an unbelievable character and unrealistic scenario at the very outset of the novel for a reason: he was making a point about obstetrics; a cryptic one until considered in the light of Andersøs critique of Heidegger. Du Bois may or may not have known about that, but he may have been thinking along the same lines.

[62] Some have called the Invisible Manøs basement space womb-like, but if it is instead thought of as tomb-like (since the protagonist does not leave it in the end), there could possibly be levels of signification here alluding to Ulysses S. Grantøs tomb and the silly old joke about it. The Invisible Manøs tomb, if it is indeed, a tomb, can be thought of as an inversion of Grantøs Tomb. Grant is buried in Grantøs Tomb, but who will be buried in the Invisible Manøs tomb? His name will never be known: he burns every identifying document he owns, including his high school diploma and the slip with his Brotherhood name, after falling through the manhole on the night of the riot (567-68). Grantøs tomb is above ground, the Invisible Manøs is below. Both are in õborder areasö on the edges of Harlem. And the personal, familial, communal, civic, and technological legacy of the Civil War and the abandonment of Reconstruction ó partially resulting from Grantøs corrupt administration that led to a close election in 1876 that resulted in the Hayes-Tilden Compromise ó is ever on the mind of the Invisible Man and was ever on the mind of Ellison. Grantøs Tomb was dedicated in 1897. The Invisible Manøs dwelling space was õshut off and forgotten during the nineteenth centuryö (6). The Invisible Man is an autobiographer, as was Grant.

The Prologue of *Invisible Man* may contain a critique of Heideggerøs õacoustic uterusö (as Erlmann calls it) while employing a position similar to that of Anders. Erlmann writes that õThe resolution of our longing for timelessness, according to Anders, is not a question of ontology or of Heideggerøs pseudohistorical phantasm, but of a well-lived life, of the successful handling of time in the satisfaction of our vital needsö (339). For Erlmann, õthe ultimate lesson of Andersøs anthropology of listening is perhaps the idea that it is in the plenitude of presence, in a realm beyond the threshold of sensory immediacy, but also well below the arrogance of reason, that musical situations put a stop to timeö (339). The Invisible Man claims that invisibility results in an awareness of timeøs õnodes, those points where time stands still and from which it leaps aheadö (8). This is Anderøs musical situation. The time spent in music has made ÷realø time stand still. It jumps ahead when the music stops. The Invisible Man finds a õcaveö within the music of Louis Armstrong (÷below the arrogance of reason,ø perhaps) after descending into its depths (9). In its depths, in the underworld of sound, he will hallucinate and hear a fragment of the sermon on a õblackness of blacknessö and the wrenching testimony of the woman who had been a slave and had children by her master. Ellisonøs risk-reward scenario here is an especially pronounced one, with the risk being enormous: a highly surreal sequence with an unclear payoff ó unless considered in light of Andersøs ruminations (or, subtracting Anders from the equation, parallel ones that Ellison thought of himself), at which point the reward becomes enormous as well.

It would perhaps be going too far to suggest that being õinö music is therefore being not õinö segregated society, or that the freezing of time by music thus freezes history and provides some sort of alternative space in which there is no segregation. But at the same time, the freezings of time by music (and sound) as occurring in these texts do seem mark moments of subtle separation from the pedestrian decrees of a segregated state and reconnection, perhaps,

with a resilient mode of being developed as a strategy for enduring slavery. This is related to understanding music separated from its content. Erlmann asks:

> So what does it mean when Anders, in a blatant reversal of the idea of reasonance, declares listening to be ÷being in music?ø And why is Anders interested in musical ÷situations,ø rather than, like any self-respecting neo-Kantian or hermeneutic philosopher of music of his time, in music as the sensuous embodiment of an idea of meaning? Likewise, why is there such little attention being given to the ÷subjectø behind the work? (321)

The question about music, content, and meaning is well-illustrated in Ellisonøs 1944 short story õIn a Strange Country,ö written during his self-imposed hiatus from music, in which an African American sailor on shore leave in Wales during World War II is assaulted by white American sailors also on shore leave. This is a work in the segregation aesthetic that contains hints or gestures of the sound-centered alternative that Ellison would explore later in *Invisible Man* and in his second novel. What Norman and Williams describe as the three elements of the segregation aesthetic ó the spatialization of race, the spatialization of fear, and the catalyst of cross-racial contact ó all become replicated and reproduced in this Welsh village, as if to imply that the importation of Jim Crow, at least among American service personnel, is part of an unspoken arrangement with Britain, as it has come under the protection of the United States. The African American sailor, Parker, is befriended by kind Welshmen after he has been punched in the eye by his fellow Americans. He is taken to a pub for a beer, and then to a fraternal singing club. The omniscient narrator describes Parkerøs feelings at hearing the Welsh tunes:

> The well-blended voices caught him unprepared. He heard the musicøs warm richness with pleasurable surprise, and heard, beneath the strange Welsh words, echoes of plain song, like that of Russian folk songs sounding. [í ] They were singing another of their songs now, and though he could not understand the words he felt himself drawn closer to its web of meaning. Then the familiar and hateful emotion of alienation gripped his throat.

> ÷It was a song about Wales?ø he asked, soothing his eye.
>
> ÷Exactly!ø exclaimed Mr. Catti. ÷And the other was about a battle in which we defeated the English. Nothing like music to reveal whatøs in the heart. You donøt need lyrics, reallyø (*Flying Home* 142).

Parker is lost in the õwarm richnessö of the sound until he intuits that it is a song about petty ethnic triumphalism, at which point õthe familiar and hateful emotion of alienation gripped his throat.ö After pondering the lack of such songs in an African American tradition, he feels õa surge of deep longing to know the anguish and exultation of such [patriotic] loveö (143). Parker goes from enthrallment with the sound, to revulsion at the content of the song, to a desire to be able to authentically take part in such music. Undoubtedly, his second reaction is affected by the kindness shown to him by these men, who buy him drinks and are good and sincere through the end of the story. While the music of these men might suggest that they are õmarooned in the ethnosö (to quote Posnock again), they have given hospitality to an African American, and they also play õThe Internationale.ö They are for the universally oppressed and against the English. But still, it is a scene that reveals much about ways of listening, and also about a deep and multifaceted American desire for ethnic authenticity, which Ellison examines and rejects across several works, most notably in *Invisible Man*.

## II. Sound and Subjectivity in *Invisible Man*

In his 1955 essay õLiving With Music,ö Ellison writes of re-embracing music in 1949 after having consciously distanced himself from it. As a skilled trumpeter and incipient composer when he left Tuskegee Institute in 1936, he decided that a self-imposed hiatus from music was necessary in order to try to become a writer in New York. After hearing a recording of Handeløs

õRodelindaö by Kathleen Ferrier, he becomes re-enamored with music and the most recent technological apparatuses for hearing it:

> Between the hi-fi record and the ear, I learned, there was a new electronic world....It was 1949, and I rushed to the Audio Fairí .I had hardly entered the fair before I heard David Sarserøs and Mel Sprinkleøs Musicianøs Amplifier, took a look at its schematic and, recalling a boyhood acquaintance with such matters, decided that I could build oneí .All this plunge into electronics, mind you, had as its simple end the enjoyment of recorded music as it was intended to be heard. I was obsessed with the idea of reproducing sound with such fidelity that even when using music as a defense behind which I could write, it would reach the unconscious levels of the mind with the least distortion. (233-34)

Considering his new found zeal as an audiophile, it is not at all inconceivable that he sought out journals with the latest writing about sound. Because of his use of Francis Steegmullerøs 49th Street office when writing *Invisible Man*, he was often near the New York Public Library on 42nd Street and would have had access to numerous academic journals. It is thus not impossible that he saw Andersøs article õThe Acoustic Stereoscopeö in the December 1949 issue of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (published under õGuenther Anders-Sternö). Perhaps his new friends in the hi-fi community, such as David Sarser, pointed him toward various articles. Perhaps he heard a summary or echo of Andersøs article at a party. Anders himself was in New York at this time, teaching at the New School for Social Research. In any event, the following passage from Anders on the use of two radios may be a source for the five wished-for record players in the Prologue to *Invisible Man.* Even if Ellison never heard of the following passage, it is still significant that he and Anders (or Anders-Stern, at this moment in his career) were thinking along the same lines and reaching similar conclusions about inhabiting sound and musical space. Anders (Anders-Stern) describes his õacoustic stereoscopeö as follows:

> *If you place one radio to your right and one to your left, and have them play the same music simultaneously, it immediately will assume a completely new 'look.'*
>
> [í ] In ÷arithmetics of soundø one plus one does not equal two, which odd phenomenon is known to every acute conductor. [í ] No, the qualitative difference is caused by the stereoscopic effect. When the two radios flank you, the two music-images become one; their merging produces the effect of spatial fullness[63]; now you are actually in music. The difference between the ÷oldø and the ÷newø look is far more than a quantitative or coloristic one; it is rather the difference that exists between a painting and a work of sculpture; or between just seeing a river from outside and being carried by it.
>
> Now, it is surprising to observe that the feeling of ÷being inø is not only the space-effect produced by the two-set arrangement; all the other spatial characteristics of music assume a bafflingly articulated profile, too. (240-41, emphasis in original)

The image of being carried along by a river as opposed to observing a river is a striking one[64], perhaps illustrating Andersøs point better than the more abstract quotes included by Erlmann in *Reason and Resonance*. Anders is not thinking about jazz per se, in fact he notes that the acoustic stereoscope generally works best with nineteenth century orchestral music, but goes on to note in the next paragraph that the õillusion is most strikingö in a concerto; in music involving a soloist in a relation to an orchestra. He is also discussing radios, not phonographs, but presumably it would work the same way. Ellisonøs attempt to appreciate Armstrongøs music most fully via five phonographs is such an odd one that it would appear that Andersøs idea of creating an acoustic stereoscope with two radios in order to be õactually in musicö could be a source for it. The Invisible Man states:

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[63] Here Anders could be responding to Adorno, who in õThe Form of the Phonograph Recordö (1930) laments the loss of õheight and abyssö in recorded music (57). Adorno responds at length to Andersøs 1930 essay õSpook in Radioö (referring to Anders as Stern) in his essay õRadio Physiognomy,ö in which he criticizes, among other things, Andersøs approach to space in music (*Current in Music* 86). In õThe Acoustic Stereoscopeö Anders mentions the õvoluminosityö of music. It appears that in the intervening decade or so he revised his approach to musical space, perhaps in response to Adornoøs critique.

[64] While õinö Armstrongøs music the Invisible Man õlonged for waterö and says õI heard it rushing through the cold mains my fingers touched as I felt my wayö (12).

> Now I have one radio-phonograph; I plan to have five. There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to feel its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body. Iød like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing ÷What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blueø ó all at the same time. Sometimes now I listen to Louis while I have my favorite dessert of vanilla ice cream and sloe gin. I pour the red liquid over the white mound, watching it glisten and the vapor rising as Louis bends that military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound. Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because heøs made poetry out of being invisible. (7-8)

He wishes to hear with his õwhole bodyö ó as if, perhaps, being swept along in the river of music, in Andersøs metaphor. Perhaps, in imagining the body as a giant ear, he is riffing on Ralph Waldo Emersonøs idea of transforming into a transparent eyeball, expressed in *Nature* (10) and õThe American Scholarö (54).[65] This should not be confused with cavity resonance. The Invisible Man does not say he wants to feel the pounding of the music in his chest, for instance. He wants to completely inhabit it.

Of course, the five records playing simultaneously do not actually appear. The Invisible Man only expresses a wish to create that situation. Playing two records simultaneously just for fun, as hip-hop disc jockeys mixing on the radio used to do occasionally for a few moments, does add a particular and somewhat shocking õwooshö sound to the recordings being played simultaneously and synchronized. This generally cannot last for more than a few seconds because of minuscule differences between the records and turntables. The difference between when each record was started and other factors will, after a few seconds (though sometimes much longer), cause one to move ever so slightly faster, undoing the synchronization that causes the spectacular, intriguing, not-un-river-like õwoosh.ö It would be impossible for one person to enable five record players to play one record with perfect simultaneity, barring the use of a

[65] The space in which he becomes a giant ear ó an unknown basement inhabited by a black man within an all-white building ó therefore a doubly-secret and doubly-constricted space, is something like the opposite of the õbare commonö on which Emerson can imagine transforming into a giant eyeball.

particular contraption or gadget invented just for the purpose. Immediately preceding his discussion of the record, the Invisible Man declares that he may invent a device to place his coffee pot on the stove without getting out of bed. Perhaps this implies a forthcoming gadget to move the arm of the record player(s) into place, but that would require much more precision and thus be even more far-fetched than the Rube Goldberg-esque coffee pot picker-upper.[66]

The Invisible Man mentions õa certain acoustical deadnessö in his dwelling space. According to Erlmann, õit was Anders who first linked the feeling of an existential forlornness so widespread after World War I to a more fundamental form of disturbance: the loss of echo[67]ö (315). There is an inverse relationship between strength of the Invisible Manøs adherence to the ideology of the college and the extent to which he is spellbound by echo. The acoustical deadness in the basement in the Prologue contrasts sharply with the resonant chapel at the college in chapter five. At the ceremony during the interregnum between returning with Mr. Norton from the Golden Day and being expelled from the college by Bledsoe, the Invisible Man attends a solemn ceremony celebrating the collegeøs founding and honoring the trustees. Here, while in the audience, he recalls:

> there on the platform I too had stridden and debated, a student leader directing my voice at the highest beams and farthest rafters, ringing them, the accents staccato upon the ridgepole and echoing back, with a tinkling, like words hurled to the trees of a wilderness, or into a well of slate-gray water; more sound than sense, a play

[66] Perhaps the image of the five records all playing at once implies some form of community, perhaps even a kind of temporary utopia ó five individuals to put five needles down at the same moment (or five hands acting in unison like the fingers on one hand). With Andersøs radios, such temporal coordination not a problem ó the radios are playing the same broadcast source, just out of multiple devices. All the solitary individual has to do is turn on the devices and set them to the same dial and the result, presumably, will be synchronized. Therefore, it seems that if Ellison knew Andersøs article, and changed radios to phonographs for the image in his novel, he was, if the image is supposed to have any real world physical practicality, advocating or imagining a new form of community within the acoustically dead space ó a space beyond the reaches of and unknown to the Jim Crow regime ó where music could thus be inhabited.

[67] Arendt and Andersøs (Sternøs) essay õRilkeøs *Duino Elegies*ö begins by asserting that the poems are characterized by õan absence of echo and a knowledge of futilityö (Arendt and Stern 1).

> upon the resonances of buildings, an assault upon the temple of the ear. (112-13)

Reflecting on hearing his own voice echo he now (twenty years hence, the time of the narration) understands its illusory nature. While at the college, under the spell of its ideology of social responsibility and dehistoricized New Negro imagery, he was also under the spell of echo. Just following his fateful meeting with Bledsoe, where he learns he will be banished (temporarily, he thinks) from the college, echo will once again assault the temple of the ear, partially causing him to stumble:

> From somewhere across the quiet of the campus the sound of an old guitar-blues plucked from an out-of-tune piano drifted toward me like a lazy shimmering wave, like the echoed whistle of a lonely train, and my head went over again, against a tree this time, and I could hear it splattering the flowered vines. (146)

By the time he reaches the factory hospital in chapter eleven, after the events of chapter nine, in which his encounter with blues-singing, signifyinø Joycean thunder-word employing Peter Wheatstraw early in the chapter begins his rekindle his childhood memories of black vernacular traditions and forestalls reflexive condemnation of such traditions, and his encounter with young Mr. Emerson (who lets him read Bledsoeøs Bellerophontic letter) deals the penultimate blow to sentimental feelings about the college (to be finally extinguished after his stint at Liberty Paints), he beings to think differently about music. The odd experience of dwelling within music will begin to affect him at the factory hospital:

> The static sounds became a quiet drone. Strains of music, a Sunday air, drifted from a distance. With closed eyes, barely breathing, I warded off the pain. The voices droned harmoniously. Was it a radio I heard ó a phonograph? The *vox humana* of a hidden organ? If so, what organ and where? I felt warm. Green hedges, dazzling with red wild roses appeared behind my eyes, stretching with a gentle curving to an infinity empty of objects, a limpid blue space. Scenes of a shaded lawn in summer drifted past; I saw a uniformed military band arrayed decorously in concertí heard a sweet voiced

> trumpet rendering ÷The Holy Cityø as from an echoing distance, buoyed by a choir of muted horns, and above, the mocking obligato of a mocking bird. I felt giddy. The air seemed to grow thick with gnats, filling my eyes, boiling so thickly that the dark trumpeter breathed them in and expelled them through the bell of his golden horn, a live white cloud mixing with the tones upon the torpid air. (234)

Here he is õinö music, so it would seem, in the sense that Anders meant: the musical situation put a stop to time. To be in music is to be in an alternative sound-world. It is not a utopian world, neither in the Prologue nor chapter eleven, but a different world nonetheless. He begins the next paragraph with õI came back.ö Whether or not õThe Holy Cityö was playing on a radio or phonograph as part of the array of experiments the doctors were performing on him or it was dredged up from his memory is unclear.

In any event, his break with the resonance model runs parallel to his break with the collegeøs ideology. At Mary Ramboøs boarding house at the outset of chapter fourteen, prior to calling Brother Jack and taking him up on his offer made in the coffee shop at the end of chapter thirteen, the Invisible Man is comforted by Maryøs singing: õThen from down the hall I could hear Mary singing, her voice clear and untroubled, though she sang a troubled song. It was the ÷Back Water Blues.ø I lay listening as the sound flowed to and over me, bringing me a calm sense of my indebtednessö (297). This will be his final experience of being õinö music for some time.

Resonance returns again when he embraces a new ideology, that of the Brotherhood. At the Brotherhoodøs party, later in the chapter, one of oddest (and on the surface, most irrelevant) details in the novel appears: õWe entered a room lined with books and decorated with old musical instruments: An Irish harp, a hunterøs horn, a clarinet, and a wooden flute were suspended by the neck from the wall on pink and blue ribbonsö (301). This could suggest the

progression of the history of musical instruments. But the still, displayed instruments seem to suggest an arrest of music. At the outset of chapter fifteen, the morning after signing on with the Brotherhood (and accepting his new name), he is awakened be a õbrash, nerve-jangling soundö (318). His soothing habitation within sound has ceased and sounding is assaulting him again, as õsomeone was pounding the steam line.ö He is once again in the passive mode of listening ó of being the receiver of resonance without resonant exchange: õMy ears throbbed. My side began itching violently and I tore often my pajamas to scratch, and suddenly the pain seemed to leap from my ears to my sideö (318). At this moment an alarm clock goes off (perhaps alluding to the opening of *Native Son*) but is drowned out by the banging on the pipes. The Invisible Man is awakened, just hours after receiving his new name, by a sound more ominous, because mysterious (who was the person banging the pipe?) and jarring than that which greets Bigger Thomas at the outset of *Native Son*. Only when he starts to break with the Brotherhood will his old relationship to sound return, during the impromptu singing of õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö during Cliftonøs funeral procession in chapter twenty-one (452). The song is heard in perhaps something like what Adorno and Eisler call the archaic mode of listening, in which music is in õdirect relationship to a collectivityö (13), as the spirituals were intended to be heard. When he first hears the õpure sweet tone of the horn and the old manøs husky baritoneö he claims he õfought something in my throatö (453). Then:

> I felt a wonder at the singing mass. It was as though the song had been there all the time and he knew it and aroused it; and I knew that I had known it too and had failed to release it out of a vague, nameless shame or fear. [í ] I looked at the coffin and the marchers, listening to them, and yet realizing that I was listening to something within myself. (453)

It seems as though he must pass through this passive if communal mode of listening, itself different from being buffeted by resonance, as with the pounding on the steam pipe and the

alarm clock, before returning to the active mode. By the time of the Prologue, he has long since lost all illusions about the college and dwells surreptitiously in the non-resonant basement, defying both the strictures of segregation, as it is a whites-only building (6), and modernityøs prominent theories of listening. (The contrast between the Prologue and Cliftonøs funeral will be explored in the next section, on Ellison, Sarser, and audio technology.)

Yet, much as Erlmann will, in the year following the publication of *Reason and Resonance*, the Invisible Man will mount an attempt to recuperate resonance. Here it may be necessary to parse the Invisible Manøs somewhat unclear commentary on smoking marijuana while listening to Armstrong. As I understand it, the õanalytical listeningö the Invisible Man develops while under the influence on marijuana is something like a temporary substitute for the five record players. In the õunderworld of soundö the Invisible Man is able to õhear around corners,ö but ultimately this õinhibits actionö (13). While õunder the spell of the reeferö he hears õnot only in time, but in space as well.ö To hear in space truly, in the sense Anderøs describes, and not in an illusory, hallucinatory way requires an acoustic stereoscope. Thus, the marijuana substitutes for the record players, and the device to make the needles drop at once, or the community of like-minded individuals to drop the needles at once. Such listening, the Invisible Man implies, even when artificially induced by a narcotic is desirable and enjoyable, but not translatable to the other.

Erlmann too seems to come to the conclusion that Andersøs approach, while compelling (and compellingly relayed in *Reason and Resonance*), is a practical, social, and political dead end. Erlmann and Ellison seem to have thought through the same issues and reached similar conclusions: the idea of being õinö music is attractive, but there is a risk in being seduced by it,

while resonance is problematic, but is perhaps the only vehicle for communication with the other. Erlmann writes, in approving paraphrase and interpretation of Descartes:

> Resonance and sympathy, Descartes seems to suggest, are if not the essence then the condition of philosophy. Without resonance, a voice will fail to find a sympathetic reception. [í ] If the voice and the eardrum of the other are, almost literally, not on the same wavelength the speakerøs words will be misunderstood, or worse, they will not be heard at all. (õDescartesøs Resonant Subjectö 14-15)

The Invisible Man, of course, tells the reader (or perhaps the listener; perhaps the entire narrative has been a radio broadcast) on which wavelength his voice may be found and where he may in fact be speaking for reader/listener: the lower frequencies (581).

## III. Ellison, David Sarser and Audio Technology

Ellison explicitly connected his literary goals in *Invisible Man* with those of new developments in audio equipment. Around 1949 Ellison befriended the violinist, audio engineer, recording studio builder, and musical amplification inventor David Sarser, whose varied contributions had a major impact on the development of high fidelity stereo equipment. According to Arnold Rampersad, circa 1950 õRalph became for a while Sarserøs unofficial assistant ö (251). Ellison inscribed Sarserøs copy of *Invisible Man* as follows: õFor David Sarser, that artist-technician, who has made unheard music hearable, this small effort to make the unseen seeable. Sincerely, Ralph Ellison[68]ö (Ellison, õInscription in Sarserøs Copy of *Invisible Man*ö). Perceiving invisibility, for Ellison, was thus somewhat analogous to properly hearing a recorded

[68] As of March 3, 2014 and for the last several years this copy of *Invisible Man* inscribed to Sarser has been offered for sale (on abebooks.com) by Charles Agvent Books of Mertztown, Pennsylvania for $18,750. I have taken a screen shot of the inscription and the Web page offering the book for sale.

piece of music. Both relate to a sharpening of senses. If invisibility in a particularly African American context was largely driven by various causes that could fall under the Jim Crow umbrella, the narrator suggests at the end that such invisibility could be universal.

In arriving at the metaphor of social invisibility Ellison was influenced by Thomas Hardyøs *Jude The Obscure* (Graham and Singh, 44; Rampersad, 76, Jackson 150). The feeling of social invisibility that afflicts the well-read stone mason Jude in the fictional English college town of Christminster is a class-based invisibility (Hardy 92, 100/Part Second, Chapters I and II). Ellison recognized the reality of the social invisibility identified by Hardy, but understood it was exponentially more intensely felt in an African American context. He thus amplified the trope accordingly, while admitting at the end that anyone or everyone might feel this, if with perhaps less amplification. Likewise, if high-fidelity equipment and stereo recording meant hearing African American musical creations as they were meant to be heard, then more people than only African Americans (that is, whites or others who may not have heard the best performers in the best contexts due to law or custom) would have access to the proper way the music was to be heard.[69] If *Invisible Man* is in fact an effort õto make the unseen seeableö (not just the narrator, but also Louis Armstrong) and this is akin to making the unheard hearable, then perhaps the book can be thought of as an effort to cut through the static of racial misunderstanding, rather than amplify the difference. In each case the problem is with device: the pre-stereo sound device and pre-modernist literary device. New technology and new technique (blues idiom or õblues-collarö modernism) were needed for a more refined perception.

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[69] For instance, the astoundingly crisp and clear albums that Louis Armstrong recorded with producer George Avakian in the late 1950s give a listener a hint of what the astounding power of Armstrongøs trumpet must have been like in person in the 1920s and 1930s. On one of these albums, *Satch Plays Fats*, is the remake of *What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue*.

I do not mean to put too much interpretive weight on a friendly book inscription, but Ellison held Sarser in great esteem and they would remain friends for decades[70].

In 1999 the historian of sound Susan Schmidt-Horning interviewed Sarser. In this unpublished interview the highly respected Sarser startlingly claimed that Ellison ghost-wrote a piece that appeared under his name. Sarser told Schmidt-Horning: õI wrote an article, itøs a brilliant article, because I didnøt write it: Ralph Ellison wrote it. But itøs 100% me. Ralph was like thatö (Sarser 1). It is also nearly õ100%ö Ellison. The article, õTape, Disks, and Coexistence[71],ö appeared in the magazine *High Fidelity* (March 1955) and was reprinted in *The High Fidelity Reader* (1955).

In February 2014, Schmidt-Horning shared Sarserøs claim with Loren Schoenberg, as Schoenberg was supervising the creation of the exhibition õRalph Ellison: A Man and his Records,ö which was to open the following month at the National Jazz Museum in Harlem. As I was one of the exhibitionøs curators and literary consultants, Schoenberg told me of his exchange with Schmidt-Horning and of Sarserøs claim. I proceeded to find the article. Based on voice, style, tone, cadence, imagery and arrangement, it seemed to obviously be a work by Ralph Ellison. I passed the article along to Ellison scholar Robert G. OøMeally (another of the exhibitionøs curators and consultants), who concurred with my assessment. I believe that if it is not entirely a work by Ellison (which it could very well be), then Ellison must have had a heavy hand in its creation or editing. That Ellison might have taken time out of his demanding schedule

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[70] According to John Callahan and Adam Bradley, in 1988 Ellison hired Sarser to transfer files from his current computer to a new computer. In the process, his pre-1988 (c. 1982-1988) files were erased (*Three Days Before the Shooting*... xiv). (It is hard to not see this event as another excuse for not finishing his second novel. But why not print out the files prior to attempting to transfer them? If it was an attempt at another excuse, it is significant that he implicated Sarser in it.)

[71] õCoexistenceö refers to the coexistence between records and tapes, not nuclear coexistence with the U.S.S.R., though that allusion may have been intended. It could also allude to racial coexistence.

to write a piece for Sarser is remarkable (and may sound far-fetched at first), but in fact Ellison was a high fidelity buff, a õtinker-thinkerö just like the Invisible Man, and he wrote at least one piece on audio reproduction equipment under his own name: õThe Swing to Stereoö which appeared in the April 26, 1958 issue of *Saturday Review.* (A dry and technical piece, õThe Swing to Stereoö did not find its way into any of his later essay collections.)

õTapes, Disks, and Coexistenceö begins with the surreal image of tape transforming into a snake, which struck Professor OøMeally and myself as Ellisonian:

> A young and impressionable friend of mine once told me of a dream during which he saw a reel of recording tape transform itself into an oxide-coated boa constrictor, after which this monster slithered up to his record shelves and proceeded to crush and devour his favorite recordings. My friend, who is an earnest music lover, had just received a very fine tape recorder as a gift and had been wondering before going to sleep whether his phonograph equipment and the record collection which he had acquired so slowly and at such great sacrifice had become obsolete. (Hoopes 94-95)

There is a tension here between technologyøs capacity to preserve history and culture and the ever-present threat of that technology being subsumed by yet more technology ó with the potential for cultural loss occurring in the process. Ellisonøs anxiety about how õthe vanished tribeö into which he was born would fare under integration ó a theme underpinning his second novel ó proceeds parallel with anxiety about the march of technological innovation. Also, given the weight of the record player(s) and the commentary on them in the Prologue, could Ellison have worried that tape might render his crucial moment in his novel dated and obsolete?

Ellisonøs anxiety about the disappearance of the phonograph may be related to the importance of the phonograph and its grooves as a trope in *Invisible Man* and more broadly speaking, for the way Ellison had come to understand and engage with recorded sound (in his

post-musical career). His anxiety is related, to echo the title of an essay by Adorno, õthe form of the phonograph record.ö In that essay Adorno claims that the most õprofound justificationö of the phonograph record is that it reestablishes õan age-old, submerged and yet warranted relationship: that between music and *writing*ö (59). Lost to magnetic tape is the arm and tracing needle that appears to õwriteö the music as it õreadsö it.

Alexander G. Weheliye is exceptionally eloquent on the point of the phonographøs importance in *Invisible Man*, in a passage that inspired many formulations in this dissertation:

> í a subject of sonic Afro-modernity, while breaking with the purely visual and linguistic paradigms of subjectivity, come into being in the crevice made by the audiovisual disjunction engendered by the phonographí .the phonograph makes the audiovisual dislocation usable for black cultural productioní .Had the protagonist encountered Armstrong only visually, he would have only seen proof of his invisibility; the phonographic voice, however, enables the protagonist to hear how Armstrong maneuvers, both literally and metaphorically, his invisibility. Here, scopic indiscernibility ceases to materialize as a monolithic nature, appearing instead as a series of textured singularities. This is a subject of sonic Afro-modernity, which emerges as the spatiotemporal crossroads where the performerøs ghostly sounds merge the ear of the listener, on those lower frequencies, which resituate, reframe, and resound a black subjectøs visual invisibility, producing *a flash point of subjectivity gleaned in and through sound*. (Weheliye, *Phonographies* 70-71, emphasis added)

Ellison seems to have understood this. The question must have occurred to him as to whether such a flash point of subjectivity ó or whatever phrasing he would have used ó could occur through tape. Records and tapes were both impermanent in different ways. Tapes were used to create backup copies of records.[72] But the physicality of the record itself, which could not be recorded over, signified a kind of permanence. Perhaps more importantly the shape of the

[72] Sarser (and/or Ellison) writes toward the conclusion of the article õby owning a good tape recorded and a dozen or so reels of tape, it is possible to keep a record collection in A-1 condition practically foreverö (103). Thus, the piece does end on a note of uneasy coexistence.

record and its circular motion signified its connection to the past in a way that the linearity of tape did not. Linearity ó õthe swift and imperceptible flowing of timeö ó is what the Invisible Man is able subvert in his imaginative habitation within Armstrongøs music, which allows him to access the õnodesö of time. For Adorno, õThrough the phonograph record, *time* gains a new approach to musicö (58). He claims that the phonograph records õtransform the most recent sound of old feelings into an archaic text of knowledge to comeö (60). When considered in the light of Adornoøs claims (which seem analogous to Deleuze on writing for õa people who are missing and a people to comeö), there appears to be a relationship for Ellison between the form of the phonograph record and the boomerang of history theorized in the Prologue, the motion of each bringing beginnings out of endings. This is contrasted with the linearity (or definitiveness) of the snake/tape.

The Ellison-Sarser anxiety about tape extends the snake metaphor further, and claims that õowners of treasured collections have perhaps been made to regard the reel of tape as a serpent offering either paradise or perditionö (95). Two ancient images, the devouring snake and the liminal, bestowing snake, are employed at the crossroads of modern technological innovation. This seems to underscore the importance of the innovation. Sarser (and/or Ellison) wishes to separate õthe dreamö (of the snake) õfrom the realitiesö ó the reality in which accepting the co-existence between records and tapes afforded the best way to build a collection in 1955 (95).

Aside from advances in audio technology, there was another great difference between 1955 and 1952: *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The moment of racial reconciliation following Tod Cliftonøs death prefigures a desegregated nation. It may be illustrative here to return to the communal singing of õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö following Cliftonøs funeral.

There may be a hitherto unexplored relationship between it and the Prologue ó with each being variations on the themes of the other. The Prologue, being last but coming first may foreshadow the communal singing following Cliftonøs death, as it may look forward to the Prologue. Perhaps there is a connection between the choice of record in the Prologue and the way in which sound is experienced by the Invisible Man and by the crowd during the singing at Cliftonøs funeral procession.

In Kenneth Warrenøs essay õChaos Not Quite Controlled: Ellisonøs Uncompleted Transit to *Juneteenth*ö he writes that *Invisible Man* may be the õapotheosisö of the õNegro American novelö as a õgenreö (189). Perhaps this is the case, but as I suggested in the first chapter, a work that is an apotheosis of one form often contains elements of a form to come, a form beyond it in time, which is one reason why *Invisible Man*, after being attacked and dismissed by various younger black writers in the late 1960s, regained such importance and relevance to young black writers in the 1970s, such as Stanley Crouch, Jayne Cortez, and Larry Neal. In Warrenøs book *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism*, he implies as much, namely that *Invisible Man* looks forward to something beyond segregation while reaching back for a Negro spiritual and presenting it in a way that would not have been on the agenda of those promoting spirituals in the concert hall (often those often promoting the segregation aesthetic, such as Du Bois). Warren presents an intriguing reading of the singing of õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö in chapter twenty-one. On the moment in which blacks and whites in the procession sing in unison, Warren comments on the suggestion of the construction of nationhood inherent in the moment, engendered by the singing:

> It almost seems sacrilegious to suggest that the unspoken something here is the nation in all its fictive primordialness, but the participation of white brothers and sisters at the outset indicates

> that race in itself cannot name the emotion here. So perhaps it is the nation invoked by the singing of anthems that is being evoked. (49)

Warrenøs reading goes on to link Ellison and Benedict Anderson and becomes a consideration of the construction of the fiction of the nation state, with the underlying implication that Ellison was aware of all this. But Warren does not extend the commentary as far as he could, and compare the scene to the narratorøs appreciation of Louis Armstrong in the Prologue. I would like to extend Warrenøs reading of the procession by comparing it to the Prologue. The novel begins with a solitary individual listening to music (secular music in particular) and later features a scene ó taking place approximately eighteen or nineteen years prior to the Prologue ó of spontaneous, moving, communal singing of a sacred song ó offering, metonymically, a glimpse of an integrated nation in the mourning Harlem crowd, in what I would argue is supposed to be late 1930s (though I can also understand an argument for the early 1940s). But in the 1950s consumerist landscape of the Prologueøs present, the narrator is listening alone, suggesting the societal fragmentation that personal technologies for cultural consumption had created.

The year *Invisible Man* was published, 1952, was a difficult year for live jazz, as were those immediately preceding it. Epicenters of bop experimentation such as Mintonøs Playhouse and the 52nd Street clubs were past their prime. The economics and generational dynamics that made the big bands and large ballrooms possible had disappeared (decimating the big bands in the late 1940s). The incipient memorialization of jazz, the beginnings of which were heralded by the creation of the Newport Jazz Festival in 1954, the national exposure of which helped revivify the market for big bands, was two years away. Technological improvements that make classic albums of say, Miles Davis and John Coltrane sound so pristine were also just on the horizon. Yet despite the threat, real in 1952, that the opportunities to hear live jazz would become fewer

and farther between, the Invisible Man suggests there is still a way to hear it properly on record, through the simultaneous use of five record players. If society was beginning to fragment, spurred by the expansion of television that atomized viewers, then possession of an accurate sound, a sort of simulacra of that heard in person hitherto flattened by technology was, the narrator seems to imply, made possibly the multiplication of that very technology. If the singing of õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö in the street was possible in circa 1938 and in a flash illuminated the possibility of an integrated nation for whom politics was an expression of love, then in 1952, mastery of technology could provide a link to an authentic sound.

If, following Warren, *Invisible Man* is the apotheosis of the Negro American novel, which it may very well be, then it also looks back to before that aestheticøs rise to prominence (to the self-acceptance of the narratorøs grandfather before he gave up his gun during Reconstruction) and looks beyond it as well, to the present moment dominated by individualized screens and social media masks. Likewise, it is the narratorøs imaginative engagement with Armstrongøs record that helps propel his reverie or hallucination about the woman who was a slave, reaching back into slavery and into the present moment (1952) on the cusp of incipient desegregation (following such pre-*Brown* milestones as the desegregation of major league baseball and the U.S. military, and early important court cases such as *Shelly v. Kraemer* in 1948 which barred racially restrictive housing covenants).

This is (following Warren) a feint in the direction of early to mid-nineteenth century conceptions of the nation state; reflected in mass anthem-singing on barricades or at parades. The Invisible Manøs listening to Armstrongøs record in the Prologue ó nearly twenty years after Tod Cliftonøs funeral ó may in fact allude to Clifton; that is, may function as a different form of memorial for Clifton, but via the technology of the late nineteenth century. The Invisible Man is

not especially dark; he is õginger-coloredö (21). The one drop rule of course makes him socially and culturally õblackö and therefore he can identify with the song just as much as Louis Armstrong (or its composer, Andy Razaf). But Tod Clifton is much more black (370-1). Perhaps the playing of the secular/Broadway pop song, re-imagined with a blues inflection by Armstrong, when juxtaposed with the spiritual, forms another form of eulogy for Clifton. It is for the darkness of his skin that Clifton is so highly praised and in effect so heavily recruited by Ras. It is after this encounter with Ras that Clifton leaves the Brotherhood and in the next chapter is found selling the Sambo dolls in midtown.

Could the playing of the record in the Prologue be partially about Clifton? If it is, perhaps it relates to the cultural matrix that helped produce the phonograph in the first place, what Jonathan Sterne calls in *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2003), õthat late-nineteenth-century culture of deathö (332). The Victorian obsession with death and mourning, according to Sterne, õshaped the possibilities of sound recordingö (332). Cliftonøs death is mourned by an interracial leftist crowd that, presumably, will no longer be able to re-form once the Brotherhood withdraws from Harlem (÷sacrifices Harlemø) during the riot. The õmanyö in õThereøs Many a Thousand Goneö could perhaps refer not just to persons but to the political possibilities before the riot, and before the Brotherhoodøs full embrace of cynicism. The Invisible Man not only mourns Clifton but mourns the moment in which Clifton was mourned. Permanently separated from numerous communities, the Invisible Man can only access them through recorded sound. Edward M. Pavli  has noticed that õ[W]hile underground, Ellisonøs figure is able to excavate the communal patterns of his personal consciousnessö (125). These communal patterns are excavated through the sound of Armstrongøs voice and trumpet. They can

only be excavated because they have been buried. The phonograph, for Sterne, is likewise a metaphorical tool of excavation. Sterne claims:

> The death imagery surrounding early sound recording marked emerging changes in attitudes about death and the preservation of the dead body, of which the voice was in some sense a logistic extension. This is why the nineteenth century boom in embalming is a key part of the pre-history of sound recording. (293)

For Sterne, the creation of recording technology is intricately connected with attempts to preserve the voices of the dead, an extension of the õboom in embalming,ö which itself was a result of the carnage of the U.S. Civil War (294). Sterne notes that the Civil War was a major cause of the related between developments in and expansions of technologies for preservation: canning, refrigeration, sound recording (also related to the anthropological study of Native Americans following the Civil War) and embalming. Sterne does not bring up segregation here, but it is a related tool of preservation: segregation was designed to preserve nineteenth century racist conceptions racial purity. This is related to what Sterne identifies as a movement toward õexteriorityö (333). Sterne analogizes embalming and recording as follows: õBoth transform the interiority of the thing (body, sound performance) in order that it might perform a social function after the factö (297). Likewise, under Jim Crow, exteriority, and the social function it performed was all that mattered. Enmeshed in this history, perhaps known to Ellison in some way, is the Invisible Man listening to Armstrongøs record. Curiously, Sterne calls the chapter in which he demonstrates the related history of recording and embalming õA Resonant Tomb.ö As if thinking along the same lines, as discussed above, the Invisible Manøs living space is a something like a õnon-resonant tombö ó it has õacoustical deadnessö (8) and, as discussed in a note above, it is tomb-like.

To summarize, following Sterne, the phonograph, like embalming, is a legacy of the Civil War ó as was segregation. As the Jim Crow regime started to break down, tape recorders emerged as a method to preserve and possibly replace records. Ellisonøs related anxiety about how both developments would play out is reflected in his second novel. But the phonograph, while it was originally thought of as a tool to preserve the voices of the dead (and the records of businesses), became a tool to disseminate music, which ultimately, through jazz, the blues, and spirituals, helped to foster interracial understanding. The voracious demand for black music, over a period of decades, helped to undercut the harsh logic of white supremacy, to a certain extent. The spread of early blues records via networks of railroad employees also helped to consolidate black communities along secular lines. Over a period of decades and through complicated, convoluted processes, the phonograph helped to increase the visibility of music by African Americans. The post-war, hi-fi, incipiently-integrating-into-a-fragmented-world protagonist, nearly two decades after Cliftonøs death, is slipping into the grooves and looking around. Audio technologyøs advance and desegregation and history are not explicitly connected in Ellisonøs writing, but it is almost as if the dotted lines are there, and so attempting to connect them may be instructive.

Literary composition, for Ellison, thus became consciously intertwined with hearing music in a particular way ó in the clearest way possible. This is reflected in his inscription in Sarserøs copy of *Invisible Man*. Equally as important, this new interest in sonic gadgetry re-connected him with an aspect of his youth in Oklahoma City, when and where he would tinker with radios. (That Ellisonøs fiction can be murky, confusing and convoluted when narrating action underscores the fact that he was sensitive to concerns of clarity and coming across with õthe least distortion.ö)

## IV. Ellison, Ann Petry, and Live Music

In Ellisonøs second novel he takes up the theme and imagery of music performed live in a way that he does not in *Invisible Man*. This is chronologically parallel to the revived fortunes of jazz in the middle to late 1950s (after a lull in the late 1940s/early 1950s), especially live jazz, which was tied to Ellisonøs fortunes as a music critic and music writer from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, which in turn contributed to the success of *Shadow and Act* and helped cement his reputation. In exploring representations of live music in ways that he had not before, he could very well have looked to previous models within an African American or jazz idiom, or been inspired by those works when they first appeared. There were numerous works Ellison could have looked to, but few as successful as Ann Petryøs 1947 short story õSolo on the Drums,ö which I will argue that he seems to have read and seems to be riffing on in his second novel.

This section is a comparative study of õSolo On The Drumsö with Ellisonøs text that became chapter ten of Book One of *Three Days Before the Shooting…*. Ann Petry was a jazz aficionado and in õSolo on the Drumsö she is keen to express the ineffable in jazz and its interaction with the psyche. It seems that Petryøs õSolo On The Drumsö was probably a source of inspiration for this section of Ellisonøs narrative. First, I will explore the similarities between the two texts, and try to make the case that these similarities are too close to be coincidental. Then, I will discuss what Petryøs parallel exploration and representation of jazz performance means for the phenomenology of listening that Ellison began to develop in *Invisible Man*, focusing on recorded music, and which he continues in chapter ten of Book One, in one of his most

significant representations of live music. I will discuss what understanding Petry as a literary precursor of Ellison means for understanding the influence of women writers, particularly African American women writers, on Ellisonøs work ó an influence he denied, particularly in the case of Zora Neale Hurston.

Ellison was careful to not associate himself with Petry. According to Arnold Rampersad, despite being generally short on money at the time, Ellison declined an offer to review Petryøs 1953 novel *The Narrows* for the *New York Times Book Review* (281). In light of his well-known 1941 critique of Hurston, this would seem to underscore something like an ÷anxiety-of-influenceø problem regarding African American women who wrote about the blues and jazz before he did. My goal here is not to scold Ellison for not acknowledging Petry, but rather to suggest her influence on a particular text and thereby expand the image of Ellisonøs reading habits, while enriching the understanding of his sources and literary echoes.

õSolo On The Drumsö is remarkable in its own right, aside from any possible influence on Ellison. But when considered alongside Ellison ó who thrived in the hyper-masculine world of jazz criticism ó it may be worthwhile to consider õSolo On The Drumsö as a work of jazz criticism in addition to being a work of fiction. Petry claimed õIøve been a jazz buff, or a fan, ever since I was a teenagerö (Clark, *The Radical Fiction of Ann Petry* 6). Jazz criticism from the 1920s through at least the 1960s, as far as I can tell, was a field in which women did not thrive, and certainly did not participate in prominently. Several jazz critics and historians I consulted could not name any female jazz critics in this period at all, nor are there any discussed at any length in John Gennariøs scholarly history of jazz criticism, *Blowin' Hot and Cool* (2006). Petry was a jazz buff, but may have been re-buffed had she attempted to become a jazz critic. Keith Clark claims that Petryøs õinterlarding of storytelling and jazz is a precursor to Ellisonøs

pioneering treatise on music and literature, *Shadow and Act*ö (6). Her jazz scenes in *The Street* (1946) could not have failed to capture Ellisonøs attention had he read it, but it seems that he almost certainly did read õSolo On The Drums,ö which I shall attempt to prove here. It makes sense to try to understand Petry as a kind of ÷alternativeø jazz critic (that is, alternative to the male critic, often white male at that, writing straightforward music criticism), but in this instance I will focus on Petry as a precursor of Ellisonøs later fiction, especially in one particular, peculiar, and important scene.

Of course, novelists are not required to cite their sources, but Ellison was fond of talking about his: Thomas Hardy, Dostoevsky, Hemingway, T.S. Eliot, and Faulkner were writers he mentioned in the many interviews he gave. The dearth of attention Ellison showed to Petry is not simply due to male chauvinism or condescension, or due to his alleged disinterest in other black writers. Perhaps it was personal; perhaps it had to do with Petryøs creation of characters based on musicians Ellison either knew personally or peripherally, or knew a lot about. As a whole, Book One of *Three Days Before The Shooting…* probably owes more to Robert Penn Warrenøs *All The King's Men* than any other work of fiction: the bulk of the story in Book One concerns a curious journalist on the trail of a mysterious and charismatic politician. Certainly the frames of Conradøs *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* could have been inspirations for both Warren and Ellison, as, in both works, thoughtful narrators become enthralled by unconventional figures whose life stories they become determined to learn about and tell. Though Ellison was friends with Robert Penn Warren (and indeed, one of his finest interviews appears in Warrenøs *Who Speaks for the Negro?*) he never really mentions Warren as a novelistic influence ó at least not the way he mentions Dostoevsky, Hardy, Hemingway, and Faulkner. Thus, to reiterate, the point

here is not to scold Ellison for not acknowledging Petry, but simply to explore her possible influence on his work.

Through music, Petryøs protagonist Kid Jones and Ellisonøs protagonist Wellborn McIntyre temporarily inhabit an imaginary past that live jazz dredges up out of their own psyches on a particular day in which they have experienced the shock of separation from a romantic partner. It seems to be the case that a technique that Petry adopts in õSolo on the Drumsö was later adopted/adapted by Ellison in chapter ten of Book One of *Three Days Before the Shooting*....

In the masterful õSolo on the Drums,ö Petry experiments with music, memory, and with something perhaps akin to what Wai Chee Dimock has called õdeep time.ö In õSolo on the Drums,ö the drummer Kid Jones (almost certainly based on the enormously influential swing-era innovator, Papa Jo Jones) performs at a midtown Manhattan movie palace in the orchestra of the Marquis of Brund, a pianist similar to Count Basie. Papa Jo Jones (1911-1985) was Count Basieøs drummer in 1934, and then from 1936-1944; from the Count Basie Orchestraøs beginnings through its years of peak fame and influence, and again from 1946-1948 after two years of military service. Petryøs story appears in 1947, making such *a clef* portrayals plausible and likely. Perhaps Petry picked up on some tensions in the band after Jonesøs return from the Army, for in 1948, Jones was to leave the Count Basie Orchestra abruptly and without notice, though not, as far as is known, for any reason dealing with a conflict over a woman. Jones later told Albert Murray that he gave written notice in 1934, which he put into effect later (Jones 58).

In the story, Kid Jonesøs romantic partner has just told him, prior to his performance that day, that she is leaving him for his boss, the Marquis. When the trauma of the morning interacts

with the music, a portal into time; an imagined time, imagined through various narrative devices, is then narrated back to the reader. Performing on the drums later that day, driving the band led by his erstwhile friend who has formed a relationship with his romantic partner behind his back, Kid Jones takes out his anger on the drums, and performs with an intensity rarely seen by his bandmates, as he first fantasizes about killing the Marquis, then sends himself into a historical reverie. The narrator says that Jones õbuilt up an illusion.ö It is an illusion that may draw on deep cultural memory, or rather, is a pastiche of memories and images heard tell of, or read about; a collage of text in the mind accessed through the combination of trauma and music:

> The drums leaped with the fury that was in him. The men in the band turned their heads toward him ó a faint astonishment showed in their faces.
>
> He ignored them. The drums took him away from them, took him back, and back, and back in time and space. He built up an illusion. 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 chieføs daughter. Kill. Kill. Kill. The war goes badly with the men with the bad smell and the loud laugh. It goes badly with the chiefs with the round heads and the peacockøs walk.
>
> It is cool in the deep track in the forest. Cool and quiet. The trees talk softly. They speak of the dance tonight. The young girl from across the lake will be there. Her waist is slender and her thighs are rounded. Then the words he wanted to forget were all around Kid Jones again. ÷Iøm leaving Iøm leaving Iøm leaving.ø
>
> He couldnøt help himself. He stopped hitting the drums and stared at the Marquis of Brund ó a long, malevolent look, filled with hate. (168)[73]

Through his (vocally) silent rage at his former romantic partner and his former friend, boss, and musical collaborator, Kid Jones refracts a hazy past (gleaned from sources to which the reader is

[73] Later in this section I will discuss the original periodical in which õSolo on the Drumsö first appeared, but I thought it perhaps better to cite the page numbers from a well-known anthology, John Henrik Clarkeøs *American Negro Short Stories*, in which it reappeared in 1966. (The anthology was retitled *Black American Short Stories: A Century of the Best* in 1993).

not privy) through his own life; grounds his own life, through his furious drumming, in world-historical narratives of loss ó of cultural and political loss. Later in his solo, Kid Jones experiences the sensation or illusion of becoming part of the drums, of being õsucked inside them (169).[74] At the end, he bows repeatedly to a cheering crowd, but not without glaring at the Marquis. It is an uncomplicated story, more valuable for Petryøs poetic language and its early, authentic representation of a jazz performance by an African American writer, than for its plot. It is much more realistic and mature than say, Rudolph Fisherøs õCommon Meter,ö an unfortunate work by a great writer, which features a similar though not exact sort of historical reverie, and condescends to the musicians and audience in the process. But perhaps õSolo on the Drumsö is most valuable for its narration of what can happen to the listener to a piece of music; the suggestion that when ÷insideø music so to speak, one is in another reality, outside the constructed social world and in a musical world particular to oneøs own mind and the effect that music has on it ó roughly parallel to the phenomenology of listening developed by Günther Anders.

I believe, as I argue above in detail, that Ellison was influenced by the work of Günther Anders (1902-1992), or at the very least was thinking along the same lines as Anders, who believed that when listening to music one formed an õenclaveö with music (Erlmann 326). According to Veit Erlmannøs interpretation of Andersøs oeuvre (much of which was written in German and remains unpublished), sound, for Anders does not passively impact the listener and help mold the listenerøs subjectivity (as widely believed since Descartes), but rather the listener inhabits the sound and creates a new world with and within that sound, albeit temporarily (326). Petry may have been thinking along similar lines (as, I argue elsewhere, was Hurston).

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[74] Perhaps this related to the image of the drums of Africa being surreptitiously smuggled to the Americas in the body of the slave/everyman õCuffyö in Zora Neale Hurstonøs *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (29).

The section of Ellisonøs chapter that seems to have been influenced by Petry follows the same general outline as her story: a man, to whose inner life the reader is privy, is distraught after the woman he was romantically involved with breaks up with him on that day. He proceeds to go into a deep reverie while taking in a jazz performance, and allows his mind to form a pastiche or collage of images from fragments of remembered history or film. There are several key differences: Ellisonøs Laura, an African American woman who breaks up with the white narrator of Book One, Welborn McIntyre, does so because her mother forces her to. And McIntyre is not personally creating the music that affects him later that night. But overall, Ellison appears to be alluding to Petryøs piece in a way that suggests he is consciously riffing on it.

Ellisonøs scene of McIntyreøs dark night inverts the features of Petryøs story in a way that seems like it was a conscious decision. To create an analogy from jazz history that seems apt: Ellisonøs scene may be thought of as a bebop riff on Petryøs swing narrative. Petryøs Kid Jones performs in a big band at the fictional Randlert Theater at Broadway and 42nd Street in New York. At this time swing orchestras, or big bands, played matinees in enormous midtown movie palaces for largely white audiences. Petryøs narrator does not specify whether or not the Randlert is segregated or partially segregated (that is, if it had a balcony area reserved for African Americans) but it probably was meant to be, as most of midtown movie palaces were segregated to one degree or another.

Petryøs story features an explosive, out-of-the-ordinary performance in a setting known for predictable performances, while Ellisonøs features an innovative performance in a space known for experimentation (and a straight-laced characterøs reaction to it). Quite the opposite from a big band playing rehearsed numbers in a midtown movie palace was a freewheeling jam

session at the famous Mintonøs Playhouse in Harlem, which became synonymous with the birth of bebop. Ellisonøs chapter is set at a Harlem nightspot closely resembling Mintonøs Playhouse, which was an uptown laboratory for bebop, where musicians, who often worked elsewhere in big bands, such as in the midtown movie palaces, would come to jam, relax, and experiment after hours. Petry names the Randlert Theater, while Ellison does not name his venue. The narrator notes that õa jam session, for which the place was famous was taking placeö and that the bandstand was õset against the rear wallö (118). Mintonøs Playhouse was the bar of the Hotel Cecil and featured an incredibly long bar perpendicular to the street, with a tight space for tables and chairs in front of a small bandstand against the rear wall, which is suggested by the closely placed tables the narrator describes.[75] Ellison knew Mintonøs well, and wrote about the scene there in his essay õThe Golden Age, Time Past.ö Ellison appears to have noticed the subtly relayed theme of Jim Crow and exploitation in Petryøs story. Kid Jones is indeed õselling himself a little piece at a timeö for white audiences. Ellison reverses this by making narrator one of the only if not the only white person in his fictional Mintonøs in Harlem. Thus, for characters bedeviled by a traumatic romantic separation earlier in the day, an Anderserian being-in-music presents a temporary, if ultimately non-extendable diversion from the frustrations of both separation and segregation.

The narrator of Book One of *Three Days Before the Shooting...* is Welborn McIntyre, a white journalist who, in chapter four, observes jazz bassist LeeWillie Minifees setting fire to his own Cadillac on Senator Sunraiderøs lawn[76], which he then connects with the attempted assassination of Sunraider shortly thereafter. Though most of the action takes place in the mid to

[75] I visited Mintonøs in 2012 prior to its recent renovation, when it still had its original configuration. The restaurant/jazz club currently there in 2014, also named Mintonøs, is in a reconfigured space.
[76] Chapter four is a variation of Ellisonøs well-known 1972 short story õCadillac Flambé.ö

late 1950s, in this section in the fictional Mintonøs (chapter ten) McIntyre flashes back to the late 1930s or early 1940s, when he was in an interracial romantic relationship with an African American woman in Harlem named Laura.[77] Lauraøs mother disapproves of the relationship and demands an end to it. McIntyre describes how after being told, earlier in the evening by Lauraøs mother that he and Laura could not be together, McIntyre wanders the cold Harlem streets in a dejected despair. He decides to go to the Mintonøs-like venue because he and Laura had been there once. He thinks she may escape her mother for the evening and think to look for him there. McIntyre settles in at a table and has a drink. As he begins to take in the music, he begins to inhabit the music in a way similar to how Kid Jones does, and speculates, like Kid Jones, on colonial conflict and cultural loss:

> The big saxophone was improvising now, seeming to talk, to speak in a hoarse, reedy stylization of human speech; pleading, crooning, coaxing, then rising to great heights of abstract eloquence which evoked for me, in my disturbed state, those movies in which great Indian chieftains bespeak in the native tongue their tribeøs vision of the world to representatives of the white manøs church, his army, and the executive branch of his government. I could see mountains, canyons, forests and plains, a row of horsemen bearing feathered lances, their war-bonneted heads outlined against the sky along the curve of a noble hill. Then he was laughing maliciously through the melody of a popular love song, lacing it with raucous catcalls, hoots, howls, bear growls, and belches which ridiculed its sentiments, mocked its pretensions. Then the sound subsided into a serene, delicately phrased song. And it was the same song but now transformed by a mood which belied the manøs appearance, the people, the place, the very banality of the song itself. Tears flooded my eyes as I watched his big hulk swaying gently back and forth, thinking as the applause roared up, *You nasty bastard, you're playing with me. You're playing with me, and all the rest, but you're laughing at me, and I have to stay here for Laura*…. (121-22, emphasis in original)

[77] Laura, incidentally, is also the name of the narratorøs romantic interest in Ellisonøs 1944 story õKing of the Bingo Game.ö A õLaura-jeanö is mentioned briefly by Mary Rambo in *Invisible Man*. Meanwhile, the bouncer at the Mintonøs-like club where McIntyre ends up in chapter ten is named Barrelhouse, as is a bartender in *Invisible Man*. All of this suggests that perhaps at one point Ellison intended or hoped to circulate his Harlem characters in a manner similar to how Faulkner circulated his characters in Yoknapatawpha County.

The music momentarily jars McIntyre out of his immersion in self-pity, before triggering a fresh paranoia. But in the moment he is jarred out of self-pity, his habitation within music momentarily constructs a new social space through himself, mediated by images, like Kid Jones, at his mindøs disposal, namely Hollywood images of Native Americans.

A well-meaning liberal white journalist in love with an African American woman, McIntyre was on his way to become a pioneer of interracial relationships. He now sits in a largely black Harlem bar, in a musical reverie, that (like that of Kid Jones) synechdochally through its pastiche of images rehearses the history of the western hemisphere over the last half millennium and thus, the historical processes that helped lead to the creation of the music he is hearing. It seems too similar to be coincidental, but the most important difference here is that Ellisonøs character is a white consumer of the music while Petryøs is a black creator of the music. Ellisonøs bebop extension and elaboration of Petryøs scenario serves to provide crucial context for McIntyreøs subsequent interest in Hickman, Sunraider, and Minifees. McIntyre, perhaps, could be imagined as one of the well-meaning whites associated with the Brotherhood and the march following Cliftonøs death in *Invisible Man*. Ellison uses chapter ten of Book One to once again contrast secular and sacred music. After the hijinks of a false nun who enters the club looking for money breaks up the jam session that had sent McIntyre into his reverie, he resumes wandering the Harlem night. He hears õan uproarous [sic] versionö of õAinøt Gonø Study War No Moreö that õexplodedö out of a basement, sung with õwild accents of laughterö (125). This could be meant to emphasize the musical diversity of an average night in Harlem. In describing a local performance of a spiritual sung in an õuproarousö style with õwild accents of laughterö perhaps Ellison is commenting on how certain spirituals were actually sung by the people, as opposed to the polished manner it had been transcribed and arranged by composers such as

Harry T. Burleigh. In any event, McIntyre later imagines this song as õrowdy farewell fanfareö for himself, for his exit from Harlem for having been õthe victim of an impossible and impractical loveö (126). The end of his interracial romance is also the end of his õefforts at social action,ö which implies a left-ish politics that he does not particularly espouse in the present (1950s) chapters.

Petryøs story first appeared in the October 1947 issue of *The Magazine of the Year*. Ellison published the Battle Royal episode of *Invisible Man* in the January 1948 issue of *The Magazine of the Year*, so presumably he was aware of its previous issues and if so, could not have failed to miss Petryøs story. Petryøs story was published during the time he would have been looking over the Battle Royal episode for *The Magazine of the Year*, so it seems unlikely that he would not have explored the contents of the magazine in which he was to debut (for readers in the United States) such an important excerpt of his novel in progress.[78] It is also possible that an editor there (Clifton Fadiman, for instance) could have brought Petryøs story to his attention during conversations about publication.

Ellison grew up in Oklahoma City and personally knew and played music with several musicians who would go on to become Count Basieøs most prominent sidemen, such as bassist Walter Page (leader of the Blue Devils Orchestra with whom Ellison sometimes rehearsed his trumpet) and the singer Jimmy Rushing (who had worked for Ellisonøs father before Ralph was born), with whom he kept in touch through Rushingøs death in 1972. When Ellison was writing for *New Masses* from 1938 through 1942, the Basie band was not only one of the most popular bands in the United States, dubbed õAmericaøs Number One Band!ö in Columbia Records publicity copy, but was also involved in *New Masses* circles itself, through the impresario John

[78] It was first published, also in October 1947, in the British journal *Horizon*.

Hammond, who was in charge of the band at Columbia. Basieøs band, through John Hammond, played fundraisers and parties associated with *New Masses*. In short, Ellison crossed paths with several of these musicians twice in his life ó in the same musical circles in Oklahoma City and later in cultural and political New York. It would seem, with all this in mind, that Ellison could not have failed to hear of and then perhaps read Petryøs story, with its main characters rather transparently inspired by Jo Jones and Count Basie.

Another reason that Ellison probably could not have failed to miss the October 1947 number of *The Magazine of the Year* was because of the portfolio of jazz photographs by filmmaker and photographer Gjon Mili. Miliøs photographs immediately precede Petryøs story in the issue. Petryøs story begins on a right-hand side page (105) and on the opposite page is what was to become one of Miliøs best-known photographs, of Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and others at a jam session. The inside of the back cover features a stunning Mili photo of the trumpeter Hot Lips Page, who was based in Oklahoma City in Ellisonøs youth and whom Ellison knew greatly admired when he was growing up and learning to play the trumpet. Mili was on the editorial board of the magazine, as was Ellisonøs friend John Hersey, who would go on to edit one of the first collections of essays on Ellison in 1974. It is hard to imagine, that with his literary friends working on the magazine and an old Oklahoma City jazz idol of his featured in the magazine, that Ellison could have missed the number, especially as he prepared to publish his a sort of make-or-break piece of fiction in it himself.

The uncanny similarities between the narratives, along with Ellisonøs and Petryøs both publishing in *The Magazine of the Year* suggest that Ellison had seen Petryøs story and found in it a way to situate McIntyreøs experience of hearing African American musicians in Harlem that create deeper context and sympathy for McIntyreøs investigation into the Hickman-Sunraider

relationship. If it will prove fruitful to try to understand Ellisonøs work through the contemporaneous work of Günther Anders, as I believe it will, then it will also be fruitful to imagine Petryøs work through the lens of Anders speculations on how the mind interacts with music. õSolo On The Drumsö may also be tangentially related to the reverie of the Invisible Man in the prologue, when listening to Louis Armstrongøs rendition of õWhat Did I To Be So Black and Blueö plunges the narrator into a hallucinatory scene of the mother who was a slave ó and thus to one of the most studied moments in Ellisonøs career. If Ellison was thinking along the same lines as Anders, it would appear that Petry was as well ó and first ó and may have provided Ellison with a framework for rendering this aspect of his fiction. If Ellisonøs literary influences were mostly males, and mostly white males aside from Langston Hughes or Richard Wright, I do not think there would necessarily or automatically be anything wrong with that. But since the textual and historical evidence suggests that that was not the case, it should thus begin to be understood that Petry, along with Hurston and others, helped Ellison to become the writer he became, and through his work, light can be shined back on theirs productively.

## V. Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Sound and Sense of the African American Pulpit Tradition

Ellisonøs public relationship with the work of Zora Neale Hurston was not positive, but there is strong, allusive, intertextual evidence for Hurstonøs influence on his work. The preceding discussion of Anders and Hurston in relation to Ellison is intended to frame the following investigation. Both Hurston and Ellison were strongly influenced by the oratorical and rhetorical traditions of the black church. Both were concerned with rendering the metaphorical, exegetical,

and oratorical performance characteristic of the best African American preachers into conventional literary forms. The ultimate goal of this section will be to demonstrate Hurstonøs hitherto unexplored direct textual influence on a central metaphor of Reverend Hickmanøs Juneteenth sermon on Ezekiel in Ellisonøs second novel, *Three Days Before the Shooting*… (and on the short story õJuneteenth,ö published in 1965, with close variants on it included in the 1999 and 2010 edited versions of the novel). First, I will explore Ellisonøs stated opinions on Hurston, interrelated with his early positions on genre and the shape of African American fiction, followed by a discussion of the sharp disjuncture between Hurston and James Weldon Johnson regarding the transcription and literary rendering of the African American sermon (and a discussion of where Ellison seems to be situating himself in the debate). Finally I will explore the influence, as I see it, of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* on an important moment second novel, Hickmanøs powerful Juneteenth sermon.[79]

As discussed in the first chapter, the last sentence of Hurstonøs 1943 article õHigh John de Conquerö is remarkably similar to the ending of *Invisible Man*. In 1941, under the strong influence of the Richard Wright (famously anti-Hurston) and still a Communist, Ellison wrote the following in his review-essay õRecent Negro Fictionö in *New Masses*:

> In her turn Zora Neil [sic[80]] Hurstonøs latest work, though possessing technical competence retains the blight of calculated burlesque that has marred most of her writing. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* tells the story of a Southern Negro womanøs love-life against the background of an all-Negro town into which the casual brutalities of the South seldom intrude. Her next work,

[79] In her essay õEllison and the Black Church,ö Laura Saunders calls this sermon õEllisonøs *credo*ö (47, emphasis in original).

[80] Ellison spells Hurstonøs middle name as õNeilö three times in the course of the essay (on page 22 and twice on page 24). Perhaps this suggests that he may not have had her books in front of him while composing the essay. Ellison was already a careful and astute critic by this point, and his poor summaries of her two novels raise the question of whether he read them at all and was just trying to cover them in a checklist manner, and probably on a deadline.

> *Moses Man of the Mountains* [sic[81]], a fictional biography, is presented as the American Negroøs conception of the life of Moses. Taking the Hebraic legend which presents Moses as a giver of laws, Miss Hurston gives us a Moses as conjureman. This work sets out to do for Moses what *The Green Pastures* did for Jehovah; for Negro fiction it did nothing. (24)

Ellison misses much about both of these works, but especially about the second half of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. What did he think of Teacake, the Hurricane, and the court room scene?[82] In any event, Ellisonøs mature fiction ended up much closer to Hurstonøs than to Wrightøs.[83] He wrote in that same essay that õ*Native Son* and *Uncle Tom's Children* express an

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[81] The title is *Moses, Man of the Mountain*.

[82] *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has a strong Emersonian thrust and contains Emersonian allusions. Perhaps Ellison picked up on this and it caused him to recoil from the book, as he was still conflicted about the work of the man he was named after. For instance, after Jody Starks dies, and Janie begins reflecting on her life, the narrator says õBut Nanny belonged to that other kind that loved to deal in scraps. Here Nanny had taken the biggest thing God ever made, the horizon ó for no matter how far a person can go the horizon is still way beyond you ó and pinched it in to such a little bit of a thing that she could tie it about her granddaughterøs neck tight enough to choke herö (247). As Ellison will in the prologue to *Invisible Man*, Hurston alludes to Emersonøs *Nature* here: õThere is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poetö (9). Nanny could not õintegrate the partsö ó she õloved to deal in scraps.ö Nannyøs attempt to control õthe horizonö was an attempt to stifle Janieøs voice and creativity, her inner poet. She realizes this just after Jody dies, connecting Nanny and Jody as enemies of her voice.

[83] If *Invisible Man* forms a sort of dividing line between much previous African American fiction and much of what came later, then *Native Son* may form a dividing line between the segregation aesthetic of the twenties and *Invisible Man*. J. Saunders Reddingøs novel of black college campus administration and politics, *Stranger and Alone* (1950) may be the dividing line between *Native Son* and *Invisible Man*. When Ellison reviewed *Stranger and Alone* for the *New York Times Book Review* he noticed the storyøs wide applicability, if not universality, in the aftermath of World War II. Ellison wrote õit is but superficially a racial novelí .it is actually about treason and the complex of mixed motives, snarled emotions and allegiances found in the collaboratorö (BR3). Reddingøs protagonist, Shelton Howden becomes the protégé of college president Perkin Winbush (perhaps a literary inspiration for Bledsoe), and ends up, in Ellisonøs words õthe willing stool-pigeon of those who have debased him.ö Perhaps Howdenøs fate is similar to what the Invisible Manøs would have been had Ellison not drawn him as so idealistic and naïve. Incidentally, this review seems to have started a long feud between Redding and Ellison, and later Redding, Ellison and Murray. Reddingøs fiction may have indeed been the apotheosis of the Negro novel, its last gasp perhaps, along with Wrightøs later fiction, as African American literature edged toward universality through more deeply delving into its own idiom ó its own sound and the sound of its communities. Ellison finally suggests that *Stranger and Alone* is of more of a sociological than an artistic achievement, and Ellison seems to mock a melodramatic scene meant to highlight the power of Jim Crow. Redding went on to write a negative review of *Invisible Man*. Murray wrote to Ellison on June 6, 1952 that he: õAlso saw *Jet*øs expected stupidity and J. Saunders Reddingøs expected chickenshittery. (Was somewhat shocked to find out that J. Saunders was *that* ignorant)ö (*Trading Twelves* 35, emphasis in original). In 1970 Redding gave Murrayøs first book, *The Omni-Americans*, a negative review in the *New York Times Book Review*; a review that the *Times* quoted in Murrayøs obituary in 2013. Robert Bone, who perhaps would have reviewed the book instead of Redding, as he was the paperøs regular critic of African American literature, wrote to Murrayøs publisher David Outerbridge shortly thereafter to note his disapproval of the review and to note that he was aware of Reddingøs õhysterical evasion of the central issuesí gross distortionsí and simply misrepresentationsö (Bone, Letter to David Outerbridge). The Redding-Ellison/Murray from feud circa 1950-1970

artistic sensibility overcoming the social and cultural isolation of Negro life and moving into a world of unlimited intellectual and imaginative possibilitiesö (22). Partially because of *Invisible Man*, the post-1960s recovery of Hurstonøs work, and the post-segregation boom in African American literature it is difficult to think of Wrightøs work in such terms today. But perhaps Wrightøs grim, naturalistic work, if still firmly in a segregation aesthetic, also came out of a folk background and perhaps felt more authentic to Ellison than that which came before. Of African American fiction of the 1920s Ellison wrote in that same piece:

> American Negro fiction of the 1920øs was timid of theme, and for the most part technically backward. Usually it was apologetic in tone and narrowly confined to the expression of Negro middle class ideals rather than those of the Negro working and agricultural masses. Except for the work of Langston Hughes it ignored the existence of Negro folklore and perceived no connection between its own efforts and the symbols and images of Negro folk forms; it was oblivious to psychology, it was unconscious of politics, and most of the deeper problems arising out of the relationship borne by the Negro group to the larger North American whole were avoided. (22)

If Wrightøs fiction today does not exactly suggest õunlimited intellectual and imaginative possibilitiesö it is also far from õtimid of themeö or õtechnically backward.ö Ellison ends the essay by claiming õthere must be no stepping away from the artistic and social achievements of *Native Son* if the Negro writer is to create the consciousness of his oppressed nationö (26). As Ellison evolved artistically and politically, he would indeed step away from *Native Son*. Never explicitly going as far as his friend Albert Murray, who in *The Hero and the Blues* summarizes Wrightøs oeuvre as õHave mercy, Massa,ö Ellison will, to an extent, align himself more closely with Wrightøs antagonist of the 1930s, Hurston.

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can perhaps be thought of as the second phase of the Wright-Hurston feud of the late 1930s-early 1940s, and illustrative of shifting aesthetic sensibilities.

By the time *Invisible Man* was published, Ellison had also ventured beyond his youthful understanding of his allusion, paraphrased in the quote above, to Stephen Dedalusøs stated goal toward the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: to õforge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my raceö (217). The Invisible Man relays, and possibly believes, the interpretation of this by his former college literature teacher, Woodridge: õStephenøs problem, like ours, was not actually one of creating the uncreated conscience of his race, but of creating the *uncreated features of his face*. Our task is that of making ourselves individualsö (354). Dedalusøs politicized ethno-literary project and Ellisonøs very different responses to it, his pre-World War II acceptance of it and his post-war skepticism of it, are the link between his 1941 comments on Hurston and his later adoption of a series of her adjectives and images found in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as well as her interest in literarily rendered sermons. Making individuals from non-individuals, through sound-based tropes, is where Ellison and Hurston will most explicitly converge.

I am not examining Hurstonøs sermons ó either C.C. Lovelaceøs sermon that she transcribed in 1929 or the version of it that she worked into *Jonah's Gourd Vine* ó in detail. But Hurstonøs inferable position relating to James Weldon Johnsonøs poeticized sermons is worth exploring briefly. Eric Sundquist claims that õone can look at Johnsonøs sermonic verse and his theory of dialect as a way of estimating Hurstonøs pointed divergence from his modelö (55). Comparing Johnsonøs sermons in *God's Trombones* to Hurstonøs livelier, and probably more idiomatically accurate free verse representation of Lovelaceøs sermon,[84] Sundquist writes õJohnsonøs is the more composed, the more conventional aesthetic work, demonstrating, as in his theory of the spirituals, a ÷developmentø of vernacular materials into a more ÷cultivated,ø

[84] This can be found in Michael Warnerøs *American Sermons* (801-07).

authorial formö (56). As discussed in the first chapter, this õcultivatedö version of the spirituals, and later work songs, with idiomatic nuance (in some cases surely variation on African retentions) polished out was a project advocated by African American cultural elites ó the same creators of and market for the kind of fiction that Ellison dismisses in the block quote above.

Johnson was on Ellisonøs mind for much of his career. Alan Nadel has insightfully noticed that *Invisible Manøs* engagement with and commentary on *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* goes far beyond the anonymous narrators. Nadel has called the Invisible Man, who is õ ÷takenø for blackö at every turn (that is, for various symbols and stereotypes associated with blackness), õthe dark alternative to the ex-colored manö who is taken for white (158). For Nadel, the moment that õunderscoresö *Invisible Manøs* õinversionö of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* is when the Invisible Man rejects Mr. Emersonøs offer of a job as his valet: õhe is turning down exactly the position that the ex-colored man accepts: to be the companion of a rich, white, neøer-do-wellö (158). If Ellisonøs first novel was peppered with commentary on Johnsonøs 1912 novel, his second novel offers a running commentary on Johnsonøs 1927 volume of poetry through Reverend Alonzo Hickmanøs nickname: õGodøs tromboneö (1004[85]) and õGodøs righteous tromboneö (509). Hickman had been a jazz trombonist before becoming an evangelical preacher after adopting Bliss, the white (or apparently white) orphan whom Hickmanøs brother was accused of fathering, and who was killed for allegedly fathering before the birth.[86] Like Hurston, Ellison seems to have had a conflicted relationship with Johnsonøs work. With all this

[85] In the 1960 excerpt õAnd Hickman Arrives,ö pages 1004-34 of *Three Days Before the Shooting*…. Also, this is in *Juneteenth* (2).

[86] Ellison may have intended Hickman to be a sort of bridge between secular and sacred aural vernacular traditions. Prior to becoming a minister, Hickmanøs preferred announcement when he used to õhit the poolroomøs swinging doorsö was the same as Peter Wheatstraw in *Invisible Man*: õFee Fi Fo Fum / Who wants to shoot the devil one? / My name is Peter Wheatstraw / Iøm the deviløs son-in-law / Lord God Stingeroy!ö (*Three Days Before the Shooting*… 464; *Juneteenth* 294).

in mind I would like to turn to what appears to be an important borrowing from Hurston by Ellison.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* begins with Janieøs return to Eatonville at sundown. The narrator describes the scene as follows:

> The people all saw her come because it was sundown. The sun was gone, but he had left his footprints in the sky. It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. (175)

While on the bossmanøs clock, alienated from themselves as their labor is commodified, the narrator describes these subjects as akin to automatons; õtongueless, earless, eyeless;ö the features of their faces remaining uncreated indeed. Or are they actually akin to embryos rather than automatons? Facial features begin to form in the embryo after about eight weeks, at which point the fetal stage begins. Are they in a sense then given birth through sound? The õtime to hear things and talkö is a different temporal realm from that connected with wage labor ó it is an enclave with sound, separate from that enclave in which õmules and other brutes occupied their skins.ö Alternatively, it is a resonating space of sympathetic exchange between individuals, rather than a workplace where individuals are turned into õconveniences.ö After their day of wage labor, the people of Eatonville regain their senses and become õlords of soundsö: transforming from automatons to subjects with autonomy. Indeed, they become õlords of sounds and lesser things,ö perhaps implying that everything then and thus becomes subordinate to sound.

In Ellisonøs short story õJuneteenth,ö first published in 1965, an uncannily similar process occurs. In Hickmanøs sermon, both in the short story and in the similar variant in the novel, enslaved African Americans are compared to the dry bones in the valley in Ezekieløs vision. They are sense-organless in exactly the same way as Hurstonøs description of the residents of Eatonville during the work day, prior to sundown. I have searched far and wide for other possible sources for Ellisonøs tropes but to no avail. The beings from Ezekieløs vision thus used as figures representing enslaved Africans by Hickman also transform from automatons to autonomy through sound ó not through regaining their own voices, as the residents of Eatonville do when freed from wage labor for the day, but through the sublime word of God, with which they enter an enclave, as relayed in Revered Hickmanøs Juneteenth celebration sermon through an extended metaphor involving Ezekieløs valley of dry bones. Here is a long, if much abridged excerpt of that sermon in the novelistic variant (as opposed to the 1965 short story). The crucial borrowings from Hurston occur in the quoted segment on the pages after this one[87]:

> They cut out our tonguesí
>
> í They left us speechlessí
>
> í They cut out our tonguesí
>
> í Lord, they left us without wordsí
>
> í And they left us without languageí .
>
> í They took away our talking drumsí .
>
> í Drums that talked, Daddy Hickman? Tell us about those talking drumsí [í ]í And they scattered the ashesí
>
> Ah, Aaaaaah! Eyeless, tongueless, drumless, danceless [í ]

[87] The passage below evidently was important for Ellison. In the 1966 episode of the WNET documentary series õUSA: The Novelö that was devoted to him and his work (õWork in Progressö is the title of the episode), Ellison chose this passage to demonstrate the method he employed to try to test and achieve the proper aural dimensions of the sound of the words in his fiction. In the documentary Ellison reads a version of this section into a tape recorder, then plays it back and listens to himself, trying to achieve the ideal sound he is looking for.

> We were truly in the dark, my young brothern and sistern. Eyeless, earless, tongueless, drumless, danceless, songless, hornless, soundless. [í ]
>
> WE WERE LIKE THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES!
>
> í .Lord, we were dead! Exceptí exceptí
>
> í Except what, Rev. Hickman?
>
> Except for one nerve from our earí
>
> [í ]
>
> í and right there in the midst of all our death and buried-ness, the voice of God spoke down the Wordí
>
> í Crying Do! I said, Do! Crying Doooo-
>
> These dry bones live?[88]
>
> í
>
> Amen! And we heard and rose up. Because in all their blasting they could not blast away one solitary vibration of Godøs true wordí We heard it down among the roots and rocks. We heard it in the sand and in the clay. We heard it in the falling rain and in the rising sun. On the high ground and in the gullies. We heard it lying moldering and corrupted in the earth. We heard it sounding like a bugle call to wake up the dead. Crying, Doooooo! Ay, do these dry bones live! (318-21)

I have searched extensively, and there appears to be no other source for the series õeyeless, tonguelessö (et cetera) other than the opening of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Even if there is a third and as yet unknown common source for this section, Ellison still seems to have been influenced by Hurstonøs employment of metaphor. Nevertheless, Hurston appears to be the only source, and this is extraordinary: both for how Ellison is understood in relation to women writers but more expansively, how sound is understood in relation to African American subjectivity in

[88] Hickman changes the õcan,ö asked by God of Ezekiel, to õdo.ö Ezekiel 37:3-6 in the King James Version reads õAnd he said unto me, Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. And he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lordö (1497-98).

mid-century modernist works. To enter into a communal sound, for Ellison and Hurston, subverts enforced labor and curtailed freedom and creates a space for autonomy.

Horace Porter, in his book *Jazz Country: Ralph Ellison in America* (2001) speculates on the possible influence on Reverend C.L. Franklinøs famous sermon on the valley of dry bones on Hickmanøs sermon (114-15). I have listened to Reverend Franklinøs inspired sermon several times. Porterøs comparison mainly relates to the moment in each sermon when the dry bones come together to form animated individual beings. The scenes are plausibly similar but there is no precise connection. Franklin (1915-1984) was Ellisonøs contemporary. Ellison heard his popular sermons on the radio or on record.[89] Porter also claims that õthe climax of Rev. C.L. Franklinøs sermon may have been Ellisonøs model. Rev. Franklin had invoked the Word as a compass against chaosö (117). Perhaps. But it is also probable that two sermons on the same text are going to be similar. Furthermore, the climax of Franklinøs sermon is the repetition of õcan these bones live?ö, with a difference, inserting several modern professions[90] between õSon of Manö and õcan these bones live.ö Again, Ellison has changed õcanö to õdo.ö Do the bones live? In fact they do, but they must hear a certain sound first. They do not live in an enclave of sound separate from the sound of Godøs word. They must form an enclave with it in order to live, in Hickmanøs formulation.

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[89] Ellison mentions Franklin as an example of an outstanding preacher in a 1976 interview (Graham and Singh 329). If Franklin did influence Ellison in some way, it would not exactly be as a ÷folkø source, like C.C. Lovelace was for Hurston or the anonymous Kansas City preacher was for Johnson. According to Michael Warner, the eclectic Franklin studied õliterature as a special student at the University of Buffaloö (920).

[90] For instance: õSon of man, you are a scholar. Can these bones live? Son of man, you are a heart specialist. Can these *bones* live? Youøre a psychologist and a psychiatrist! Can these bones live?ö

According to Allen Dwight Callahan, traditionally Ezekiel 37:1-14 has been a frequent text used in the African American church[91] (46). Without mentioning Ellison, Allan Dwight Callahan may have identified another source for a critical section in Ellisonøs second novel. Callahan writes:

> Oscar Micheauxøs 1925 silent film classic *Body and Soul* is the film debut of Renaissance man Paul Robeson, who plays the charismatic, conniving, and abusive Reverend Isaiah T. Jenkins, a black flim-flam man and ex-con who poses as a preacher in a small southern town. Toward the end of the film, after Jenkins has robbed, raped, and bullied members of the local community, he preaches a sermon entitled õDry Bones in the Valley.öí .The intertitle reads that this ÷is a sermon which is every black preacherøs ambition.ø This without further comment: Micheaux implicitly expects that his audience is already familiar with the biblical text that Jenkins has taken for his sermon. Micheaux does not provide intertitles for the contents of the sermon in the silent film. (46)

At first glance this would seem to bolster the idea that there is not one likely source for Hickmanøs sermon (though there seems to be only one source ó Hurston ó for the õeyeless, tongueless,ö et cetera, sequences). Ellison may have heard many sermons on Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones while he was growing up (and at times living in a church rectory as a child with his mother). But Micheauxøs film may indeed have given Ellison an idea. In *Body and Soul*, at the 1:07:27 mark, Jenkinsøs sermon is interrupted by a woman (apparently white) who accuses him of murder. Hickman may have made mistakes in raising Bliss, but he is nothing like Jenkins; he is a man of great integrity and morality. But later on that same Juneteenth day, as Hickman and Bliss do their resurrection shtick wherein Hickman commands Bliss to rise from a coffin,

[91] Perhaps for nineteenth and early twentieth century communities the liminality of the text between speech and writing was an appealing feature. According to Herbert Marks, õ[Ezekieløs] career marks the beginningí [of the] shift from speech to writingö (1429). It is thus significant that Hickmanøs sermon on Ezekiel is the passage Ellison chose to read into his tape recorder for the world and for posterity in his episode of õUSA: The Novel.ö

they are interrupted as well, by a white woman claiming to be Blissøs mother (*Three Days Before the Shooting…* 338).

Ellisonøs sources are probably manifold and some are probably lost to history. It would appear that Johnson, Hurston, Franklin, and Micheaux may have helped his creative process along. It seems, though, that he is signifying on Hurston most explicitly, as their sense-less characters gain their senses and thus an important aspect of their humanity through forming an enclave with sound. But I would just like to suggest one more possible source: Louis Armstrong. In 1958, as Ellison was working on his second novel in earnest, Armstrong recorded õEzekiel Saw De Wheel,ö which appeared on his album *Louis and the Good Book*. Ellison surely did not need Armstrongøs rendition of the old spiritual to teach him anything about Ezekiel. But Armstrongøs singing of spirituals ó difficult to imagine in the 1920s or at any time before the 1950s ó is analogous to Hickman going from the jazz musicianøs world of the pool halls and Peter Wheatstraw-style signifyinø to the pulpit. Armstrongøs engagement with the spirituals in *Louis and the Good Book* is something like the (non-religious former secular musician) Ellisonøs engagement with African American religious traditions ó not necessarily for supernatural reasons, but for historical, cultural, and anthropological reasons, and out of respect for all of those. Ellison may have imagined that the shadow of Armstrong, or the sign of Armstrong, or the spirit of Armstrong, could thus hover over both of his novels, through õWhat Did I Do To Be So Black and Blueö and õEzekiel Saw De Wheel.ö In any case, it is the exploration of the vast and complex African American aural experience and the related origins of carving out a space for subjectivity under an oppressive system that is his goal in Hickmanøs sermon, which is built upon an image in all likelihood derived from the opening of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

## Chapter Three: The Ellison-Murray Friendship and Exchange: Ear of Another

> õThe ear is uncanny. Uncanny is what it is; double is what it can become; large or small is what it can make or let happen.ö óDerrida (*The Ear of the Other*, 33)

> õFor Albert Murray ó my friend who was schooled in the same briar patch, to confound the squares, bears, and fools thereabouts. Passion is his, and with it consciousness, but best of all self-acceptance and self-respect. In his ear, my voice becomes richer for his love and knowledge of the experience we both love and share.
>
> Sincerely, Ralph Ellison, Tuskegee, 1954ö (Ellisonøs inscription in Murrayøs copy of *Invisible Man*) (Russell 37)

I. Ellison and Murray In and On Each Otherøs Fiction, In Their Fiction and Correspondence

The seven-decade friendship between Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray is well-known and has been discussed at length over time[92]. Their productive literary exchange and shared aesthetic (not completely shared, but closely shared) is central to this study. Their goals, eloquently expressed in fiction and non-fiction, was a reorientation of African American literature that entailed a re-presentation of the African American experience that emphasized style, elegance, resilience, and affirmation, imbued with music and (sometimes cryptically) guided through tropes of sound.

Their engagement with one anotherøs texts was extensive. While their friendship has been studied assiduously, the intertextual dimensions of their work, as regards one anotherøs work, has not been explored in any depth.[93] Commentary on Ellison and his work appears throughout Murrayøs oeuvre[94], while Ellison comments on Murray in letters and in his second novel. I will investigate the intricacies of their intertextual engagement here and attempt to contextualize close readings in order to demonstrate the great extent to which Murrayøs work can be read as a response to Ellisonøs call, as they endeavored alongside one another and sometimes in friendly competition with one another to provide counter-information to both the segregation aesthetic and what Murray has called õthe folklore of white supremacy,ö which they both recoiled from.

The most important source for the study of their relationship is *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray* (edited by Murray and John Callahan, 2000), which includes their correspondence between the crucial years of 1950-1960. In his

[92] For instance, see õThe King of Catsö (1996), a *New Yorker* profile of Murray by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., since republished several times, including in Gatesøs *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man* (1998) and Barbara Bakerøs edited volume *Albert Murray and the Aesthetic Imagination of a Nation* (2010).

[94] Murray writes about Ellison personally in *South to a Very Old Place* (126-27). He comments on *Invisible Man* as a literary critic explicitly in *The Omni-Americans* (177) and subtly but unmistakably in *The Hero and the Blues* (31, second paragraph). I will not be investigating these straightforward readings or discussions, but rather will be exploring his signifying on Ellisonøs work in *South to a Very Old Place* and his commentary on him in fiction.

preface to *Trading Twelves* Murray explains the early history of his friendship with Ellison. I will summarize it briefly in this paragraph and also expand upon it. Ellison was two years ahead of Murray at Tuskegee. Ellison worked in the library and Murray and they would have brief exchanges when Murray checked out books. The extracurricular reading in the history of the novel that Murray was doing mirrored Ellisonøs, as both were guided by their mutual professor Morteza Drexel Sprague. Ellisonøs name was often the most recent on the cards in the back of the books that Murray was checking out. They would see each other in the library but did not really become friends at Tuskegee. They were formally introduced in New York during World War II by a mutual friend from Tuskegee and re-connected again in New York after the war when Murray was going to graduate school at New York University. During the 1947-1948 school year (Murray completed his masterøs at NYU in one year, having already done graduate work at the University of Michigan and Northwestern just before the war) Murray listened to Ellison read sections of what would become *Invisible Man*. They exchanged numerous letters between 1950 and 1960s, while the Murrays were living in Alabama, then Morocco, then Los Angeles (places which were Murrayøs assignments as an officer in the U.S. Air Force) while the Ellisons were living in New York, then Rome, and then New York, while traveling all over. When Murray retired from the Air Force in 1962 he moved with his wife, Mozelle, to New York. His daughter, Michele, was already in New York by this time, attending Julliard and living with Ralph and Fanny on Riverside Drive (Devlin and Walsh 153).

Murrayøs early periodical publications came with Ellisonøs assistance. Murray published a short story in 1953 (which will be discussed at great length) but could not find a publisher for the manuscript from which it was excerpted. His next publication, a non-fiction publication, came in 1964, through Ellisonøs assistance. By the early 1970s, Murray had his own momentum

and Ellisonøs publication rate had stalled somewhat. Ellisonøs second novel was highly anticipated but would never be published in his lifetime. Meanwhile, Murray published five books in six years from 1970-1976. Many have claimed that Murray and Ellison seem to have drifted apart (personally) during these years, though Murray insisted in a 1997 interview that this never actually happened (Murray, Interview with Susan Page). Murray attended Ellisonøs eightieth birthday dinner and gave the toast a month prior to Ellisonøs death in 1994.[95]

During the last phase of Ellisonøs career, when he became a distant, austere figure (õa statue,ö in Murrayøs words, in conversation), Murray, three years younger than Ellison, maintained youthful energy, humor, and enthusiasm, as he was working closely with Romare Bearden, wrote Count Basieøs autobiography (*Good Morning Blues*, 1985), lectured widely, mentored many, served on the board of the American Composers Orchestra, and starting in 1987, worked closely with Wynton Marsalis, Gordon Davis, and Stanley Crouch to found the organization that would develop into Jazz at Lincoln Center, to which Murray devoted enormous amounts of time from 1987-2004, while still writing.

Murrayøs fiction exists on the response-side of a call-and-response relationship with his Ellisonøs fiction. Murrayøs non-fiction does as well, especially his first creative non-fiction volume that was not an essay collection, *South to a Very Old Place* (1971). Understanding Murrayøs commentary on Ellisonøs work in *South to a Very Old Place* is essential to understanding Murrayøs perspectives on segregation and desegregation, as he elides both in his fiction. The second half of this chapter, which itself is sort of an interlude or connecting chapter between the Ellison and Murray chapters, will explore Murrayøs perspective on segregation and

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[95] David Remnickøs report on the dinner (õVisible Manö), which originally appeared in the *New Yorker*, is included in *Conversations with Ralph Ellison* (392-401).

desegregation in *South to a Very Old Place* and tease out his extensive but subtle commentary on Ellison contained therein. Before beginning that discussion I think it best to examine Murrayøs *a clef* rendering of Ellison in his fourth and final novel, *The Magic Keys* (2005). But before embarking on an exploration of the way Murray portrayed Ellison in the last book he saw through publication, I will briefly explore Ellisonøs imaginative portrayal of *Murray* in his second novel.

Ellison and Murray included fictional portraits of one another in their later fiction. Both portrayals of one another highlight the importance of sound to their related aesthetics. Murray created a character closely based on the historical Ellison. In his second novel, Ellison re-imagines Murray as a preacher of their parentsø generation. In *Three Days Before the Shooting…* Hickman tries to jog Blissøs memory of the crucial Juneteenth (in which Blissøs identity becomes thrown into question), reminding him of the various preachers who preached that night, including:

> that little Negro Murray, who had been to a seminary up North and could preach the pure Greek and the original Hebrew and could still make all our uneducated folks swing along with him, who could make them understand and follow him ó and not showing off, just needing all those languages to give him room to move around in. Besides, he knew that *oftimes the meaning of the Word is in the way you make it sound*[96]í .Revernø Murrayøs education didnøt get him separated from the folks. (328, emphasis added)

Indeed, that Murrayøs education did not get him separated from the folks is one of the things that impressed Ellison most about Murray ó that he was so astonishingly well-read and so enmeshed

[96] In Ellisonøs essay õThe Myth of the Flawed White Southerner,ö he writes: õWhat I was growing up, a Negro Oklahoman always listened for the threat in the accent of a white Texan, but one learned to listen to the individual intonation, to *what* was said as well as to *how* it was said, to content and implication as well as to style. Black provincials cannot afford the luxury of being either snobbish or provincialö (*Collected Essays* 560, emphasis in original). Murrayøs commentary on this essay will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

in the downhome vernacular, while integrating both so seamlessly.[97] But Ellisonøs claim about the sound of words to õRevernø Murrayö is an acknowledgement of their shared aesthetic and a gesture in the direction of the winter of 1947-48, when they discussed the relation of sound to literary aesthetics, and Murray listened to Ellison read from what would become *Invisible Man*. This õRevernø Murrayö portrait (a bit longer than what I quoted) is also in John Callahanøs 1999 version of Ellisonøs second novel, *Juneteenth*. Murray was amused by it and appreciative of it. It is unknown if he knew about it prior to 1999. But he did read and comment to Ellison on the second novel over a period of decades (Rampersad 482; Murray and Callahan 204). In any event, Murray responded heartily to the call of Ellisonøs fiction, providing his own riffs on the inseparability of the sounds of words from their image.

This becomes abundantly clear after Scooter, the protagonist of Murrayøs four novels, encounters Taft Edison, a character closely modeled on Ralph Ellison, in chapter four of *The Magic Keys* (the final volume in Murrayøs tetralogy, 2005). After Scooterøs encounters with Edison, and after having listened to him read from the manuscript of his *Invisible Man*-like novel, previous scenes that Scooter has narrated going back to the first novel in the tetralogy, *Train Whistle Guitar*, become more clearly responses to the call of Edisonøs (Ellisonøs) fiction[98].

Though Scooter and Edison had attended the same college at approximately the same time, Taft Edison had not appeared in the two preceding novels that discuss Scooterøs college days (1991 and 1995). Perhaps once Ellison passed away (and *Juneteenth* and *Trading Twelves*

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[97] A similar assessment by Bernard Bell is quoted in the first chapter.

[98] Numerous instances abound, but for example, the õCalvin Hargrovesö section of *Train Whistle Guitar* (171-73) is a variation on a theme of the Trueblood episode in *Invisible Man* (that is to say, a money-making storytelling performance for whites, that whites pay for because it reflects badly on African Americans). The õHistory Lessonsö section and the õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö section within õHistory Lessonsö are (as will be discussed at length) extended meditations on or jazzy re-compositions of the Invisible Manøs meditations on the founders of the United States, as expressed in the Epilogue of *Invisible Man*. In *The Spyglass Tree*, Murray offers his own imaginative (and completely non-historical) history of the Tuskegee-like college that Scooter attends, just as Ellison invents a fabulous mythic history of the Founder of the Tuskegee-like State College for Negroes in *Invisible Man*.

had been published) Murray decided that he could and should memorialize him in fiction. Indeed, in Murrayøs responses to Ellisonøs extended and insightful critique[99] of his first novel-length manuscript, he tells Ellison that he plans to include a character based on him in his second novel. Based on the contents of these letters it is clear that Murrayøs first two novels (1974 and 1991) correspond closely to the manuscript that Ellison read and commented upon in 1952, while what became Murrayøs next two novels ó forty and fifty years hence ó are outlined in Murrayøs reply to Ellisonøs critique. It is here that Murray writes to Ellison that he plans to include an *a clef* version of him in next manuscript:

> Iøm going to have to go to novel #2 (it seems). I think itøs that cross country jazz thing and I keep wanting to call it ÷Black and Tan Fantasyø for some reason or other.í I think itøs going to have a band leader piano player with a scar on the side of his face name of Dude or something. Eunice will be there to purify and be purified and old stuff Johnny NoName will be in there being called Gilbert Morris[100], since you canøt sign in anywhere as Jack the Cub. I hope to put Taft Edisonøs ass to work too. But thatøs going to be rough going since that son of a bitch is an umpteen kilowatt operator. Man, old Invisible ainøt so invisible to me, but I sure got to watch out for that distorting mirror, got to keep telling myself that it ainøt glass ó itøs a DIAMOND! (34)

The õumpteen kilowatt operatorö epithet refers not just of course to the 1,369 light bulbs that the Invisible Man fuels with stolen power, but to Ellisonøs formidable nature and personality, which it would be difficult to properly render in fiction. Indeed, perhaps it was õrough going,ö as it would be fifty-three years before Murray followed through on the idea. In *The Magic Keys* Scooter sees Taft Edison on Fifth Avenue somewhere between 42nd and 47th Streets in Manhattan and notes, õI recognized his walk as soon as I saw him moving up the

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[99] February 4, 1952 and February 9, 1952, respectively.

[100] The name õGilbert Morrisö as a stand in for õAlbert Murrayö could very well be a conscious combination of the names of the British classicist Gilbert Murray (1866-1957, whose work Murray and Ellison admired) and Morris Slater, the real name of the African American folk hero/outlaw/tall tale legend of the Gulf Coast, õRailroad Billö (d. 1895) discussed in *Train Whistle Guitar* (and in my second Murray chapter), suggesting again that Murrayøs ÷education didnøt get him separated from the folks.ø

sidewalk about ten yards ahead of meö (31). Catching up to Edison on the street, Scooter hails him with a Tuskegee-esque greeting, echoing or alluding to Booker T. Washingtonøs 1895 Atlanta Compromise speech[101]: õWhat I said in my old roommateøs mock conspiratorial stage sotto voce was, *Hey, let that goddamn bucket down right there where you at, old pardner. You know what the man said!*ö (32, emphasis in original). Murray, equally concerned with naming in an African American vernacular context as Ellison (as shall be discussed at length) then proceeds to play a riff on Ellisonøs ponderous relationship with his own name that he (Ralph Waldo Ellison) tries to work out in his major 1964 essay õHidden Name and Complex Fateö (in which, incidentally, Ellison quotes an otherwise unpublished rumination by Murray[102]). Scooter says:

> I said Edison, Taft Edison. Taft Woodrow Edison. And he shook his head and said, What can I tell you, man. What can I tell you. My folks were big on newsworthy names. All I can do is try to make mine mean what I want it to mean so when someone drops it in there on me it sounds as if it belongs as much to me as to that son of a bitch, Wilson, if you know what I mean. (32)

The name õTaft Edisonö was created by Ellison himself. õRalph Taft Edison Ellisonö is how he signed his letter to Murray of February 4, 1952 (Callahan and Murray 31). This is the letter in which he offers Murray an appreciative and substantive reading and critique of the manuscript of his novel, a portion of which went on to become *Train Whistle Guitar*[103]. Murray replies in a letter of February 9, 1952:

> (By the way, Invisible Man equals IM equals IøM equals I AM: and Taft Edison = Taft Jordan plus Harry Edison equal a double-barreled trumpet player, plus Thomas Edison minus Wm. H. Taft equals light bringer equals shining trumpet.)Thatøs what I call

[101] Washingtonøs famous plea to õcast down your buckets where you areö was a theory for improving race relations that focused on neighborly good will.
[102](*Collected Essays* 194)
[103] õEdisonö was also a character in that no-longer-extant manuscript that Ellison read.

> extreme bop[104] and I just play it for my own amusement and for the amusement of close friends, and thereøs a lot of it in Jack the ---- and I donøt expect and donøt want any reaction public at all. (32)[105]

Such play derives from African American idiomatic signifying, which is integral in Murrayøs central formal aesthetic preoccupation: creating a space for the appreciation of aural (and thus oral) dimension of the southern African American experience within a literature informed by modernism (thereby plunging into myth and subduing the tyranny of literal interpretation), thereby preserving aspects of that experience grounded and understood through the aural that might be lost to history due to the impermanent nature of the aural.[106]

In that same letter, Murray tells Ellison (regarding Morteza Drexel Spragueøs suggestion that the manuscript might be more of a prose poem than a novel): õ(I was hoping that it would be poetry, which is why I wrote it in pencil and kept reading it aloud[107]í . Remember that time we were talking about visual dialogue and sound, 1947, ca. Me at NYUí .) But not as such, not just as such, because I was hoping even harder that it would be a novelö (33). For Ellison as well,

[104] In an earlier letter, of May 29, 1951, Murray played a similar kind of õextreme bopö game, signifying on what was then the manuscript that became *Invisible Man* in relation to General Douglas MacArthurøs õfadingö (18). (MacArthur had recently given his farewell speech to Congress that April, in which he said õold soldiers never die, they just fade away.ö)

[105] Curiously enough, though I do not see how Murray could have planned it this way, the meeting and greeting of Taft Edison occurs on pages 31-32 of *The Magic Keys*, and his riff on Ellisonøs signifying signature occurs on pages 31-32 of *Trading Twelves*.

[106] For instance, there is an African American folk expression of rhetorical dissuasion, or *apagoresis*, in which a speaker invites an assailant to attack first but warns the assailant that the initial attack must end in the speakerøs death, or else the assailantøs death will surely result. Murray preserves a version of this *apagoresis* in *Train Whistle Guitar*. Variations on this (not derived from *Train Whistle Guitar* but from widespread folk sources) were later expressed by Notorious B.I.G. and Jay-Z. In *Train Whistle Guitar*, Scooter reports Luzana Chollyøs version of this form of dissuasion: õBecause the idea of going to jail didnøt scare him at all, and the idea of getting lynch-mobbed didnøt faze him either. All I can remember him ever saying about that was: If they shoot at me they sure better not miss me they sure better get me that first timeö (13). The Notorious B.I.G., on his song õThe Whatö (1994), says õNigga touch me / you better bust me / *tree* times in the head / or [a] motherfuckerøs deadö (2:53). Jay-Z, on his song õFriend Or Foeö (1996), expresses it with the most poetic flair, creating a double-entendre on the word õdraw,ö as in draw a picture and draw a gun: õyou draw: better be Picasso / you know, the best / cause if this is not so / eh, God blessö (1:20). If hip-hop had not developed the way it did, this form of dissuasive brag might have gone unrecorded if not for *Train Whistle Guitar*.

[107] Murray loved to read his own work aloud, especially prior to its publication. I listened to him read his poetry aloud, as well as sections of *The Magic Keys* on numerous occasions. But he also liked to read a diverse selection of work by others aloud, particularly the poetry of Auden, Millay, and Marianne Moore, but also the prose of Thomas Mann, as translated into English by H.T. Lowe-Porter.

and perhaps prior to Murray, the way a novel was *heard*, was listened to, and sounded out loud was as important as the interiorized reading experience and process. For Ellison and Murray, in order to render African American oral traditions into literature (and properly connect the historical depth of African American oral and aural cultures to modernist literary practice) the physically present sounds of the words had to be acknowledged and respected as working within their novels, and understood as an elemental aspect of the form of the works and their processes of composition.[108] In response to Murrayøs May 29, 1951 letter, Ellison tells (reminds) Murray, in a letter of June 6, 1951, about the importance of aurality and orality in his own editing process: õErskine[109] and I reading aloud, not cutting (I cut 200 pages myself and got it down to 606) but editingö (19). Murray knew of Ellisonøs preference to hear his work read aloud, but perhaps did not know until this letter that Ellison did so with others besides him.

Murray writes in a prefatory note to the first section of *Trading Twelves* õIt was also during that school year [1947-48] that my relationship with Ralph Ellison developed into an ongoing literary dialogue that included sessions during which I listened and responded to his readings of sequences and episodes from the novel he was writingö (3). One of these sessions is fictionalized in *The Magic Keys*. After their chance meeting in chapter four, they cross paths again, as Scooter is doing research at the main branch of the New York Public Library and Edison is working on his novel in a midtown office (just as Ellison worked on *Invisible Man* in an office loaned to him by Francis Steegmuller at 608 Fifth Avenue, at 49th Street). Scooter says that õhe [Edison] and I had a lot to talk about, especially about the literary possibilities of the down-home idiom. Something beyond the same old overworked sociopolitical clichés about race

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[108] As mentioned in the previous chapter, in õWork in Progress,ö the 1966 episode of the WNET documentary series õUSA: The Novelö that solely featured Ellison discussing his work and career, then reading portions of his second novel into a tape recorder, and then playing the recording back to himself, Murray is listed in the credits at the end as the productionøs sole õTechnical Consultant.ö

[109] Albert Erskine was Ellisonøs longtime editor at Random House.

and injustice that had long since become so usual that they were also the expected and tolerated and indulgedö (56). They thus commiserate about their distaste for the dominant aesthetic of African American literature over the previous half century[110]. Scooter goes on to describe a lunch with Edison at the counter of the unsegregated Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station (without, as is par for the course, ever mentioning that it was unsegregated).[111]

After this lunch, Scooter is invited uptown to Edisonøs apartment to listen to him read passages from his manuscript. Since these were passages that Edison was considering for magazine publication, presumably they were intended to have been *Invisible Manø*s Battle Royal scene and/or Prologue (the only excerpts that appeared prior to publication). Edison tells Scooter: õI really want to know what you make of all this stuff. So Iøm open to cross-examination. Except for one point. Man, donøt ask me why Iøm trying to do whatever this stuff is about. With a pencil and a typewriter and not with valves and keysö (69). Scooter does not need to ask because he is proceeding along the same lines; with a typewriter and not with his bass strings. Edisonøs voice then propels Scooter on a journey through his memory, to one of his first introductions to literary aesthetics that took music into account, explained to him by his former roommate (one of the tetralogyøs most important characters), the polymath T. Jerome Jefferson:

> When he [Edison] began reading that night, it was very much as if I were back down on the campus in central Alabama with my old roommate again. Because it was during that first autumn term that

[110] Ellison wrote to Murray on January 24, 1950: õI believe that at last weøre going to have a group of writers who are aware that their task is not that of pleading Negro humanity, but of examining and depicting the forms and rituals of that humanityö (8).

[111] Their lunch, incidentally, ends with Edison proudly showing Scooter the brass knuckles that he carries in his pockets at all times. Thus does Edison become associated, in the logic of Murrayøs four novels, with Murrayøs assertive African American characters immersed in a secular soundscape and prepared for violence, such as Luzana Cholly, Stagolee Dupas, and Giles Cunningham. Compare this with Michael Harperøs recollection of walking with Ellison on a deserted street in Harlem late at night: õHe reached into his pocket and pulled out what we used to call a shankö (Russell 46; for more see Rampersad 455). In *Invisible Man*, of course, Brother Tarp gives the Invisible Man a piece of metal that had been part of his leg chain on the chain gang. The Invisible Man then realizes this piece may function as brass knuckles.

> he said what he said about tune in the head and voice on the page. He was not talking to me, he was talking to himself, and he said it twice. [í ] Tune in the head, voice on the page applied even when the narration was in the third person. Because even when it was in the first person or even the second person it was not really your ordinary, everyday voice. It was your yarn-spinning, lie-swapping, tell-me-tale and so your storybook-time voice. (71)

Perfecting his õyarn-spinning, lie-swapping, tell-me-taleö voice was evidently a challenge for Murray; that is to say, much effort went into creating the modernism-and-blues-idiom synthesis that works well in *Train Whistle Guitar*. Ellison expressed reservations about Murrayøs folk-modernism synthesis in his 1952 letter on Murrayøs manuscript. Ellison advises Murray in that letter:

> The only other thing that I would watch and I had plenty to watch in this thing that I finished [*Invisible Man*], are those [folk] rhythms from which you derived part of your style. I know how powerful they can be, indeed they can move a man to write, make him will to endure the agony of learning to think and see and feel under their spell ó even before he learns what he must say if he is to achieve is own identity. Well, you have an identity and what youøre saying no one but you could say. So watch the trailing umbilicus of rhythm[112]. (29)

It may be illuminating to compare Ellisonøs admonition about the õtrailing umbilicus of rhythmö with Derridaøs commentary in *The Ear of the Other* (1985) on Nietzscheøs claim that it is by the

[112] Murray commented this letter of Ellisonøs six years prior to the publication of *Trading Twelves* in his 1994 Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project interview with Robert OøMeally. Murray told OøMeally, paraphrasing Ellisonøs letter in such a way as to suggest that he really internalized it and knew its admonitions quite well:

> so many of our so-called black writers, they get the folk level andí they get stuck there. And at one time ó I have the letter from Ralph in which heøs warning me. Okay, so he says, Well, you have to watch out for those folk rhythms at such and such a point. I know how strong a pull that can have, and they can make you want to write ó [unintelligible] ó but you have to ó you know, in effect youøre saying you have to realize youøre writing a book. And a book has a language thatøs got to be in a certain extent like other books. You seeí you get over that. You canøt take what some Negroes are saying on the street and just write it down and would be ó but thatøs the kind of stuff Langston Hughes would do. You say some smart remark and then you chop it up like itøs a poem and put it downí .when you readí Dylan Thomas or something, you heard that on the street. But a genius worked it into a poem. Or Yeats: nobody could be more vernacular than Yeats if he wanted to be. But a guy whoøs writing the best poetry he can possibly write. You see? And Langston would not accept that challenge. (99)

(I have never heard the audio. I am quoting from the manuscript of the Smithsonianøs 1994 transcript with partial corrections in Murrayøs handwriting. I have certain reservations about the quality of the transcript in general.)

ear that the student becomes connected to the õumbilical cord of the universityö (Derrida 35). Murray was, in Ellisonøs 1951 assessment, too connected to the Magazine Point community similarly by the ear. Derrida writes:

> Dream this umbilicus: it has you by the ear. It is an ear, however, that dictates to you what you are writing at this moment when you write in the mode of what is called ÷taking notes.ø In fact the mother ó the bad or false mother whom the teacher, as a functionary of the State can only stimulate ó dictates to you the very thing that passes through your ear and travels the length of the cord all the way down to your stenography. This writing links you, like a leash in the form of an umbilical cord, to the paternal belly of the state. Your pen is its pen, you hold its teleprinter like one of those Bic ballpoints attached by a little chain in the post office ó and all its movements are induced by the body of the father figuring as alma mater. How an umbilical cord can create a link to this cold monster that is a dead father or the State ó this is what is uncanny. (36)

When Ellisonøs statement is refracted through Derridaøs, his meaning might become more clear. Perhaps he is admonishing Murray not to write as if, in Derridaøs words, the mode of *taking notes* (as Murray criticizes Langston Hughes for doing), but rather suggests that he re-process their beloved rhythms African American speech. Ellison sees these rhythms as almost parental, as Derrida sees the rhythms of institutions of education that work on behalf of the state. In Murrayøs case, the uncanny connection of the ear is with the parental mother-tongue (so to speak), the African American idiomatic variation on English. In his extensive reflections on jazz autobiography (in essays on Count Basie and Louis Armstrong) Murray is keen to note that extemporaneous recorded speech does not usually make for aesthetically pleasing writing; that raw speech must be undergo a process that turns it into art speech; it must be polished and honed into something readable that will then resemble ÷naturalø speech.[113] The pipeline from speech to

[113] It is too much to go into here, but these reflections are found in Murrayøs essays õComping For Count Basieö (*The Blue Devils of Nada* 29-49) and õLouis Armstrong in his Own Wordsö (*From the Briarpatch File* 108-130).

ear to writing implement ó the umbilicus ó must not, Ellison seems to be saying, be a direct pipeline. After all, Ellison seems to be saying, writing is not speech, and what works in speech does not always work in writing. (And this has an analogy in Hurstonøs distinction between writing in the idiom and writing in dialect.[114]) The difference, of course, between remembering lively folk rhythms and writing them down as one remembers them, and listening to a professor lecture take notes, is that the professor, writes Derrida, õdeciphersí a text that precedes him, and from which he is suspended by a similar umbilical cordö (36). Ellisonøs critique of Murray is in a sense a critique of what he saw as the manuscriptøs lack of having been thoroughly edited. (Unfortunately, the 1951 manuscript no longer exists to compare with the published versions. The 1953 version of õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö may have been revised considerably before appearing in *New World Writing*.) It is difficult to reconstruct this without examples of what Ellison is actually referring to, but Derridaøs example of õtaking notesö seems illustrative. The umbilicus stemming from the ear, for Ellison and Derrida, represents a provisional form of writing; one not fully and properly honed. Thus, as Scooter is listening to Edison, connected to the streaming action in the *Invisible Man*-like novel by ear, as it were, he is remembering the process of development of his own õstorybook-time voice.ö

> And so, while I sat listening for his tune in the head as Taft Edison went on reading, I also found myself remembering how I became aware of the narrative voices on the pages of the list of novels I began reading on my own during that first fall term, starting with the voice of Henry Fielding, the author of *The History of Tom Jones, the Foundling*, among the academic classics and that of Ernest Hemingway among the serious contemporaries. (70-71)

[114] In õArt and Suchö Hurston writes anonymously of her work in the third person: õThe second element that attracted attention [to *Jonah's Gourd Vine*] was the telling of the story in the idiom ó not the dialect ó of the Negro. The Negroøs poetical flow of language, his thinking in images and figures, was called to the attention of the outside world. It gave verisimilitude to the narrative by stewing the subject in its own juiceö (*Folklore* 910).

Edisonøs voice re-grounds Scooterøs earlier-considered but (up to this point) not much-reflected upon conceptions of what he wanted prose to sound like.

In this scene at Edisonøs apartment, it becomes clear where Scooterøs impetus to write the previous three-and-a-quarter novels originated: in *listening* to excerpts from a novel very much like *Invisible Man*. Here is the first inkling of the possibility of Scooter becoming a writer. Indeed, at the end of *The Magic Keys*, he will transition from musician to writer, as he signs on to write the biography (or perhaps ghost-write the autobiography) of the tap dancer Royal Highness. Scooter continues:

> And when Taft Edison paused at the end of his first excerpt, took of his glasses, and I said what I said about how it already sounded and about tune in the head and voice on the page, he said, The problem as I see it with this stuff is how to get our old down-home kind of lying and signifying to function as literature. í Man, the very act of writing a story is always a matter of a certain amount of lying and signifying. Think of camera angles, microphones, and the sound track in movies.í You reshape whatever has to be reshaped to make the point you try to get across to the reader. (72)

To paraphrase the problem at hand, for Edison: how can someone from a largely oral culture, a culture not largely oral by the luck of history but had orality enforced upon it (by slavery), that was nevertheless highly imaginative and rhetorically sophisticated, render the orality/aurality of that culture into literature and maintain the feeling, or structure of feeling, and authenticity of it; maintain the idiom, if not the dialect, to paraphrase Hurston. If dialect was out of the question because of its association with minstrelsy and because it had been abused by white writers of questionable motives, and the Victorian or at least Edwardian prose of Du Bois, Johnson, and Walter White was not up to the task of reflecting the sound of these communities, then Edison would strive for his own synthesis.

When Edison makes the analogy between writing fiction and making movies, he may not realize he is talking to a professional. Scooter has already been intimately involved with the creation of movie sound tracks. In book three, *The Seven League Boots*, he spends much time working with the movie music arranger Eric Threadcraft, who will appear later in *The Magic Keys* as well.

Murray was to write to Ellison that he considered the episodes in his own work to have musical analogues, and he imagined his fiction as being akin to a movie with a soundtrack. In his February 9, 1952 letter to Ellison, Murray spells this out:

> You must think Iøm crazy by now but Iød just as soon put a scene by scene soundtrack of jazz records in an appendix as not. (Did you play Dukeøs ÷Jack the Bearø for Fanny when I slid that in there about Jimmy Blanton?). Thereøs ÷Cotton Tail,ø ÷Mainstemø and a hell of a lot of stuff in there like the rivers running through Annalivia Plurabelle, but also there like the soundtrack in a goddam movie: whining (grinding) Boy, Bessie, Leadbelly, all kinds of stuff, man (I hope, but not too strongly). But so much for old Jack the Bear for this time, but tell Erskine or Ford when I say Jack the Bear I mean all possible Jacks (and Metaphysical knaves, and bears to include Mr. Faulknerøs). I wonder if Erskine could see any connection between Dukeøs Jack (Victor 26536-A) and mine. (34)

Murray is describing to Ellison is a compositional process of writing inspired by both in the form of the blues and writing out of the spirit of the blues idiom. The importance of Joyce to Murray and Ellison is an enormous topic, which shall be examined briefly below, but it is significant to note here how central the inspiration of the õAnnalivia Plurabelleö section of *Finnegans Wake* was to Murray and to his compositional process, as he tells Ellison it was his model. Murray strongly believed that his work was best accompanied by the õscene by sceneö soundtrack and would go on to emphasize that point for the rest of his career. When Murray would give public readings of his work, he would bring cassette tapes and play the compositions that he felt best

accompanied the action. Notes and outlines survive from readings he gave at Emory University (1978), a PEN-Faulkner event (1996), and Yale University (1997) in which he maps out which sections of text from his novels he is going to read and then what he is going play (or vice versa) in order to present the words against the backdrop of music as (presumably) he heard it in his head.

Ellison, Murray, and Duke Ellington were all inspired by the African American folk character Jack the Bear. In this letter, Murray refers to Ellingtonøs composition õJack the Bearö (1940). The folk tale, which concerns invisibility, (for Jack the Bear knew how to be õnowhereö) informs and circulates throughout *Invisible Man* (and, according to Barbara Foley, played an even larger role in the unpublished versions and variants). It is thus curious that Murray would call his manuscript õJack the Bearö or õJack the ----ö as it so clearly alludes to *Invisible Man*. The õumbilicusö of *Invisible Man* would thus be rather obvious in connection to õJack the Bear.ö By the time Murray got his excerpt into *New World Writing* a year later, the provisional title he gave to the book in his brief biographical statement was õThe Briarpatch.ö The first title change was thus shifting the focus from the narrator (Jack-the-Bear, or Scooter) to the community (õThe Briarpatchö). The next title change would be one that reflected music and sound, or music inspired by a not-necessarily-musical sound, the onomatopoeic rendering of the sound of a train whistle by a guitar: *Train Whistle Guitar*.

Ellison included another important admonishment to Murray in his 1952 critique of Murrayøs manuscript. Ellison recoiled somewhat from the straightforward presentation of ideas and theories by the narrator, at that time called Jack and not Scooter:

> For while I hardly disagree with any of his formulations of the nature of fiction nor with his theories of jazz, etc., I think the

> reader is deprived of his, the readerøs adventure because here you turn from presenting process to presenting statements (Listen, I am probably too much involved in my own techniques of illusion to be a balanced critic, so take this with the knowledge that I have just emerged from a long period of madness). Nevertheless I would like more Emdee, actually heøs not as real as Lilø Buddy, though heøs right there in the environment ó or Jaygee, because with them Jack could arrive at his theories through conflict just as Stephen arrived at his through talks, discussion, arguments with Cranly, Lynch, the dean, etc. His ideas are not the usual ones (sic.) and I think *unrevealed* revelation lies in the story of how he attained this kind of transcendence. (28, emphasis in original)

Ellison suggests that Murray look to Joyceøs *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* for a model of how to show how a philosophical protagonist develops his ideas, rather than just telling the reader what those ideas are. Perhaps there is an analogy to be made between Joyceøs *Stephen Hero*, his first attempt at what became *A Portrait* and Murrayøs no-longer-extant manuscript that Ellison is commenting on and what that manuscript evolved into, *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree*.

Murray took Ellisonøs criticism to heart, and in fact took it a long way, because in the four novels Scooter does not seem to have many of his own ideas at all. Murrayøs own ideas often appear through Scooterøs narration in the discourses of others: Luzana Cholly, Uncle Jerome, Soldier Boy Crawford, the schoolteacher Miss Lexine Metcalf, T. Jerome Jefferson, the blues diva Hortense Hightower, the entrepreneur Giles Cunningham, a French aristocrat called the Marquis de Chaumienne, the Jo Jones-like drummer Joe States, Taft Edison, Royal Highness, and a host of others. The Marquis de Chaumienne, who shares many of Murrayøs ideas on jazz and American culture is the most problematic of these interlocutors and discoursers, for the reader never learns how such a European aristocrat, even if he is a student of the culture of the United States, arrived at his ideas, which are basically Murrayøs ideas, which came about through a very particular upbringing, angle of vision, and personality. Why he chose to de-

historicize many of his own ideas is a mystery, unless it is supposed to show that anyone can hypothetically arrive at the same place[115].

Why Murray chose this approach, rather than follow Ellisonøs suggestion to look to and perhaps emulate Joyceøs process in *A Portrait*, may have to do ó oddly enough ó with Kenneth Burkeøs discussion of Walter Pater in his book *Counter-Statement* (1931). Ellison and Murray were both friends with Burke, though Murray was never nearly as close to him as Ellison.[116] I believe that Murray may have used elements from Burkeøs portrait of Walter Pater in *Counter-Statement* to help form Scooter in relation to the ideas that he (Murray) wanted to express. Rather than follow Joyce/Stephen Dedalus as a model, he seems to have been inspired by Burkeøs image of Pater (if somewhat oddly inspired):

> Whatever our reservations as to Walter Pater, we must recognize his superior adjustment of technique to aesthetic interests. An unenterprising thinker, an inveterate borrower of other menøs ideas, concerned with a probably non-existent past, he was more of an ÷innovatorø than many of his outstanding contemporaries who gave great thought to innovation. Without the slightest element of ÷rebellion,ø he shaped prose fiction to his purposesí Being an oddity but untroubled, being exceptional without strain, he could simplify his work through sheer lack of sympathy for anything but the restricted world in which he lived. (9-10)

Scooter has a startling amount in common with Burkeøs portrait of Pater. First, he is õan unenterprising thinker, an inveterate borrower of other menøs ideas.ö Murray was an enterprising thinker, but frames Scooter, for the most part, as the recipient of the ideas of others (from Uncle

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[115] Murray goes so far as to place his own theory of fiction in relation to the segregation fiction that came before in the discourse of the African American õbaseball umpire and prizefight refereeö Dewitt Dawkins. This seems like an odd choice, but Dawkins is, after all, an arbiter of the rules and performance of games, and for Murray, art is a form of play (as he discusses in numerous essays and interviews). Dawkins says õWe donøt need any more horrors stories trying to put the shame on those people as if they donøt know what the hell they themselves been doing to us all these yearsö (*The Spyglass Tree* 150).
[116] Murray thoroughly admired *Counter-Statement*, though perhaps not as much as Burkeøs *Attitudes Toward History* (1937), which Murray mentions in numerous pieces as a strong influence, particularly because of Burkeøs õframesö of õacceptanceö and õrejectionö of history, as expressed in literary works.

Jerome, T. Jerome Jefferson, et al), even if most of these ideas are Murrayøs own. (Iøll skip past õconcerned with a probably non-existent past,ö but, that is potentially an issue as well.) Most intriguingly, Scooter, like Burkeøs Pater, is also õan oddity but untroubledö and õexceptional without strain.ö It is extraordinary just how untroubled, exceptional, and without strain Scooterøs life generally is; indeed, it puts many readers off, but makes sense in terms of Murrayøs oft-made claims to have written a fairy tale. It cannot be coincidence that Murray knew this book well and Scooter shares so much with Burkeøs image of Pater. Murray never mentioned Pater to me in conversation, and as far as I can tell Pater only appears once in Murrayøs oeuvre, but it is in a crucial place in relation to Murrayøs literary aesthetic. Murrayøs poem õPas de Deuxö (2001) in which he unfolds his literary aesthetic, begins:

> *all art,*
> *said old walter pater,*
> *speaking of sandro botticelli,*
> *constantly aspires*
> *toward the condition*
> *of music.*
> So it is swing that is the supreme fiction,
> madam (*Conjugations and Reiterations* 35)

What Murray found useful in Pater was his claim that all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music. Murrayøs fiction aspires toward the condition of music as well, and it thus is perhaps at first somewhat outlandish but in light of the evidence perhaps not too far-fetched to imagine the elements of Paterøs personality would be part of the model for the narrator of that fiction. Scooter is indeed based on Murray, to a degree, but not entirely so. To the extent that he is not based on Murray, he could have been inspired by Burkeøs portrait of Pater.

If Murrayøs protagonist was inspired by Burkeøs portrait of Pater ó as I believe to be the case ó then he was also inspired by Ellison, as the final rendering of the character from 1974-2005 is in response to Ellisonøs critique of the 1951 manuscript. Murray perhaps felt he could not fully take Ellisonøs advice, as *Train Whistle Guitar* already emulates *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in other ways (for instance, Scooterøs consciousness, and thus the form and rhetoric narration, evolves subtly as he grows up). But because it is so different from the version Ellison read regarding the way ideas are presented, it may thus be said that Ellisonøs stamp of influence is on it. In *South to a Very Old Place*, which has been often called Murrayøs best book (and which was a finalist for the National Book Award), he comments on Ellison and his work both subtly and explicitly. Understanding the implications of this critical engagement will be necessary to fully contextualize the extent to which Ellison and Murray saw themselves as engaging in a project of providing alternatives to previously dominant forms in African American literary aesthetics, with attendant political implications.

## II. Murray, Ellison, and Desegregation: Murrayøs Commentary on Ellison and Desegregation in *South to a Very Old Place*, From Lyndon Baines Johnson to Norman Mailer.

Albert Murray favored desegregation and integration. His decision to not represent segregation in his fiction had nothing to do with pretending segregation was not pernicious. Several letters to Ellison reveal that Murray strongly favored desegregation (125, 214). He kept his NAACP membership card from the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954-1955 (if he

was a member in other years, he did not save those cards). He was in the Air Force reserve when the U.S. armed forces were desegregated in 1948 (he went back to active duty in 1950), and thus in a sense he was living in the vanguard of the desegregation of the nation. Instead of writing about desegregation (or segregation) in his fiction, Murray chose to devote his second book, his memoir *South to a Very Old Place*, to exploring its effects, affects, and contexts. *South to a Very Old Place* was a finalist for the National Book Award in 1971. In a sense, its success may have paved the way for a revised version of the fiction manuscript that Murray began working on in 1947.[117]

Ellison wrote in his 1965 essay õTell It Like It Is, Babyö that õwhen a Negro American novelist tries to write about desegregation, he must regard, in all its tortuous ambiguity, the Southö (*Collected Essays* 31). Murray took up this challenge, with an important difference. To understand the extent of Murrayøs commentary on Ellison in *South to a Very Old Place* it will first be necessary to contextualize the work and to discuss sections that do not pertain to intertextual exchange with Ellison directly, in order to frame the discussion of those that do. He tried in *South to a Very Old Place* to write a õnonfictionö or õdocumentary novelö that covers a large swath of the South, from Greensboro, North Carolina, to Atlanta, Tuskegee, Mobile, New Orleans, and Memphis. In a lecture at Wesleyan University in 1985 Murray spoke of *South to a Very Old Place* as

> a sort of nonfiction or documentary novel. I went south to look at things in the Old Country. I went down home to see what had been happening. And instead of coming back with a sociological report or a bunch of journalistic bullshit, I came back with a metaphor about the imperatives of heroic action. And I found that ever since the fugitive slave, the mold that I was cast in and everything that

[117] As will be discussed at length in the next chapter, despite the wide anthologization of õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö after 1966 (and publication and subsequent anthologization of õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö in and after 1968), *Train Whistle Guitar* did not find a publisher until 1974, after Murray had published three successful books.

> happened in my life were designed to make me and all the people that I grew up with heroes. Or to make us take on the responsibility for heroic action, to take on the responsibility of saviors, of Prometheus, of bringing light, of bringing fire, bringing enlightenment. It had nothing to do with being a victim. It had to do with the fact that if you were faced with a problem, the problem was a dragon and you were the hero. (Murray, õThe Function of the Heroic Imageö 572)

When he says he went down home to see what was happening (in 1969, when he began to work on the book as an assignment for *Harper's*, which never made it into the magazine[118]), he had not been away for fourteen years, for most of the Civil Rights Movement and during the crucial years of desegregation.

Murray had last lived in the South in 1955, when he was a professor in Tuskegeeøs ROTC program. His experience in the South was diverse, and his experience was diverse in general. He grew up approximately three miles north of the downtown and docks of the multi-cultural port of Mobile, from 1916-1935. He attended Tuskegee Institute from 1935-1939 in the heart of Klan country, and taught there from approximately 1940-1943, after a stint as principal of a junior high school in rural Georgia in 1939-1940. During the summers of these years he took courses on theories of pedagogy at the University of Michigan, Northwestern, and the University of Chicago. These were his first visits to the North. During World War II he went to basic training in Utah in early 1943, then spent time in Atlanta and at Officers Training School in Miami, before returning to Tuskegee and participating in the training of the Tuskegee Airmen, before being transferred to Colorado toward the very end of the war. He returned south after being released from active duty in 1946. Aside from a school year at NYU and a summer in

[118] The assignment was given to Murray by executive editor Willie Morris (who wrote of Ellison and Murray, and of a party at Murrayøs, in his memoir *North Toward Home*, on which the title of *South to a Very Old Place* may be a riff). But the managing editor of *Harper's* at that time was Midge Decter, who was married to Norman Podhoretz, whom Murray mocked in *The Omni-Americans* and of whom Ellison was also critical. It would not be far-fetched to imagine that the piece may have been killed due to politics within *Harper's*, i.e., perhaps due to Decterøs objection. But this is just speculation.

Paris, he was based at Tuskegee from 1946-1955. In 1955 the Air Force transferred Murray and his family to Morocco for three years, and there after he served on Air Force bases in southern California and Massachusetts, before moving to Harlem in 1962. All of this is to note that he lived in various places around the south, around the nation, and around the world.

He goes on, in that Wesleyan talk, to describe *South to a Very Old Place* in a manner that might actually be a better description of *Train Whistle Guitar*, but it is worth noting that this is how he thought of it more than ten years later:

> *South to a Very Old Place* was an attempt to process the details of my childhood and young manhood into metaphors of heroic action. Here what counts most is not the material facts, but the rituals that conditioned me to see life as a perpetual adventure, to see it as a picaresque story with some episodes that might be as tightly plotted as a detective story and some that were as loosely strung together as a farce. (573)

Yet much of the book is spent in conversation (and reflection on conversation) with others, particularly white writers and journalists, such as C. Vann Woodward, Robert Penn Warren, Walker Percy, Ray Jenkins, and several others. But he also engages in dialogues and broader conversations with numerous African Americans in Mobile, who provide diverse reflections, and at various times provide the bookøs most insightful, irreverent, and intriguing opinions on race relations, desegregation, and the Civil Rights Movement: they are not media-savvy writers who are self-conscious about being interviewed for *Harper's*. The book is less about the details of Murrayøs childhood and young manhood per se (though it is continually referenced) than taking the temperature of the times from key contemporaries, juxtaposed with his own recollections.

One such recollection is worth recounting briefly because it is one of the few times Murray portrays a practical effect, or feature, of segregation: the lack of lodging for traveling African Americans. Certainly most of the time this created great danger and hardship, and

perhaps it did for Murray as well, at times. Undoubtedly, Murray could have chosen negative examples from his own experience, but he chose one that illustrates the unexpected connections ó and micro communities or temporary communities ó that segregation simultaneously created even as it caused terrible hardships. In this case, Murray remembers the late summer of 1939, traveling by bus from Tuskegee to Blakely, Georgia, where he was soon to take a job as a principal of a junior high school. Due to a missed bus connection and the lack of lodging for African Americans in Columbus, Georgia, he ends up, by chance, in the home of legendary blues diva Ma Rainey, who was to die later that year. Warren Carson has noted that in *Train Whistle Guitar*, Murray is keen to portray an African American community that õnurtures and cares for its youngö (294). In Murrayøs recounting in *South to a Very Old Place*, Ma Rainey is a representative of just such a community and tradition:

> the Greyhound from Tuskegee had pulled in to Columbus, Georgia, too late to make the connection with the Trailways bus to Blakely in Early County, and you had by a chance but fabulously appropriate encounter met with a young road musician and had spent the night on a couch in the red-velvet-draped, tenderloin-gothic, incense-sultry sickroom of the legendary but then long since bedridden Ma Rainey....
>
> But back to what Aunt Hagar in the old whispering blues-dive-diva timbre of Ma Rainey actually sang to the young initiate from Tuskegee: ÷your money can't pay for nothing in this house, my precious. Not in Mama's house darling. Just go on the way you going, sweetheart, and just be careful.ø (Nor did she, or anybody else, have to remind you that from junior high school on having an education was as dangerous as it was precious, that a brownskin boy with education made white people even more uneasy than the idea of a man with a concealed weapon.) ÷No, honeypie, Mama knows what you trying to do, and it takes more than a notion, more than a notion, and every little bit helps. Mama just wants you to know how proud she is you come to her. Mama Gertrude always did back up her chillum and always will as long as she's got breath in this old body.ø(51-52)

Rainey became wealthy due to her unsentimental business acumen, but she is gentle and generous to the twenty-three year old Murray. The very existence of her large home is due to the fact that she was a savvy operator in the rough and tumble world of show-business, but through her commitment to õback up her chillumö she becomes associated, for Murray, with the mythic Aunt Hagar. He recounts the potential danger he is in, traveling alone at night between the locales where he is supposed to be, as a young African American man with a college degree in a town where he has no official business. Murray describes the danger he is in as present; he can and would make õwhite people even more uneasy than the idea of a man with a concealed weapon.ö But his serendipitous arrival at Raineyøs underscores how segregation sometimes brought different groups of people together who otherwise might not have come in contact with one another (such as how Bud Powell ends up staying with the Suder family in Percival Everettøs *Suder*). This of course is not to excuse segregation or argue in favor of it, but rather to illustrate how African Americans sometimes turned the tables on it. Murray goes on to remember Ma Rainey from his past (at a distance) as well. Murray writes that he remembers her from when he was a õpreschool totö and her road show travelled through Mobile: õthey used to come tail-gaiting around on a platform truck advertising for the vaudeville. She would be wearing a shimmie-she-wobble-spangled dress and her blues-queen sequined headband.ö (53). Perhaps Murrayøs description of Ma Rainey here could also be commentary on Sterling Brownøs poem õMa Raineyö (1932), some of which is in dialect.

Moving on to the central thrust of the book, and thus, to Murrayøs commentary on Ellison in relation to desegregation I will first briefly discuss his interactions with the white writers he visits, then turn to the more interesting conversations with the (mostly) working-class African American Mobilians, while pausing to juxtapose two experiences of Murrayøs that he relates: one

during segregation and one contemporary (in 1969). In the 2002 essay collection *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture*, editors Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith write perceptively about Murrayøs interactions with white southerners in their summary of the bookøs essay on *South to a Very Old Place* by Carolyn M. Jones. Toni Morrison reviewed *South to a Very Old Place* in the *New York Times* in 1972. Half of her review is overwhelmingly positive, as she welcomingly understood and conveyed what the book was about. It was, until the midpoint, the best review that Murray could have hoped for. The second half is negative, as she did not care for Murrayøs reflections on Africa. Murrayøs opinions on Africa, especially his claim that the shared experience of African Americans has resulted in more practical solidarity than any solidarity engendered by race alone has meant to the peoples of Europe or Africa, offended Morrisonøs sensibilities, specifically the idea that racial solidarity has not prevented wars in Africa or Europe but shared experience has largely prevented African Americans from being violent to one another *en masse*. She called this õmisinformationö and suggested that it reduced the value of the book (Morrison RB5+). Murrayøs commentary on Africa is more complex and nuanced in *Train Whistle Guitar*, as he explores class divisions between the African descendants of the those who had been on the slave ship *Clotilde* or *Clotilda* (those either personally African or of direct African descent in the vicinity of Mobile), the last slave ship to enter the United States from Africa, and the African Americans, some of whom were natives of Mobile but many from other places in the South, who migrated to Mobile for various reasons, with many looking for work during the World War I shipping boom. He also includes subtle admissions of cross-cultural influence that he had previously perhaps obscured in *South to a Very Old Place*. For instance, the narrator of *Train Whistle Guitar* mentions Uncle Jim Bobøs õScotch-Irish-Ashanti walking sticků (174). What Carolyn M. Jones does in her essay is reconnect Murray and

Morrison on their points of contact and shared opinions and goals, which were obscured by the heated climate of the early 1970s.[119]

I will now go on to discuss, in a manner that hopefully is not too circuitous, Morrisonøs reading of Murray along with Carolyn M. Jonesøs reading of Morrison and Murray together in order to specifically situate one of Murrayøs key insights about desegregation in the Atlanta chapter, which in turn will help assist in understanding his non-representation of segregation in his novels. If the progress of Ellisonøs second novel was stalled by Ellisonøs not quite knowing how to deal with desegregation ó as Kenneth Warren argues in his essay õChaos Not Quite Controlledö ó Murray avoids this by creatively dealing with desegregation in *South to a Very Old Place* and ultimately, crafting an elaborate commentary on Ellison at the same time. To properly frame this discussion, it will be productive to first read Murray through Jones and Morrison. Monteith and Suzanne W. Jones perceive Murrayøs strategy as Morrison does in her review. Monteith and Suzanne W. Jones write:

> In ÷Race and Intimacy: Albert Murrayøs *South to a Very Old Place*,ø Carolyn M. Jones returns to Murray in order to rethink what it means to dwell in a place. Murray recognized the hybridity of southern culture long before the concept became trendy in contemporary theoretical circles. He showed how the South has, within its indigenous African American musical forms, some of the tools it needs to reconstruct its society and to think differently about its region. Via Toni Morrisonøs ideas of ÷intimate things in place,ø Jones argues that in the structure of *South to a Very Old Place*, Albert Murray illustrates how the blues-inspired jazz form can become a model both to locate the self and to improvise new communities. Through his conversations with white southerners ó Robert Penn Warren, C. Vann Woodward, Edwin Yoder, Walker Percy, and others ó Murray, playing the role of the trickster, tests to see if they will acknowledge the hybridity of southern culture,

[119] Carolyn M. Jonesøs attempt to connect Murray and Morrison is rare but not singular. Veronique Lesoinne has claimed that Morrisonøs belief that õthe African American novel has to take over the functions of the music that no longer belongs exclusively to the Black peopleí seems to owe something toö Murrayøs *The Hero and the Blues* (Lesoinne 158).

> all the while hoping to spot the ÷downhome angle of visionø beneath their cosmopolitan intellectualism and their southern politeness. (12)

They are correct that Murray is seeking for models to õlocate the self and improvise new communitiesö ó that õselfö (Iød prefer õsubjectivityö) and those communities are ever-shifting. In *South to a Very Old Place* Murray is also writing for a people who are missing and a people to come, to paraphrase Deleuze (an idea which shall be expounded upon in the Murray chapter). Morrisonøs review captures this in its socio-political moment. She writes:

> Murrayøs going home, like the return of any black born in the South, takes on a special dimension. Along with an intimacy with its people and ties to its land, there is a separateness from both the people and the land ó since some of the people are white and the land is not really his. This feeling of tender familiarity and brutish alienation provides tension and makes the trip down home delicate in its bitterness and tough in its joy.
>
> But Albert Murray is not simply taking a trip home, he is also creating it; the creation is made up of music, literature[,] geography, memory and quest.í
>
> Using his own Aunt Hagar-Uncle Remus trained radar, as well as his enormous gift for understanding what he has read, Murray examines the Southern sensibility of Walker Percy, David L. Cohn, the Hodding Carters, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe and a host of others. Always with fresh, when not lucid, insight.
>
> Moving from white South to black South, memory plays a heavier role than investigation. (RB5)

Morrison does not use the term õdouble consciousnessö in her review, but her echo of Du Bois here is unavoidable, both in her review and in the book, as much as Murray rejected the concept (and rejected Du Bois, though they have many points of contact, particularly in Du Boisø 1924 essay õThe Dilemma of the Negroö). But perhaps Murray recognized that in order to publish fiction in which segregation and double consciousness are not represented, he had to first write about desegregation in order to ground his oeuvre in a more õconventionalö reality than his

novels will present (which is not to say that his novels do not reflect reality; they reflect a particular angle of vision). Carolyn M. Jones thus connects these novelists and theorists of the period of desegregation and integration: õFor Murray, we begin with the ÷blisses of the commonplace[120].ø Toni Morrisonøs phrase ÷intimate things in place,ø illuminates ÷blisses of the commonplace.øí .Morrison suggestsí .freedom and a model of what to do: locate meaning in particular people, places, and thingsö (Jones 62). Jones is correct that the ideas complement one another, and though Morrison is referring in her quote (quoted by Jones) particularly to the complexities womenøs domestic labor and domestic spaces and Murray is referring to appreciating the small details of life in general, both seek to take note of heightened perceptions of and multiple perspectives on immediate circumstances. Jones continues that õart, Murray and Morrison suggest, is the model of a place in which we might locate ourselves.ö Morrisonøs echo of Du Bois becomes paralleled in Jonesøs essay, as she also echoes Du Bois (as echoed in Murray, unconsciously perhaps). Jones continues:

> How can we creatively and meaningfully negotiate this intimacy? Murray asks, as does Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, how, in looking at our overlapping histories, we can find an alternative ÷secular interpretationø to a politics of denunciation, regret, blame, and ÷the even more destructive politics of confrontation.øí .Murray, in his conversations in *South to a Very Old Place*, embraces both notions: the need for a secular interpretation and for one that moves beyond a redistribution of the same destructive power. He rethinks intimacy in community with other intellectuals to articulate a secular notion of culture that can acknowledge the existence and interdependence of a multiplicity of selves. That reconstruction can help us to create a form of expression through which free and mutual selves can interact. He argues that this form already exists, that it is a southern indigenous form, and he calls it the blues idiom. (63)

[120] õBlisses of the commonplaceö is an important concept for Murray, which he adopted from a translation of Thomas Mannøs *Tonio Kroger* (and which probably, for Murray, also owes much to the meditations on the commonplace in the works of Hemingway and Wallace Stevens). In chapter thirty-two of *The Magic Keys*, T. Jerome Jefferson claims that õblisses of the commonplaceö are õwhat luxury is really aboutö (236).

Du Boisø essay õThe Dilemma of the Negroö also wishes to move beyond õa redistribution of the same destructive power,ö but Du Bois, of course, was not a champion of the blues idiom as Murray understands it. In the Atlanta chapter Murray will present an anecdote that is central to the õintimateö (a better word might be õmicroscopicö) interactions on which new communities might be formed. Murray, from an utterly poor neighborhood and penniless background, demonstrates class solidarity with a waitress from a similar class background and thus, in the spirit of Booker T. Washingtonøs Atlanta Exposition speech, is letting down buckets where he is; in other words, building civility through one to one interactions, and thus, in a roundabout way, combining the imperatives of Du Bois and Washington.

In the Atlanta chapter, circa 1969, Murray visits white journalist Joe Cummings, at that time the Atlanta bureau chief for *Newsweek*. Over a meal at an upscale restaurant in public (a situation which would not have been possible perhaps a few years earlier or less), Murray tells Joe Cummings the purpose behind his mission. Murray frames the goals of his journey and the goals of his book in comments and speculation on their white waitress in relation to desegregation:

> Man, sheøs got to be fresh off of Tobacco Road or some goddam where. So I wouldnøt be at all surprised that if you followed her home and interviewed her for *Newsweek* she would express all kinds of negative sentiments about desegregation ó a white girl shouldnøt have to serve Negroes, and all that crap. She might not, but I wouldnøt be surprised if she did. But is what she says when interviewed on desegregation as a specific issue really more significant than the way she is acting right now with me sitting right here? Look man, Iøm not about the find more change in a white Southern attitude than a white Southerner like yourself will concede. Not me, man. If you say these cats are getting ready to fire on Fort Sumter again I for one am not going to dispute you. But the point is, Iøm not down here to run any statistics but just to see how it feels. Iøm operating on my literary radar, this time, my metaphor finder ó how about that? ó and you know what my

> goddam radar is telling me about this girl? That she is a country girl, new to the great big city of Atlanta, a young girl from the provinces, the Georgia sticks, come to seek her fortune in the big time, and she was far more concerned about getting our orders right just now than about anything else in the world. My radar indicates that the difference between her embarrassment when I had to help her spell Heineken and when you had to help her pronounce Shrimp Arnoud was nil. She was relieved and thankful. Man, what she is really worried about is some stern-eyed *maître d'* and some evil-assed cat back in the kitchen! Thatøs not the whole story of course, but it is the part that most often gets left out. (92-93)

The irony in this otherwise trivial ó or commonplace ó situation is profound. Here is Murray, a successful black writer and world-traveling retired Air Force officer helping to assuage the labor anxieties of a poor white waitress. This moment might seem too small to subject to such an analysis if Murray had not outlined for Cummings the procedure in place in his travels: he is operating on his õliterary radarí my metaphor finder.ö And the metaphor he has created here is one of malice-toward-none, to echo Lincoln, and coincide with Du Bois and Washington at the same time. (One of Washingtonøs ultimate goals, chiseled in stone around his famous statue at Tuskegee, is his wish to õdignify and glorify labor.ö) Perhaps something that may be extrapolated from, or is implied by the exchange, is that if such a microscopic gesture of generosity to a provincial waitress can be extended by the cosmopolitan Murray, then hopefully upper class whites may also extend a hand to underprivileged African Americans.

At the end of the Mobile chapter, Murray contrasts the Atlanta waitress with another white waitress. But first I will explore the Mobile chapter in some depth as it is both a sort of hinge and centerpiece of the book, climaxing in an elderly African Americanøs monologue on the achievement of Lyndon Johnson on Civil Rights. The chapter begins with Murray checking in at the landmark Battle House Hotel, where segregationist Woodrow Wilson once stayed and gave a major speech. Murray notes that he would not have been able to stay there in previous years,

implicitly contrasting the Battle House with Ma Raineyøs couch. He describes what Mobile was like in those years he grew up there, in the 1920s, when the term õcrazed Negro,ö when used by whites, would often simply mean õunsmilingö and white hysteria and paranoia was often at a fevered pitch (160). He describes some of the aftershocks of the lifting of Jim Crow and unfading suspicion of some African Americans who question why õWhite folks don't go around trying to make fun of us like they used to. You noticed that shit? Think about itö (178). They suspect something more sinister could be afoot. Murray doesn't say yes or no, but rather reports his findings on how people feel.

The key to the chapter, and perhaps the book, is the reflection on Lyndon Johnson, whose policies in the arena of civil rights created the new social conditions that made the book possible. In Ellisonøs essay õThe Myth of the Flawed White Southernerö (1968) he describes southerners such as Johnson and ex-Klansman Hugo Black, who turned against the racist ideology they were raised with in order to advance the cause of civil rights. In what is probably a riff on Ellisonøs essay, Murray delivers, via an unnamed elderly Mobilian, a vernacular improvisation on the theme of Ellison's essay, which emerged from a vernacular sensibility itself. Murray's elderly monologist says:

> I said you can say what you want to, and I might not be here to see it, but it's going to take one of these old Confederate bushwhackers from somewhere right down through in here to go up against these old Southern white folks when they get mad. My daddy used to say it over and over again. So when old Lyndon Johnson come along and got in there on a humble ó and, boy that's the onliest way he ever coulda made it into there ó I was watching with my fingers crossed....But now here's what give the whole thing away to me. These white folks down here....So what give it away to me was them. Because they the very first ones to realize that old Lyndon Johnson meant business when he said the time is here to do something. And didn't nobody have to tell them what that meant because they already knew he was one of them and if they made

> him mad he subject to do some of that old rowdy cracker cussing right back at them, and some of that old cowboy stuff to boot. When they commence to telling me about how mean he is that's when I tell them, I say that's exactly what we need, some mean old crackers on our side for a change. That's when I commenced to feel maybe the Lord had spared me to see the day, and then next thing you know them northern folks up there talking about you can't put no dependence in him no more. The very same ones that used to trust him when they thought he was another one of these old crooked Confederates. Now wait, I'm going to tell you what put us in that creditability gap you been reading about. Talking about the government lying to them about something. Boy the consarn government been lying to *us* every since emancipation. Now here they come talking about somebody lying!....all he had to do was let them know he was going to hold the line on the black man and he could've stayed up there as long as he wanted to. All he had to do every time one of us started acting up was just put on his old head-whipping sheriff's hat and make out like he's getting up a posse or something, and theyd've kept him up there till he got tired of it. That's why I got to give him credit don't care who don't. Because I know what he coulda done and I remember what he did for a fact. He got up there in front of everybody and said we shall overcome.[121] Boy that's enough to scare white folks worse than the Indians, boy. (202-04)

It is difficult to not see this working intertextually with the õThe Myth of the Flawed White Southerner,ö as Murray transposes the ideas of Ellisonøs formal essay into a vernacular mode and sound. The section quoted above is abridged version of the first few pages, and it goes on for several more. In the preceding section, Murray presents a group discussion arranged along the lines of jazz orchestration, with each voice corresponding to an instrument and in the place of where that instrument would appear in sort of jazz arrangements that Murray favored. The speaker here is the sort of vernacular pundit and historian ó with attendant angle of vision ó that Murray was keen to give a voice to on the page. Chance figures prominently (õSo when old Lyndon Johnson come along and got in there on a humble ó and boy thatøs the onliest wayí ö), as does Johnsonøs own agency. Social science determinism, for Murray, is halted by Johnsonøs

[121] This refers to Johnsonøs address to a joint session of Congress on March 15, 1965.

agency just as it is by his own. In other words, Johnson transcended his background, just as social science would not have predicted writers like Ellison and Murray coming out of a trade-oriented institute like Tuskegee, rather than institutions like Fisk or Morehouse. (Both chance and social science determinism will be discussed in the Murray chapter.) Vietnam has been elided here, but has been alluded to in õcreditability gapö and the northernerøs claiming õyou canøt put no dependence in him no more.ö Johnson didnøt lose the support of northern liberals because of civil rights, but because of his disastrous policies regarding Vietnam. However, and this is important to note, *South to a Very Old Place* documents that the opinion of the speaker did exist; implying that some felt that Vietnam gave some northern Democrats cover to distance themselves from Johnson because they secretly disliked his progressive civil rights policies.

The penultimate paragraph of Ellisonøs õThe Myth of the Flawed White Southernerö concludes on this note: õConsidering that he [Johnson] has changed inescapably the iconography of federal power, from his military aides to the Cabinet, from the Federal Reserve Board to the Supreme Court, there appears to be ample reason for hopeö (*Collected Essays* 566). When Murrayøs Lyndon Johnson monologist appears to comment directly on Ellisonøs essay (below), it suggests that the monologist might be Murray after all, adopting the mask one of his elders (he was in his early fifties at the time and rendering the voices of his parentsø generation). The monologist continues, speaking in his own voice but imagining the discourse being delivered by Lyndon Johnson in the first person:

> ÷Send me old Thurgill[122] Marshall. He already whipped everybody thatøll go before a judge with him. So cainøt nobody say he ainøt

[122] õThurgillö is the correct spelling in the text. Murray enjoyed the African American rhetorical practice of willfully changing or mispronouncing a name in the course of conversation (an Irish practice as well, practiced with well-timed effect by my father). When comedian Cedric the Entertainer performed at Jazz at Lincoln Centerøs 2004 spring gala at the Apollo Theater, he teased Wynton Marsalis a little bit in a friendly way, and at one point said ÷you know his mama never called him Wynton. I know she *had* to call him Winford. I can hear her now yelling *Winford*!

> ready. Iøm going to make him my chief lawyer for a while and then Iøm going to ease him up on the Supreme Court bench and let him help make some decisions. Them Iøm going to put one up there with them millionaires on the Federal Reserve Bank to help me keep an eye on the money. I want him to be a real black one so they canøt say I just put old Thurgill up there because heøs damn near white! And another one over in the World Bank to look out for that. Make that one brown.øThink about that, boy. Two niggers watching white folks count money! (206-7)

Murrayøs irreverent vernacular riff on Ellisonøs solemn observation about õthe iconography of federal powerö is part of his procedure in using his literary radar and metaphor finder, presenting insights poetically and with intended humor, and imagining the highest levels of superpower-management as quaint activities (perhaps reducing them to the commonplace). It is not known what Ellison made of Murrayøs good-natured irreverence regarding these historical milestones that Ellison (rightly) took so seriously.[123]

Murray concludes the section on Johnson with õAnd you [that is, Murray in the second person] want to believe most of what he [the Johnson monologist] says about white southerners like Lyndon Johnson as much as he apparently wants to believe it.ö The speaker, Murray makes clear, is not Murray-off-record speaking through a fictional device, but the speaker more or less believes something close to what Murray himself believes ó a meme that was out there and from one angle, looked compelling. The Johnson monologue is in many ways the climax of the book, with truths of fate and historical processes unraveled in the Very Old Place of Mobile by a wise sage.

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*Winford*!!!ø (thatøs a paraphrase of a ten year old memory). Murray thought the bit was hilarious, as did the audience. It is difficult to explain how and why this sort of name game is funny when it is properly delivered and timed.

[123] What Ellison may have thought of this is unknown. Ellison wrote a recommendation letter for Murray in 1974, wherein he gives high marks to Murrayøs personality, but does not go into any detail about Murrayøs four books published up to that point.

Before leaving Mobile for New Orleans, Murray visits the lunch counter at the Kress five-and-dime store. He has experienced the upscale desegregated restaurants of Atlanta and the desegregated Battle House Hotel, but now he wants to check out a more pedestrian example of desegregated America: õThis time the soda-fountain counter is no longer for whites only, and the palest of all paleface girls are now free to smile their whing-ding smile at you too (in public). And say: 'Coke and one burger comin' right up.' And say: 'Be anything else? Well than you kindly, now.' And say 'Come agayhan, now, you hear?' democratizing and howard-johnsoning you at one and the same timeö (216). Even as Murray cheerfully documents the process and effects of desegregation, he slyly works in allusion to violent resistance to white hegemony, particularly through references to Native Americans, through the Johnson monologist (õthatøs enough to scare white folks worse than the Indians, boyö) and through his description of the young lady at the lunch counter (õthe palest of all paleface girlsö) suggesting, ever so subtly, that the fight might not be over, or at least that he will be ready should it begin again.

Earlier in *South to a Very Old Place*, Murray deals with a topic that enraged Ellison and possibly (following Michael Szalay) even set back Ellisonøs second novel: Ellisonøs anger at Norman Mailerøs mid-century opinions on African Americans and race relations[124]. Mailer expressed this most famously in his essay õThe White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipsterö (1957) and expanded on it tangentially in his essay õSuperman Comes to the Supermarketö (1960), in which he attempts to align John F. Kennedy with the white hipster and

[124] My 2013 article õWhy Did Ralph Ellison Never Publish His Second Novel?: A New Theoryö (*Slate*, June 19, 2013) suggests that after the 1967 publication of Iceberg Slimøs bestseller *Trick Baby: The Story of a White Negro*, which has a similar/almost identical premise as Ellisonøs second novel óas a wise, black adoptive father raises a white baby and trains him in his own profession, with the white character eventually breaking away from the black father ó Ellison gave up on publishing the full novel so as not to be compared with Slim or accused or plagiarism (even though excerpts of Ellisonøs second novel had appeared in literary journals in 1960 and 1965). In this article I set up my argument by explaining Ellisonøs disgust with Mailerøs essay. (I also note that the similarity to Slimøs pulp novel is probably not the only reason that Ellison never published his second novel, but it seems like it is a compelling reason.)

his concept of hip. Mailerøs exoticizing of black culture in õThe White Negroö angered numerous black writers, including Ellison, Baldwin, and Lorraine Hansberry (Szalay 146). Murray was angered by Mailerøs essay as well, but takes a very different approach to critiquing it than Ellison did.

This is intricately tied to the paths of their careers as novelists during integration. They recoiled from the idea that integration might mean the performance of an imaginary and exotic blackness by whites. In a sense, Ellisonøs fiction stalled trying to get over his mountain of anger against Mailer (as will be explained). Murrayøs fiction finally appeared in book form after he was able to poke fun at Mailer and signify on him effectively in *South to a Very Old Place*.

Michael Szalay, in his profound chapter õRalph Ellisonøs Unfinished Second Skinö in his book *Hip Figures: A Literary History of the Democratic Party* (2012), attempts to read major aspects of Ellisonøs character Adam Sunraider as a commentary and critique of Mailer. Szalay convincingly demonstrates through close reading that Ellisonøs Senator Adam Sunraiderøs Senate career is apparently based on that of Senator John F. Kennedy (166).The last piece of fiction that Ellison published was the epistle õBackwacking: A Plea to the Senatorö (1977) by õNorm A. Maulerö (*Three Days Before the Shooting…* 1097-1101). In õBackwackingö the racist õMaulerö complains to Sunraider about what he imagines to be black sexual practices. It is probably the least nuanced and most poorly conceived piece of writing Ellison ever published; ill-advised and potentially could have been disastrous for his reputation. It is corny, silly, and ineffective satire, it could have suggested that his powers had failed, had more people taken notice. It is really that bad. Ellisonøs unpublished short story õNormanö (1983), apparently about baby Norman Mailer and his parentsø aspirations for him, seems to have been even more poorly conceived and disastrous. It has never been published, but regrettable-enough sections have been quoted by

Szalay (145). It seems that Ellisonøs anger at Mailer festered over time and he let his anger at him take control over his artistic abilities and processes. Ellison wrote about Mailer from at least 1958-1983. Ellisonøs only public, non-fiction statement on Mailer made while he was alive is as follows. He told an interviewer in 1963:

> The hipster, although Mailer doesnøt quite understand it, is not simply living in the present, he is living a very stylized life which implies a background because it takes a good while, a lot of living, to stylize a pattern of conduct and an attitude. This goes back very deeply into certain levels of Negro life. Thatøs why it has nuances and overtones which Mailer could never grasp. He is appropriating it to make an existentialist point which doesnøt seem to me to be worth making. (Graham and Singh 75-6)

But Ellisonøs lucid and exacting critique, written in a letter to Murray in 1958 (and published in *Trading Twelves* in 2000), perhaps should have formed the core of a public statement at that time:

> I saw something of Norman Mailer during the summer and have been discussing Kerouac and that crowd with Bernie Wolfe[125] and I understand something of how far you got under that Greenwich Village poetøs skin that summer in Paris[126]. These characters are all trying to reduce the world to sex, man, they have strange problems in bed; they keep a score a la Reich on the orgasm and try to verbalize what has to be basically warmth, motion, rhythm, timing, and technique. Iøve also talked to Bellow about this and it would seem that the puritan restraints are more operative among the bohemians than elsewhere. Thatøs whatøs behind Mailerøs belief in the hipster and the õwhite Negroö as the new culture hero ó he thinks all hipsters are cocksmen possessed of great euphoric orgasms and are out to fuck the world into peace, prosperity, and creativity. The same old primitivism crap in a new package. (197-98)

[125] Wolfe was the as-told-to writer of Mezz Mezzrowøs autobiography *Really the Blues* (in which Mezzrow imagines himself transforming from white to black). According to Szalay, *Really the Blues* is referenced in Ellisonøs second novel (152).

[126] This may possibly have been Seymour Krim, who discusses Murray in his 1974 book *You & Me: The Continuing One-On-One Odyssey of a Literary Gambler* and refers to him as õmy old sharp antagonistö (316).

What Ellison leaves out in his analysis is how this intersects with integration and segregation. For Szalay, õSunraider is a down-home variantö of Mailerøs white Negro. Sunraider has appropriated and reified various aspects of African American and rhetorical traditions. One danger that integration posed was a renewed hostility to African Americans by whites if African American culture was not taken seriously but was rather appropriated cynically or superficially. Szalay claims that õEllison wanted to see black style as an agent of integration rather than a product of segregation, as an expression of pre-capitalist wholeness rather than an example of reification. He wanted to endow style with a transformative promise, and view it as more than a reaction to racism, or the reflexive effect of exploitative structuresö (149). Murray replied twice, briefly in 1958 and in much more depth in 1959, but in each of his replies, he pushes Ellison closer to a more fully articulated diagnosis of and answer to the problem. His answers employ a different vocabulary than Szalay but they address the same problem. Here is Murrayøs 1958 reply:

> Man, what are we going to do about these fay ÷hipstersø? Or better still, what are we going to do about these boot hipsters who are so impressed with them? Niggers imitating whitefolks imitating niggers. Goddamn, man, do you reckon Sammy [Davis] Jr and Eartha [Kitt] ever meet themselves coming? (200)

In 1959, Murrayøs recent re-reading of the literature of the 1920s sparked a re-visit to Ellisonøs earlier letter, and another reply:

> Old Van Vechten is probably much more important to an understanding of the twenties than guys like Cowley and even Edmund Wilson have been able to see or admit. If Gertrude Stein was important we certainly caint overlook the very real influence Van Vechten had, much of which still survives today. Man, where did Norman Mailer and them ó them ó teenagers get that shit from? That goddamned Mailer sounds like a degenerate.
>
> You mentioned that Greenwich Village poet in your other letter. Which reminds me that he got so shook up that he never did realize

> what I was really trying to tell him. I was trying to tell him that fay boys were making a myth of the Negro ÷studø a psychological factí .I also pointed out that jazz represented CONTROL not abandon, as did all forms of American Negro dancing. Man, I was mainly trying to destroy the image of the rapist and I created for him the supercoxman! He began going around asking white women if they had done it with one and was it different!....But by that time penis envy had dam near turned him into a segregationist. (211-12)

Murrayøs astutely identifies the moment when the northern white liberal hipster exotica promoted by Mailer begins to slip from a superficial admiration of what they imagine to be a virile blackness to a fear of its power. The consequences of this slippage was a phantasm in the mind that õdam near turned [the Greenwich Village poet] into a segregationist.ö It is at this moment that Murray articulates the anxiety that Ellison subtly spends hundreds of pages trying to work out in his second novel: the moment when a sincere if superficial white appreciation of African American culture morphs into hostility toward it and toward African Americans[127]. This figure, the white hipster who admires African American culture but gradually becomes somewhat racist, is quite the opposite of õthe flawed white southernersö Lyndon Johnson and Hugo Black: southern ÷good old boysø with impeccable segregationist credentials who turned on Jim Crow.

The difference is exemplified in the historical personages of Johnson and Kennedy. Kennedyøs record on race in the Senate was not particularly progressive (Szalay 166-68). Indeed, he was seen, in Szalayøs words, as õhostile to civil rightsö (166). And yet, in õSuperman Goes to the Supermarket,ö Kennedy is Mailerøs ideal of the hipster. This is what Ellison was trying to work out and critique in modeling the ÷ex-coloredø Senator Sunraider on Senator Kennedy[128]. Ellison was *so* subtle that it would be fifty-one years between when õAnd Hickman Arrivesö was

[127] This is a major theme of the Ellison-Murray influenced novel *Angry Black White Boy* by Adam Mansbach (2005).

[128] As Szalay implies, this portrayal may have become problematic after Kennedyøs assassination.

published in Saul Bellowøs journal *Noble Savage* in 1960 and Szalayøs careful unearthing and re-assembling of its allusions in õEllisonøs Unfinished Second Skin,ö which first appeared in *American Literary History* in 2011.

Ellison could not access humor in his critique of Mailer (he tried, but failed, with õBackwackingö). Murray, on the other hand, is able to perceive Mailerøs silliness and render a portrait and critique of him accordingly. Murray was equally upset with Mailer, yet dispenses with him in a jazzy, improvisational manner, dropping him deep into the dozens ó and into a sophisticated aspect of African American oral culture that admirers of õThe White Negroö could hardly surmise existed. Ellisonøs dismissal of Mailer in public was harsh and abrasive and his attempt to comment on him in in his second novel through Bliss/Sunraider was perhaps too subtle, too elaborate, and too late.

Obsessing over Mailer hobbled Ellisonøs later fiction. Murray decided to do something different in his fiction: he would make his fiction a statement about the ways in which the sounds that enveloped a community were more important to that community than segregation, while situating his impressions of desegregation and his critique of Mailer within *South to a Very Old Place*.

*South to a Very Old Place* is, in its way, a work in the genre of New Journalism that Mailer was also practicing; indeed, that Mailer helped pioneer. Thus, it is in the context of the New Journalism (or what Roberta Maguire has called õMurrayøs Anti-Journalismö) that Murray playfully reframes Ellisonøs statements toward the end of õThe Myth of the Flawed White Southerner.ö Murray re-transmits the same information in the frame of the vernacular, much like a jazz musician riffing on a work of European art music. Murray is working, in South to a Very

Old Place, in a new genre, one born of the tumult of the late 1960s, and a genre that Ellison never embraced. Murrayøs mockery of Mailer, much more funny and more devastating than Ellisonøs (in õBackwackingö), in a sense operates, cathartically. By putting Mailer in the dozens, so to speak, Murray gets him out of the way so that he can write what he wants to write outside of the shadow Mailer cast over the literary approach to race relations.

Murray situates his critique of Mailer in italicized literary notes or Hemingway-esque õitemsö that he would have liked to have shared with Morteza Drexel Sprague, a professor of English at Tuskegee with whom he and Ellison had studied, and later, his (Murrayøs) close friend and colleague on the faculty. Sprague died in 1966 at age 57 and Murray imagines what he would have reported to him about his literary adventures. After humorously describing meeting Mailer at a party in New York, and commenting on Mailer in the contexts of Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Murray writes:

> At a party to launch a newspaper (that didnøt come off) there was old Norman Mailer disguised this time not as a somewhat white Negro or Brooklyn Texan but as a Brendan Behan Irishman standing as if with one foot on the bar rail, shoulders squared, pants baggy, stomach forward, elbows gesturing ÷cheers me lodsø with each sip. Somebody said ÷Al, youøve met Norman of courseø; and I said ÷Yeah sure,ø Bogart style, everybody knows Podhoretz.ø And old Mailer gave me his best Irish pub wink and did his José Torres bob and weave and said, ÷He really is a very noyce goy, Podhoretz. A very noyce goy. Or so it sounded to me at any rate. So, I hear, is Mailer, a very nice Brooklyn nice guyí .*As for what old Norman thinks of us in print, all I can say as of now is that instead of taking off our balls he only wants to relieve us of our brains. He seems to like our balls even to the extent of painting his own black.* And a few months later you would have added: *Did you see that crap old Norman Mailer wrote about us in* Life *Magazine? He writes a whole big fat article defining himself in terms of the zodiac (Aquarius this, Aquarius that and the other) and then turns around and declares that it is black people who are such lunatics that they are all shook up because a white man has put his foot on the moon! Very nice guy that Mailer or as Jimmy*

> *Baldwin*[129] *says 'A very sweet guy, really.' But is he ever full of adolescent gibberish about us!* (146-47, emphasis in original)

The italicized sections would have been meant for the recently departed Sprague. Evidently, by the late 1960s Mailer still clung tightly to the racist, essentialist õprimitivism crap in a new packageö (in Ellisonøs words) and õadolescent gibberishö he had expressed in õThe White Negroö in 1957. Mailer felt that white emulation of his vision of black hipsters could lead to a mode of being in the world for white hipsters that would be appropriate to face the existential crises of the present moment (the threat of nuclear war, for instance). My sense is that Ellison and Murray felt that Mailer was working to poison the well or undermine the benefits of incipient desegregation. To paraphrase Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*, Murray puts Mailerøs false seriousness to the test of mockery, which it cannot withstand. Mailerøs false seriousness collapses in Murrayøs juxtaposition of Mailerøs belief in the zodiac (which Murray presents without comment, to devastating effect) with his belief that African Americans cannot grasp mathematics.

In her 2010 article õRiffing on Hemingway and Burke, Responding to Mailer and Wolfe: Albert Murrayøs ÷Anti-Journalismøö Roberta Maguire claims: õIt would have been the third installment of the Apollo series in *Life*, appearing on January 9, 1970 that sealed Mailerøs unworthiness for Murray, as it is there that ÷Aquariusø ó the name by which Mailer refers to himself in the third person throughout the series ó encounters a black man, a professor at an Ivy League school, who is attending the same moon-landing party as Mailerö (18). According to Mailer, African Americans had õa distaste for numbersö (18). Maguire cites numerous wild

[129] Murrayøs casual, friendly reference to James Baldwin as õJimmy Baldwinö might have surprised readers of Murrayøs essay on Baldwin in *The Omni-Americans* and *Anger, and Beyond* and alludes to a closer relationship between them, which was not clear, or public, until they both participated in the roundtable discussion õTo Hear Another Languageö with Romare Bearden and Alvin Ailey in 1977 (for transcript see Maguire, *Conversations with Albert Murray* 25-45).

examples of Mailerøs exoticized understanding of African American culture in the piece. Murray, finally, in an attempt, as Maguire says to õhelp Mailer settle his identity crisisö suggests that Mailerøs next identity might be that of a õU.S. Levi Yitzchak.ö Maguire unpacks this reference, explaining how Murrayøs reference to the eighteenth century rabbi wouldøve brought to mind Paul Robeson and Leonard Bernstein, both of whom were associated with a folk song about him (19). Maguire concludes that õTo separate black culture from white cultural excellence, as Mailer does in his last Apollo installment and elsewhere, indicates a profound misunderstanding of the country, and especially African Americansö (19). Coming out of Tuskegee, and having personally known George Washington Carver and Dr. Charles Drew, Murray could have helped but be incandescent with rage at Mailer ó and yet he realizes a particular, peculiar bufoonishness in the õAquariusö nonsense and Mailerøs rhetoric, and decides to meet it on its own almost too-clever turf of the New Journalism.

*South to a Very Old Place* was Murrayøs attempt to give form to the magnitude desegregation (and thus segregation) from a variety of angles and in a variety of cross-sections, from reporting the political views of the previously voiceless African American subalterns in Mobile (voiceless on a national stage, but now no longer voiceless through publishing giant McGraw Hill, which published the book), to lunch counter encounters, to defanging Mailer. Most importantly, he presents a vision of interpersonal interaction that signals a path for a new approach to race in the United States, but particularly in the South. Having done his best to come to terms with desegregation, with Ellisonøs commentary on it, with Mailer and the literary worldøs most famous approach to it in õThe White Negro,ö and Ellisonøs commentary on Mailer, he turned in the coming years (1972-1974) to revising his fiction manuscript that was completed

in 1951, and to representing a time of segregation (1920s) without representing its specific actuality.

**Chapter Four: Albert Murray's Fiction: Some Historical, Critical, and Formal Approaches**

I. Introduction to Murrayøs Fiction: Critical Lenses and Literary Contexts

Albert Murrayøs four novels[130], published from 1974-2005 (though the first two were drafted by 1951), narrate the episodic (Murray called them picaresque[131]) adventures of Scooter, his semi-autobiographical protagonist. Scooter weaves his way from the outskirts of Mobile, Alabama to the worldøs capitals of culture, all while remembering and reveling in the sounds (music, speech, and other noises and their culturally specific interpretations) he heard in the proud and dynamic African American community in which he was raised, thus narrating the structuring of his own subjectivity through a process separate from the fact and impact of de jure segregation. While Murrayøs novels note the existence of de jure segregation (if ever so briefly, and in passing) and portray ethnic conflict between Southern whites and African Americans, the actual features of segregation are never mentioned or represented in action that takes place from the early-1920s through the late 1940s. This chapter will present an interpretation of Murrayøs four novels in order to try to explain what they seem to be trying to accomplish with sound as they present an alternative to the aesthetics of segregation fiction. Much like the work of Zora Neale Hurston, with whose work Murrayøs shares numerous intersections, similarities, and goals, and with whom his life and the lives of those he grew up around intersected, Murrayøs fiction was written decades ahead of the moment when it would be best appreciated and have the most

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[130] They are: *Train Whistle Guitar* (McGraw Hill, 1974) about the protagonistøs childhood just outside of Mobile, Alabama, *The Spyglass Tree* (Pantheon, 1991) in which the protagonist attends a college similar to Tuskegee, *The Seven League Boots* (Pantheon, 1995), in which he plays bass in a big band and becomes involved making music for movies in California and *The Magic Keys* (Pantheon, 2005), in which he attends graduate school in the humanities in New York and decides to become a writer.

[131] Murrayøs engagement with and understanding of the picaresque as the ideal genre for his motives, and how Murrayøs understanding of the picaresque intersects with various respected theories of the genre, will be discussed at length in this chapter.

impact, and like Hurstonøs, only saw the light of day again in the climate of desegregation and integration, as it memorializes and bears witness to the existence of pride, power, strength, humor, joy, (and a willingness to resist attempts to disrupt these features) in African American communities, the histories of which may have been about to be obscured by desegregation and the (what Murray saw as) the overly deterministic (and for him, pathological) approach of the segregation aesthetic and its successor, which he called, in *The Omni-Americans* and *The Hero and the Blues* õsocial science fiction.ö

Murray worked on his narrative of Scooterøs adventures from circa 1947, when, on leave from the Air Force, he entered the M.A. program in English at New York University (and rekindled his friendship with Ralph Ellison), through early 2005. During these fifty-eight years he wrote nine other books, collaborated extensively with the artist Romare Bearden, and from 1987-2005, worked closely with Wynton Marsalis and others to established Jazz at Lincoln Center. The first piece of fiction Murray published, an excerpt from the manuscript that was to become *Train Whistle Guitar* in 1974, was published in 1953. The next excerpt, despite Murrayøs ambition to become a writer and public intellectual, was published in 1968, while the 1953 excerpt gained new life in (and after) 1966, just after de jure segregation had been effectively abolished at the Federal level.

Murrayøs fiction is an exception to Kenneth Warrenøs paradigm: it is neither a protest against segregation nor a search for identity. It is neither indexical nor instrumental, to use Warrenøs categories, nor was it shaped by the imperatives of segregation. Murrayøs fiction, like Hurstonøs, I would venture, may be close to the hypothetical fiction Warren admits might have been written had de jure segregation not existed. Murrayøs novels are, perhaps, in classic *bildungsroman* fashion, a search for vocation (or they could be a *kunstlerroman* about a choice

between artistic vocations), but more than that they are a portrait of and witness to a structure of feeling, or form of subjectivity, developed aurally, through a soundscape, as opposed to visually (through a particular print tradition or the signs of segregation). Murrayøs work is not a form of speculative desegregation fiction written under segregation, nor is it a historical fantasy in which there is no segregation. That it does take place in the õrealö historical world of de jure segregation is unequivocal, even if the features of such a world are not described. Public elements of segregation are not represented. For example, segregation signs (õwhites only,ö etc.) are never shown or described. Problems with public services such as transportation or water fountains are never mentioned. Neither are problems with lodging.

Racial animus and conflict does exist in Murrayøs novels, but its rootedness in public policy is barely mentioned. Still, in no way can the novels be suggested to take place in an alternate or fantasy universe. Toward the end of *The Seven League Boots* the narrator (Scooter) makes that clear:

> The trip from Mobile by train was also a matter of perhaps three days at most (with fair connections). And the thing about it in those days was that most of it took you through what had become of the old Confederacy, most of which (largely because of the notorious Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877) was not only far from being reconstructed in accordance with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments but still in violently reactionary defiance thereto. (262)

This rumination occurs just before the narrator embarks on a trip to France, as if to somewhat begrudgingly explain or acknowledge why so many African American artists wanted to go to there. The importance of France, and particularly Paris, in the African American bohemian imaginary as represented in Murrayøs fiction, will be discussed later in the chapter.

Indeed, the very few mentions of the existence of institutionalized racism in the four novels mostly, if not completely, occur in relation to discussions of Paris.

The first two novels contain incidents of white-on-black racial violence, and the response to them is assertive, aggressive, violent African American resistance. But both major incidents are not triggered by violations of the codes or laws established in order to enforce the Jim Crow regime per se: they were incited by (in book one) a desire to curtail violence instigated by possible violations of the Volstead Act (prohibition) and (in book two) a broken verbal contract. Thus, hypothetically, these instances (which will be discussed in detail) could have occurred between all white characters or all black characters. Much of the second half of book two appears to be gearing up toward a battle between a white mob and a heavily armed black contingent fully prepared to shoot (at) the white mob. After this situation is diffused in a manner highlighting the cooperation of white upper class and black bourgeoisie, racial animus disappears almost completely from the narrative in the third and fourth books.

Despite the block quote above, Murrayøs third novel is almost completely free of any kind of racial tension ó even when Scooter dates a white film star ó and is one of the most relentlessly sunny and least-alienated stories imaginable, though some readers find it alienating in that very respect. Gaynelle Whitlow, a witty African American woman (and one of Murrayøs strongest characters), brings Scooter down to earth in chapter thirty-five just as the narrative seems to become impossibly divorced from conventional reality.

And yet, as if in recognition of how almost unbearably charmed it can be, *The Seven League Boots* begins with a nod to its polar opposite, the other pole of total alienation, as it features an epigraph from Kafkaøs *The Castle* in the translation of Willa and Edwin Muir. It is

the only epigraph used in Murrayøs four novels, and therefore it stands out starkly and practically asks for comment. The epigraph is the second sentence of *The Castle*: õThe Castle hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a castle was thereö (Kafka 3). It appears at start of the third volume, and so at the midpoint of the tetralogy. Rowan Ricardo Phillips has theorized the epigraph as follows:

> The main function of an epigraph is not to signify (what writer wants to be outdone by a few lines of another writer?). Instead the central function of an epigraph is to simply be there. Its mere being is charged with significance and gives a glimpse into the intended affect of the writer. It need not do more than this. (Phillips 20)

Murray has a similar understanding of his employment of the epigraph in *The Seven League Books*. Murray said in a 1996 interview on C-Spanøs *Booknotes*:

> *The Seven League Boots* of course comes from Puss in Boots, right? It means you put on these magic boots and you get a longer stride, a more effective stride. But the *epigraph* in the book is a statement from the first paragraph of Kafkaøs *The Castle*, which says *the castle hill was dark, hidden in mist, nor was there any evidence that a castle was there*. Now that should take it *out* of any narrow discussion of civil rights, and back to the basic problems of *existence*. In other words: an American vernacular approach *to the meaning of life*, which is what we do. We take the vernacular particulars, that is, the idiomatic particulars, that impinge most intimately on our everyday life, and if weøre an artist we try to process that or stylize that into a statement of universal significance, because then itøs valid, itøs comprehensive, and itøs reliable, just as in statistics. (6:55-8:19, emphasis based on Murrayøs vocal inflections in the interview)

Murray seems to be making a subtle but definite intervention with the epigraph, indeed, its purpose is to give a glimpse into his intended affect and thus perhaps steer the interpretation of the novel õout of any narrow discussion of civil rights.ö The first two novels take place entirely in Alabama, while the next two, beginning with *The Seven League Boots*, take place all over the United States and in Europe. Murray undoubtedly saw how the metaphor of the magic boots

could be interpreted as boots that carry the protagonist away from the land of Jim Crow and toward freedom. The epigraph from *The Castle* serves a contrary reading: that the metaphorical boots carry him instead toward nothing, toward an elusive goal that he has not even identified yet. Murray uses the epigraph, to borrow language from Phillipsø discussion of Phyllis Wheatley, to get the title unstuck from the text, or at least from a reading strongly suggested when title and text are stuck together; that the metaphorical boots will send the protagonist bounding out of Alabama.[132]

Toward the end of the fourth and final volume, there is a passing mention of the õscrewed-up racial situationö (240) in the United States, about which very little has been said previously in more than eight-hundred pages. Slavery and its aftermath are discussed in volumes one and two, but scenes of de jure segregation is not featured. In *The Spyglass Tree*, the local public high school in a central Alabama college town is offhandedly referred to as the õwhite supremacist high schoolö ó as to imply that all white public high schools were õwhite supremacistö high schools (77). Murrayøs first book, the essay collection *The Omni-Americans* (1970) was first subtitled õNew Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture,ö but later re-subtitled õSome Alternatives to the Folklore of White Supremacy.ö Segregation was the manifestation of that folklore in public policy, and Murray refused to represent it. Within *The Omni-Americans*, he ties the phrase õfolklore of white supremacyö to õfakelore of black pathology.ö For Murray, the two go hand in hand, and to represent one is to represent the other. Yet all this is not to say he does not represent conflict. But what the narrator chooses to present about this world limits and curtails segregationøs day to day importance in black life and denies it

[132] The magnitude of leaving Alabama, of leaving the South in general, is suggested at the outset of the novel, through signifying on a text about leaving Alabama with another set of associations: Stephen Fosterøs õOh! Susanna.ö But leaving the South per se, which for Scooter was never that bad (and indeed, he will return) is not the controlling idea and is of secondary importance to his venturing to new places where he will learn new things, particularly Los Angeles and New York.

almost any role in the communityøs opinion of itself, or its cultural practices. And since there is conflict but not segregation per se, this could perhaps be the sort of work that might have been written had there been so segregation.

Keith Clark, in his book *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, and August Wilson* (2002), presents an eloquent synopsis of *Train Whistle Guitar*, and is especially helpful in framing it in the context of the outset of Murrayøs career vis-a-vis predecessors he was determined to counter-state:

> Assailing Wright (and Baldwin) for overlooking ÷the rich possibilities available to them in the blues traditionø (Omni-Americans 166), Murray transposes his extensively theorized blues aesthetic into *Train Whistle Guitar*, the antithesis of the racially charged and dystopic southern landscape of Wrightøs short story ÷Big Boy Leaves Home.ø *Train Whistle Guitar* pulsates as a distinctly black and blues bildungsroman, containing an arabesque of stories and voices ó folk idioms and verbal rituals of signifying, toasting, boating, and storytelling. In Murrayøs 1920s Alabama, a precocious protagonistøs communal and vernacular education supersedes his formal training, as the author showcases oral and aural in his musically inflected writing. Scooter is firmly planted in this community even after he leaves it, for it endures as a sentient, nurturing space that spawns roots and wings through its emphasis on folk epistemology and the hard-won lessons inherent to a blues life. (128)

Unwittingly connecting with Clarkøs accurate understanding of Murrayøs first novel and expanding it across the span of the four novels is John Leonard, in his review of Murrayøs final novel *The Magic Keys* in *Harper's* in 2005, wrote that it was õless kiss-kiss bang-bangí than elegy, reverie, memory book, and musical score, as well as a thank-you note to the entire sustaining community of black Americaö (85). These complementary perspectives of two very different critics, Clark and Leonard, notice the same features: the showcasing of õoral and aural,ö the õmusical score,ö and the tethering of these representations of sound to representations of

community. These taken together with Murrayøs non-representation of segregation itself these features add up to another form; a form that becomes diminished and misrepresented when reduced to the real political circumstances surrounding its composition.

Unpacking Clarkøs quote will reveal much about the first stage of Murrayøs writing career. Before publishing *Train Whistle Guitar* in its entirety, or before even being able to find a publisher for it, Murray had to first publish three books, one of which, *South to a Very Old Place* (1971), was a finalist for the National Book Award. Murrayøs novel was so unusual, so unexpected, so apparently outside of any obvious tradition (even if it had much in common with Hurston, also forgotten during most of those years), that it took twenty-two years for it to see the light of day, even with the early help of Ralph Ellison and with his first and only excerptøs appearance in a prestigious venue, *New World Writing*. In the meantime, Murray developed, as Clark notes an õextensively theorized blues aesthetic,ö the centerpiece of which is *The Hero and the Blues*, delivered as the Paul Anthony Brick Lectures at the University of Missouri in 1972 and published by the University of Missouri Press in 1973. Indeed, he assailed õWright (and Baldwin)ö in in this book but previously as well, in his essay õJames Baldwin, Protest Fiction, and the Blues Tradition.ö This essay was first titled õSomething Different, Something Moreö and published in Herbert Hilløs edited anthology *Anger, and Beyond* in 1966. The lightly revised version which Clark quotes from above was published in 1970 in Murrayøs *The Omni-Americans.* It is Wright, more so than Baldwin, whom Murray, like his friend Nathan Scott, had the ÷biggerø problem with. Murray had personal admiration and even affection for Baldwin, of whom he draws a charming portrait in his third novel *The Seven League Boots*, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Murray met, befriended, and to a certain extent mentored Baldwin in Paris in 1950. His essay on Baldwin reflects Murrayøs deep disappointment with the trajectory

of Baldwinøs career through 1970, exemplified by this quote from õJames Baldwin, Protest Fiction, and the Blues Traditionö:

> [Baldwin] never really accounts for the tradition that supports Harlemøs hard headed faith in democracy, its muscular Christianity, its cultural flexibility, nor does he account for its universally celebrated commitment to elegance in motion, to colorful speech idioms, to high style, not only in personal deportment but even in the handling of mechanical devices. Intentionally or not, much of what he says implicitly denies the very existence of Harlemøs fantastically knowing satire, its profound awareness and rejection of so much that is essentially ridiculous in downtown doings. Sometimes he writes as if he had never heard the comedians at the Apollo theatre. Life in Harlem is the very stuff of romance and fiction, even as was life in Chaucerøs England, CervantesøSpain, RabelaisøFrance. (149)

Murrayøs fiction strives to present a portrait of African American life that reflects õthe very stuff of romanceö that he observed and experienced, while presenting adversity in heroic terms. In the next paragraph Murray criticizes Baldwinøs fiction for not being õreallyö about life in Harlem, but rather õthe material *plight* of Harlem[133]ö (149). Murray was a historical materialist himself (see *Stomping the Blues*) when it came to the form and practice of cultural creations (and followed influences such as Lord Raglan, Kenneth Burke, and Constance Rourke), but he completely rejected the politically-motivated aesthetic representation of the lack of material well-being (and the public policies that created it) in literature.

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[133] Perhaps it is problematic for Murray, an urban and suburban Southerner to critique Baldwinøs experience of growing up in Harlem, but in an interview for a PBS documentary on New York in the 1990s he commented on that issue, in a sense: õ[New York is] like a fairyland that comes alive. New York is very realistic ó thugs, footpads, gangsters, itøs just like being in the London of Charles Dickens. It puts you in touch with the complexities of life and the vastness of human experience. Well thereøs so many things to respond to when you didnøt grow up here and you have a more comprehensive view of the whole country so you make something of New York that many people that grew up in New York wouldnøt make of it. So there is a sense of its being international. I just wrote this little bitty scene in a novel Iøm working on where Scooterí gets to 59th Street and sees the Plaza and the Sherry Netherland, and sees all this, itøs international, you see. You think of Nice, you think of Cannes, you think of Monte Carlo, you think of London, you think of Rome, you think of the American Express Cardí .and when youøre back at Washington Square, thereøs Henry Jamesö (Murray, PBS Interview About New York). And so, Murrayøs ultimate problem with Baldwinøs Harlem is that it does not seem capable of allowing the possibility for another Baldwin to develop ó and, like Baldwin, discover Henry James.

Murrayøs novels take place approximately from the mid-1920s through the late 1940s and seek, through memories of a soundscape dominated by music, to retrieve, recover, and celebrate the otherwise unknown, undocumented, unheralded (because unrecorded) African American culture as it existed under de jure segregation (õJim Crowö), but with the horrible fact of segregation and its relegated to the faintest background noise. Wolfgang Karrer[134], in his 1994 essay õNostalgia, Amnesia, and Grandmothers: The Uses of Memory in Albert Murray, Sabine Ulibarri, Paula Gunn Allen, and Alice Walkerö aptly notes that Gasoline Point, Alabama, the community that Murray memorializes in *Train Whistle Guitar* õis saved from time like a fly in amber. Communal and individual values can be reaffirmed and held up to the present community as an antidote and inspiration at the same timeö (133). Providing models of õantidote and inspirationö for African Americans during integration was a major goal of Murrayøs career. To do that, he portrays life under segregation through another angle of vision. Murray remarked in a 1994 interview (also quoted in my first chapter):

> I keep hoping against hope that Iøm gonna win, you know, that people will see that our own foreparents had respect for themselves, that they believed in their own humanity and integrity. They could not be torn apart. They werenøt putting on a front. They

[134] Karrerøs 1994 essay represents a significant moderation in tone toward Murrayøs work from his hostile 1982 essay õThe Novel as Blues: Albert Murrayøs *Train Whistle Guitar*ö in *The Afro-American Novel Since 1960*, which he edited along with Peter Bruck. In this substantial essay, Karrer presents a respectful and microscopically close reading of *Train Whistle Guitar*, before badly misreading and dismissing Murrayøs approach to the blues in an emotional about-face toward the end. Karrer, a German critic, at this point was so invested in images of African American pathology that he condemns Murrayøs largely positive portrait of his childhood and community. Karrer criticizes Murray for õ[presenting] the ghetto and the South as an idyllö (259). (His choice of the word õghettoö says a lot about his extravagant misreading.) Karrer cites Irish critic Vivian Mercierøs similarly hostile book review of *Train Whistle Guitar* in *Saturday Review*. Mercier writes õI canøt help wondering whether a young black activist mightnøt spurn [*Train Whistle Guitar*] as an updated version of Uncle Tomismö (51). Mercierøs answer to that speculation is that Murray subsequently found the interest and friendship of no less than Larry Neal and Stanley Crouch, up and coming young black writers who were moving beyond a late 1960s militancy. They found the book to be authentic, and were certainly not in the market for Uncle Tomism (not that they would be the only judges anyway, but they are the examples that Mercier was imagining). (In late 1974 Neal arranged for Murray to speak at Yale.) Karrer and Mercier were precisely the type of white liberals, devoted to a pathological black image out of a pseudo-altruism that in fact reinforces the folklore of white supremacy, that Murray railed against in *The Omni-Americans*. Camille Pierre Laurent (1988) and Michael Borshuk (2006) have offered correctives to Karrerøs outlandish conclusions in his 1982 essay.

> were for real. In *Gone With the Wind*, when Mammy is fitting Scarlett OøHaraøs corset and she tells her mistress, ÷You done had a baby, you ainøt never gonø be no eighteen-and-a-half inches again,ø itøs because Mammy knows what is behind the façade of the plantation mistress. She made Scarlett into a lady. Our foreparents knew what was behind the myth of whiteness, because they helped create it. Later, Scarlett OøHara sees the devastation of the South, and still she keeps her dignity. Who taught her that? Aunt Jemima. Uncle Ben. (Maguire 90)

Murrayøs fiction is a project of cultural recovery grounded in the way African Americans, mostly in the South, mostly in Alabama, understood themselves and, in, and through their aural surroundings and oral creations (with that aurality and orality having been enforced by slavery). In Murrayøs non-fiction and interviews he often mentions his primary influences in fiction as being Thomas Mann, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway. He has devoted much commentary to all three. But his work specifically and almost uncannily parallels that of Zora Neale Hurston, in important ways: striving to present fiction in African American idiom, as opposed to dialect, representing African Americans in relation to one another rather than in relation to whites (with key exceptions).

One difference between Hurston and Murray is that while Murray (twenty-five years younger than Hurston) wrote the manuscript of what became novels one and two under segregation, he published them at very different moments during integration (1974 and 1991). In 1974, he was worried about a potential backlash to the Civil Rights Movement. He responded to a query from *Time* magazine about desegregation in 1976[135], saying: õI hope the changes are permanent, but there could be a counterthrust. These things always go up and down. As a Southerner, my main response is through the blues. The nature of the blues is improvisation...you must be ready for all eventualitiesö (Murray, *Time Essay: Other Voices*).

[135] This is also quoted in the introduction.

By 1991 he was beaming with pride in the fact that so many municipalities had elected black mayors (without mentioning white flight).[136] In short, I believe Murray intends for Scooter to look backwards and forwards; to honor and celebrate what was good in African American culture under and in spite of segregation and provide a model not just for African Americans in integration but for anyone in the contemporary world. Yet, simultaneously, he also seemed to have intended the work for African Americans during integration. Scooterøs story ends, in *The Magic Keys* (2005) on the cusp of desegregation, around 1950. The strong implication is that if he could succeed the way he did under segregation, people can go even further under integration. What is needed is grounding in idiomatic particulars coupled with an attempt to have a grasp of contemporary global cultural knowledge. If this seems a shade naïve and utopian, it is tempered by the blues. The blues, for Murray, is akin to farce, and pratfalls are potentially around every corner.

Alexander G. Weheliyeøs essay õPost-Integration Blues: Black Geeks and Afro-Diasporic Humanismö (2013) provides a framework to think about the ways in which Scooter provides a model for dealing with integration within the text even as he memorializes communities under segregation that were vanished by the time Murray published his novels. Weheliye writes:

> For my purposes, the phrase ÷post-integration bluesø serves as an apt description of how integration has affected black subjects because it amplifies both the immense gains achieved by the Civil Rights Movement and the cultural, political, and psychological fallout from these benefits. In other words, ÷post-integration bluesø insists on coarticulating the positive and negative dimensions of

[136] Murrayøs inscription to an unknown Al (possibly his friend Al Hirschfeld) reads õDear Al, I would say quite a bit has changed during the past twenty years. The costumes have gotten worse, to be sure. But the exercise of political power has gotten better. Iøm afraid I can claim no direct intellectual influence whatsoever. However I must say that all those mayors, the new governor of Virginia and the present chairman of the Democratic Party are all consistent with THE OMNI AMERICANS I have always had in mind. Al Murray NYC 28 Jan 90.ö On the opposite page in a vertical column Murray wrote: õMayors of Atlanta Birmingham Chicago Cleveland Detroit Durham Gary Los Angeles Newark New York New Haven New Orleans Richmond Seattle among others!ö (Murray, Inscription)

> integration without resolving the tensions between them. The blues, as a structure of feeling rather than a particular musical genre, provides a pathway to understanding the central contradictions of the post-integration era. (212)

Describing and delineating the blues as a õstructure of feelingö (without actually using Raymond Williamsø phrase) is what Murray strove to do throughout his writing career, in fiction and non-fiction. This fiction conceived and drafted under segregation was published at various moments under integration, and therein lies the tension between the work and its times. It is not exactly õpost-integration bluesö but an elegy for a world that had been obscured by segregation and a model for a future. In Weheliyeøs next sentence, he quotes Murrayøs history and aesthetics of jazz, *Stomping the Blues* (1976) on the distinction between the blues as such (i.e., the sad feeling) and blues *music* (õsomething contrived to be specifically performed as entertainmentö) which is designed to õgenerate a disposition that is both elegantly playful and heroic in its nonchalanceö (212). I see the õstructure of feelingö in the õdisposition.ö To borrow another phrase from Raymond Williams and connect it with the discussion that Weheliye began, Murrayøs fiction may be thought of as a õhesitation between tenses.ö It is certainly not segregation fiction as defined by either Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams or Kenneth Warrenøs õAfrican American fictionö or õNegro fiction.ö Nor can it be accurately called õpost-integration bluesö in the full sense of Weheliyeøs definition. Murray called it a fairy-tale; I would add that is a fairy-tale in which the mysteries of sound replace any element of magic. A blues break, after all, is a sort of õhesitation between tensesö and elegant dance steps include stylized hesitation as well. Weheliye continues:

> Hence, the ÷post-integrationø blues does not dwell solely on the losses precipitated by integration (loss of black cultural specificity, the continued existence of racism and white supremacy, etc.); instead it accentuates the manifold fissures that are integral elements of this particular culturo-historical formation. The figure

> of the black geek, as it has emerged in literature and popular culture, represents one of the principal embodiments of the ÷post-integration blues,ø allowing black cultural practitioners to underscore how larger societal shifts impact specific black subjects and to create avenues for imagining blackness that refuse to be contained by mutually exclusive poles of assimilation and separatism. (213)

Without mentioning Murrayøs fiction, Weheliye has perfectly described it: an avenue for imagining blackness that refuses to be contained by mutually exclusive poles of assimilation and separatism. Scooter is like the prototype or forerunner of the black õgeek.ö õGeekö is a word I do not care for, but which Weheliye subtly defines as one who õobsesses over information/knowledge; [í ] intelligent and socially discomfited to varying degrees (220).ö Scooter, like Murray, is marked by an absolute absence of any social discomfort, but leaving that aside as a quirk of Murrayøs unusual personality, Scooter is undeniably a black geek, hesitating between tenses but swinging on the break, equally at home quoting Rilke and barbershop jive; discussing Thomas Grayøs influence on Thomas Hardy and quoting and unschooled but not unsophisticated folk political theorists.[137] In a 1997 interview Murray neatly encapsulates what Weheliye seems to be saying when he writes about the õpoles of assimilation and separatism.ö

> [Interviewer:][D]o you really want to claim that growing up in the Jim Crow South had no effect on you whatsoever?

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[137] Murray not only provides a prototype or forerunner of the õblack geekö figure of integration through Scooter, but also through Scooterøs roommate (in *The Spyglass Tree*) and correspondent (in *The Seven League Boots* and *The Magic Keys*), the polymath T. Jerome Jefferson. Jefferson is closely modeled on Murrayøs and Ellisonøs Tuskegee classmate, the brilliant John Gerald Hamilton, who, aside from Murrayøs and Ellisonøs mentions of him has since disappeared from the historical record. According to Murray (in conversation), Hamilton was overweight and did not make it through basic training during World War II, a failure which shook is confidence. He subsequently fell out of touch with Murray. Murray mentions him (õwherever is he nowí ö) in *South to a Very Old Place*, undoubtedly calling out to him and hoping to get in touch. I have searched for information about him to no avail. T. Jerome Jefferson, Murrayøs *a clef* rendering of Hamilton, often communicates Murrayøs own ideas to Scooter (who is semi-autobiographically based on Murray) in the form of letters and mini-lectures. *The Seven League Boots* and *The Magic Keys* provide a sort of fantasy of what Hamilton might have become, as Jefferson becomes an architect and goes to work for Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil. Two out of the last three chapters (including the last chapter) of *The Magic Keys* are letters from Jefferson to Scooter and presented mostly in Jeffersonøs voice. For more on Hamilton see Murrayøs *Booknotes* interview at 46:44.

> [Murray:] I was *beating* that. I was better than that. I wasnøt their conception of me, I was *my* conception of me. And my conception of me came from the great books of the world. Thatøs what I thought of human possibility, not what some dumb-assed white guy thought a colored guy should be doing and feeling. (*From the Briarpatch File* 154)

Of course, Murrayøs answer is incomplete, as he has written about: the heroism of the slaves, those who escaped to freedom and those who did not, informs his sensibility just as much, as he notes in numerous places, along with the gallantry and panache of blues men he knew. But earlier in the interview, Murray describes his dual influences of Euro-American modernism and African American blues and jazz:

> If I can claim anything about my own work, it is this. I was immersed in, and influenced by, the twentieth century literary sensibility. Thereøs Eliot and Pound, and the fallout from Yeats. Thereøs Kafka and Mann, and all of that. Thatøs my context. Thatøs my conception of what prose is. I know where Hemingway was coming from, and he pulled more of it together for me than anybody. Faulkner was playing some other stuff ó doing Coleman Hawkins, donøt you see. Then there was Proust and all of that. But at the same time Iøm reading these guys Iøm also listening to Louis and Duke and Kansas City jazz and coming to terms with that too. So itøs all part of the same thing with me. *It's not an artificial exercise, but an integrated one.* When a sentence sounds right to me, itøs probably some variation of the Kansas City 4/4, and when it has the right rhythm, itøs getting close to what Hemingway and e.e. cummings did, and even to guys like Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay (*Briarpatch* 152, my emphasis).

The õintegratedö nature of the õexerciseö for Murray is of the utmost importance; it illustrates the Omni-American sensibility put into practice and also grounds Scooter as a prototype (would Deleuze say õdark precursorö?) of the õblack geek.ö [138] Related to Murrayøs other liminal positions, looking forward and looking back, representing the idiomatic particulars of African

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[138] This quote is missing key influences as well: Melville, Douglass, Twain, and especially Joyce, but also Wallace Stevens, W.H. Auden, Marianne Moore, Herman Broch, and Edna St. Vincent Villay. Allusions to Millay bracket the entire narrative. The opening of *Train Whistle Guitar,* in which the adult narrator describes the local and national geography as imagined by a child in a Chinaberry tree is an allusion to Millayøs õRenascence.ö Millayøs poem õI Shall Forget You Presently My Dearö is quoted in chapter thirty-two toward the end of *The Magic Keys* (237).

American experience and the experience of the wider (õOmni-Americanö) culture to which all have access and through it, all have access to idiomatic cultures if they take them seriously enough, Murray offers this explanation of his work in a 1994 interview, which also helps to explain his elision of segregation:

> My work doesnøt ever stick to ethnicity and yet I donøt want anyone to ever be thought of as a greater authority on ethnicity. They should say, ÷Ask him, he knows.ø[139] Or, ÷Heøs got the voice. Heøs got the this, heøs got the that.ø .I want to say that Negroes never looked or sounded better than in Murray and Duke. With everybody else, theyøve got to go through a certain amount of mud. (Maguire 88)

The apparent paradox in wanting his work to reflect expertise on ethnicity yet go beyond it is at the heart of Murrayøs work; a desire to channel the particular into the universal (reflected in Hurston and Ellison as well). His personal antipathy to representing any adversity may be at odds with what he spells out in *The Hero and the Blues*, but here he notes that it is in emulation of Ellington. By õa certain amount of mudö he does not likely mean actual mud, but seems to mean õmudö as ÷harm caused by Jim Crow,ø as he has celebrated the heroism required to õdrink muddy waterö and õsleep in a hollow logö as an attribute of one of his most important characters, Luzana Cholly (*Train Whistle Guitar* 5).

In *Train Whistle Guitar*, Scooter grows up in Gasoline Point, Alabama, a fictional representation of Magazine Point, where Murray grew up, which was about three miles north of downtown Mobile.[140] Scooter is immersed in a historically particular soundscape, one that

[139] The alludes to Duke Ellingtonøs oft-quoted book blurb on the first edition of *Train Whistle Guitar*: õAlbert Murray is a man whose learning did not interfere with understanding. An authority on soul from the days of old, he is right on right back to back and commands respect. He doesnøt have to look it up. If you want to know, look him up. He is the unsquarest person I knowö (back cover flap, first edition, *Train Whistle Guitar*).

[140] Magazine Point essentially ceased to exist as a residential community in the 1960s, when the area became repurposed for industrial use. (During the Civil War it was a place where gun magazines were stored. By the time of Murrayøs youth it was home to gasoline refineries, hence õGasoline Point.ö) Murray remarks in *South to a Very Old Place* that a Scott Paper Towel factory now stood where the house he grew up in once stood (145). The shock of

Murray argues in his works on jazz, particularly in *Stomping the Blues* (1976), provided the onomatopoeic basis for big band swing: trains, train whistles, and saw mill whistles, but also clocks from (stolen from?) the õold plantation,ö and the rich and diverse vernacular/idiomatic voices of his elders, combined with the hollers and guitar work of Luzana Cholly, the records playing the early solos of Louis Armstrong, and the ragtime, boogie woogie and barrelhouse piano of Stagolee Dupas help to form his subjectivity as much any officially sanctioned public policy or communally enforced ideologies of class. Scooter is portrayed as coming from one of the poorest possible pockets of African American society, yet he achieves success through the mastering the sonic idioms of that society (in book three, when he becomes a professional musician). He makes it to college and excels there, prior to focusing on music, because of his integrated vision of culture and human achievement. The voice on the page of the major documents of the history of the United States that he studies and memorizes in elementary school are not represented as being any better or worse than the glosses on them by the uneducated but far from unwise adults in the extended circle of his adoptive parents. Class divisions within this community seem limited to the African Americans among Scooterøs kith and kin, and the slightly better off õHill Africansö (descended from the slaves aboard the *Clotilde*, one of the last slave ships to arrive in North America; the hull of which was visible in the nearby Mobile River during Murrayøs childhood)[141]. Scooter revels in his class identity (if it can be called that) by embracing the past and focusing on the present.

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encountering this may have propelled Murray to once again try to get *Train Whistle Guitar* published. The narrator of *Train Whistle Guitar* notes that the town where the action takes place is õperhaps even more of a location in time than an intersection on a mapö (3). The immediately adjacent African American neighborhood of Plateau, where the African Hill Baptist Church stands and where Murrayøs high school (Mobile County Training School) still stands, looks very much like how Magazine Point would have looked, according to Mobile native Kern Jackson, professor of English at the University of South Alabama, who took me on a tour of the area in 2011.

[141] Cf. Sylviane Diouføs *Dreams of Africa in Alabama* (2007).

> And when somebody from up there used to call us them old sawmill quarters niggers, section gang niggers and foggy bottom niggers who didnøt come from anywhere but from looking up a muleøs ass back on the old plantations back in slavery times, all I thought was that they were trying to get even because we were also not only closer to all the best places for hunting both land and water game, but we also had a baseball team that was in the same class as those from Chickasaw and Whistler and Maysville and Bayou La Batre and Biloxi. (81)

Murray of course was aware (as Scooter will become) of all the subtle class divisions in African American society, but never partakes even when he becomes successful, because a rejection of class divisions within the African American community is a rejection of the bourgeois rejection and suspicion of jazz and the blues. I should add that while Gasoline Point hostility toward the Hill Africans is depicted as being strong and mutual, the character Unka Jo Jo, closely modeled on Cudjo Lewis (whom Hurston wrote about as well[142]), is a figure revered and admired by Scooter.

In *The Spylgass Tree* (1991), when Scooter goes to an unnamed college very much like Tuskegee, he has to encounter some local thugs shooting dice in an alley of the college town (much like the town of Tuskegee) adjacent to the campus. The reason he makes it as far as college in the first place is not because of any conventional desire to enter the middle class, but through a promise he makes to Luzana Cholly, the itinerant blues singer and guitarist, invincible tough guy, and representative of folk traditions Murray wishes to valorize. (This is a crucial point missed by Wolfgang Karrer in his 1982 essay discussed above.) And yet he does comment on the false consciousness of those residents of central Alabama who have perhaps not been

[142] Cf. Hurstonøs article õCudjoøs Own Story of the Last African Slaverö (1927). The oft-repeated claim that Hurston plagiarized this article is, in my opinion, overblown. See Lawrence Jacksonøs *The Indignant Generation* for a recent re-hash. She plagiarized some of it but the claim that she plagiarized all of it, which is unfair and untrue, is floating around in various sources.

exposed, as Scooter has been on the Gulf Coast, to an unschooled but sophisticated folk wisdom. Scooter comments in *The Spyglass Tree*:

> I used to stay away from these blocks, especially on Saturdays because I didnøt want to have to see all of the crap games so many of the farmhands always used to seem to make the weekly trip into town to get into with the local hustlers. Not that I was against gambling as such on any principle. Certainly not on any principle based on the conventional morality underlying the disapproval of the church folks of Gasoline Point.
>
> Not me. Not the self-elected godson of the lines of old Luzana Cholly and Stagolee Dupas (*fils*) plus Gus the Gator all rolled in one.í .But I felt the way I felt about the back street crapshooters because it was as if they were still stuck in the same rut as the slaves of a hundred years ago, who used to be brought into town by the plantation master or overseer to reload the cotton wagons with supplies and provisions, and then used to spend their free time gambling away whatever slavers had to bet and fight each other about while the master or overseer finished his transactions and no doubt also found amusement elsewhere. (80-81)

Scooter thus balances his class identity along with his vernacular identity, with his identity as a student. He views his identity, however academically oriented, as an extension of the bluesman Cholly, the pianist Dupas, and the baseball player Gus ó all of whom he views as models of masculinity; quiet and reserved unless threatened, then assertive ó strong silent types, in the parlance of the era.

Much like his contemporary, the Native American novelist and theorist Gerald Vizenor, Murray is a great exponent of the power and importance of chance, especially as the existence of chance (in real life and in narratives), when chances are taken by tricksters, undercuts the foundations of sociological or anthropological narratives of minority pathology (*The Hero and the Blues* 60). Yet Murray is suspicious of games of chance that separate African American

laborers from their hard earned money.[143] The scene could have occurred had segregation never been formally instituted.

As discussed at length in the introduction, Kenneth Warren claims that if Reconstruction had not been betrayed and abandoned in 1877 and segregation had never been broadly implemented, African American writers would still have written literature. He wrote in his õA Reply to My Criticsö in *PMLA,* õhad the Jim Crow regime been throttled in its fetid cradle, African American writers would nonetheless have produced compelling novels, plays, short stories, and other worksö (403). Murrayøs fiction, along with Hurstonøs, is perhaps the closest to what that literature would have looked like: a literature grounded in the aural and oral, that recognizes and comments on the antebellum era of slavery and current ethnic conflict, but does not feature representation of the institutions of segregation (or Jim Crow more broadly). The term õJim Crowö only appears once in Murrayøs four novels, in reference to an aesthetic of minstrelsy in film, in *The Seven League Boots* (244). Murray takes ethnic conflict for granted, writing õThat there were conflicts [in his youth in Alabama] seemed natural. Conflicts exist just about everywhereö (Cranston 26).

In the process of trying to understand and illuminate Murrayøs fictive strategies and goals, I will present (interwoven with the first ever close reading of the four novels) the peculiar publication history of Murrayøs work and seek to understand how the narrative of his career as a novelist reflects changing literary taste across the years of desegregation, particularly the liminal period from approximately 1965-1976. The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 and in 1966,

[143] Scooter goes on to admit in the next paragraph that sometimes dice games concealed communication networks of the Underground Railroad, but also claims that many African Americans during slavery did not believe the Underground Railroad existed, and in fact believed it was a õtrick that Old Master and the overseer played to find out who they could trust, or it was a trap set up by rogue peckerwoods who stole slaves from one plantation and sold them to another in another place (82).ö

Murrayøs first story, õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö which was first published to little notice in 1953, was rescued from obscurity by John Henrik Clarke. I chose 1976 as a bracket because that is when Jimmy Carter was elected (and soon cemented major gains of the Civil Rights Movement) but more crucially, because it is the date when Murray gave his intriguing quote to *Time* magazine, in which he expresses anxiety about a possible white backlash to desegregation. I will attempt to show how Murrayøs novels resist aspects of Kenneth Warrenøs classifications while simultaneously highlighting other aspects of Warrenøs investigations. My intention is not to argue with Warren but rather to try to build upon his suggestions and to understand Murrayøs work both inside and outside the framework that Warren has suggested, and by extension, offer a blueprint to expand that framework. I will hope to demonstrate how Murray extended, elaborated upon, and in some cases refined the blues tradition in fiction begun by Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Zora Neale Hurston, and brought to the forefront of literary production by Ralph Ellison. Thus, as I interpret the scenes in Murrayøs fiction and situate his fiction historically, I will try to place it within several wider historical contexts.

To recapitulate, the narrator-protagonist of the four volumes is nicknamed Scooter, and later, Schoolboy. His real name is never revealed (this will be discussed at length). The four novels, written in a style informed by the blues, and by jazz (which for Murray is a õfully-orchestrated blues statementö), and perhaps suggestive of a prose poem, revel in African American pride and achievement while taking for granted what Murray called, in the revised subtitle to *The Omni-Americans*, the õthe folklore of white supremacy and the fakelore of black pathologyö ó that is to say, white supremacy and black pathology are assumed to be fictions and treated as such. The first and best-known volume, *Train Whistle Guitar* (1974), follows the adventures of young Scooter around the outskirts of Mobile, Alabama, as the soundscape of his

neighborhood, Gasoline Point, forms and informs his subjectivity as he learns about African American music and history from a heroic perspective. The second volume, *The Spylgass Tree* (1991), follows Scooter to an unnamed college, the details of which reflect Murrayøs memories of Tuskegee Institute (it is not especially similar to the college in *Invisible Man*), where Scooter learns more lessons on and off campus. The third volume, *The Seven League Boots* (1995), follows Scooter, by now an up and coming bass fiddle player, into the big band of the Bossman, and on to California and later, to New York and Paris. The fourth volume, *The Magic Keys* (2005), opens with Scooter having abandoned a career in music in order to pursue a graduate degree in the humanities at a large university in lower Manhattan, and ends with him becoming an instructor back at the unnamed Tuskegee-like college and agreeing to become the biographer of the legendary tap dancer, Royal Highness, also known as Daddy Royal.

In 1972 Murray delivered õThe Hero and the Bluesö as the Paul Anthony Brick Lectures at the University of Missouri. In these lectures, published as *The Hero and the Blues* a year later, Murray offers strident critique of protest fiction influenced by Marx and Freud, along with a critique of the Freudian interpretation of the story of Oedipus. In 1972 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari published *Anti-Oedpus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, a critique of Marx and Freud and the Freudian interpretation of Oedipus. I do not intend for that to sound reductive or glib, but rather for it to frame my claim that Deleuze and Murray intersect at numerous points and therefore, Deleuze will emerge in this study as a theorist that may illuminate some aspects of Murrayøs work (just as Deleuze and Guattari will provide a compelling frame through which to understand Percival Everettøs *Suder*, which I will argue is also commenting on Murray and Ellison) Murray, it seems, is writing for what Deleuze called õpeople who are missingö and what Deleuze and Guattari called õa people to come.ö The õpeople who are missingö are not only the

denizens of Gasoline Point, but also those of the college (such as Gerald Hamilton/T. Jerome Jefferson), the members of the Bossmanøs band, and the many other representatives of folk wit and wisdom that populate Murrayøs fiction. The õpeople to comeö are represented by the Omni-American Scooter himself, but also can be imagined by Scooterøs rendering of the brilliance of the people who are missing, from Luzana Cholly through Taft Edison/Ralph Ellison. Returning to Weheliyeøs õPost-Integration Blues,ö Weheliye writes, õI want to suggest that black geeks in black literature and popular culture conjure ÷a people to come,ø to use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattariøs formulationí .Rather than insisting on the representation of a preexisting social reality, the concept of ÷a people to comeø accentuates the positive, productive, and provisional aspects of art and literatureö (225-26). It is the Jim Crow dimension of this õpreexisting social realityö that Murray declined to represent, as he created forerunners of the black geek and forerunners of a people still to come. Equally important is the connected goal of writing for people who are missing, giving voices to communities that existed under segregation and are now long vanished, thus bearing witness to their existence and the structures of feeling that existed within them.

Deleuze writes in his essay õLiterature and Lifeö that õLiterature is delirium, and as such its destiny is played out between two poles of deliriumö (*Essays Critical and Clinical* 4). I see these poles of delirium as possibly being represented by Murray and Kafka (whom, as discussed above, Murray acknowledges in his epigraph to *The Seven League Boots*). Murray would not have signed off on all of Deleuzeøs diction below, but the general thrust of his ideas about õthe ultimate aim of literatureö in this paragraph would not have been alien to Murray at all:

> Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims is pure and dominant. But it is the measure of health when it involves this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly

> stirs beneath domination, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons, a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process. Here again, there is always the risk that a diseased state will interrupt the process or becoming; health and athleticism both confront the same ambiguity, the constant risk that a delirium of domination will be mixed with a bastard delirium, pushing literature toward a larval fascism, the disease against which it fights ó even if this means diagnosing the fascism within itself and fighting against itself. The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health of this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life. To write for people who are missingí (÷forø means less ÷in the place ofø than ÷for the benefit ofø). (4)

The people who are missing are thus the people of the past *and* the people to come.

Murray does not engage in the õdelirium of dominationö because he will not represent political or social domination. Ellison, for instance, also writing for people who are missing and for a people to come, on the other hand does portray the õdelirium of domination,ö and also, thus represents a õlarval fascismö as something lurking with the potential to seduce his characters: Tod Clifton, the Invisible Man and Bliss/Sunraider. The potential for embracing a õlarval fascismö in *Invisible Man* is represented Ras the Destroyer, partially based, according to Barbara Foley on the Harlem fascist Sufi Abdul Hamid (Foley 301). In Ellisonøs second novel, something like a õlarval fascismö may be found in the character of Bliss/Sunraider, who was originally based, according to Foley, on Lawrence Dennis, an erstwhile child preacher who passed for white and later became a financier and fascist theorist (307). In Murrayøs work there is no clear character or moment that can be said to be suggestive of a larval fascism, but should the work ó should Scooter ó push rhetorical celebrations and revels in African American cultural forms into a politicized simulacra of those aesthetic forms (which he does not), then perhaps that is where the larval fascism could conceivably lurk.

Writing for the benefit of people who are missing and people to come is about not just memorializing colorful characters or indulging in nostalgia, but rather bearing witness not just to a structure of feeling but to a worldview. Warren Carson, in his essay õAlbert Murray: Literary Reconstruction of the Vernacular Communityö (1993), one of the first comprehensive essays on Murrayøs career up to that point, writes õAt the core of novel is Murrayøs insistence that the legacy of the black Southern experience is a positive, wholesome one. Moreover, Murray portrays the black community as one that nourishes and cares for its young. To illustrate this point, he populates *Train Whistle Guitar* with a number of characters who, despite whatever weaknesses they may possess, always manages to find something positive and edifying to pass on to the Scooters of the black communityö (291). And it is almost always through the metaphor of sound that these memories are configured. For Murray, the sounds (sawmill whistles, trains, guitars, Louis Armstrong records) that are in the background of Scooterøs childhood are more important than the visual signs that undoubtedly were in his childhood as well. And this is part of the idea in writing for people who are missing and people to come, to bear witness to a disappeared soundscape, more important in some ways, to some people (such as Murray himself) than physical, legible artifacts (e.g., segregation signs) that have survived.

## II. The Luzana Cholly Kick: A Curious Publication History

In 1953, at age thirty-six, Murray published õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö an excerpt from the manuscript of his novel, at that time titled õThe Briarpatch,ö in *New World Writing: 4th*

*Mentor Selection*.[144] It was the first piece of writing that Murray ever published. Murrayøs name appeared on the center of the cover in between the names of Jorge Luis Borges and Jose Camilo Cela ó an auspicious beginning if there ever was one. The publication self-consciously reflected mainstream highbrow literary and visual culture, and included contributions from Robert Motherwell, Gore Vidal, Shelby Foote, Suzanne K. Langer, and Nadine Gordimer, among others. Yet despite this auspicious beginning, Murrayøs writing career did would not get past this point for more than another decade. It would take another thirteen years for any fiction by him to appear again, and at that time it would once again be õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö which was included by John Henrik Clarke in his anthology *American Negro Short Stories* in 1966 (a volume which also helped re-introduce and recirculate Hurstonøs work prior to the resurgence of interest in her work).

In the brief biographical note preceding õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö in *New World Writing* Murray articulates his already carefully theorized aesthetic vision and procedure, from which he was never to vary:

> We all learn from Mann, Joyce, Hemingway, Eliot, and the rest, but Iøm also trying to learn to write in terms of the tradition I grew up in, the Negro tradition of blues, stomps, ragtime, jumps, and swing. After all, very few writers have done as much with American experience as Jelly Roll Morton, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. (*New World Writing* 228)

Murrayøs statement reflects that he seems to feel that he is on to something new. He is õtrying to learn to write in terms of the traditionö that he õgrew up inö ó a musical, that is to say aural tradition ó and not in terms of any previous African American literary tradition, that is to say, the segregation aesthetic dominant for the previous half century. Murray declines to mention any

[144] I am not sure whether to identify *New World Writing* as a journal or series of anthologies. Physically, it is much closer in resemblance (identical to) to a paperback book as opposed to a typical journal issue of the time, and an editor is not listed though the editor was Arabel Porter.

African American writers, as he did not care for the way most of them wrote in the twentieth century. His literary influences listed here (in a very restricted space of a few lines) are limited to white male high modernists õand the rest.ö This of course is far from the extent of his influences, but this is how he wanted to frame his own project, as a combination of African American musical influences and modernist literary influences. Although he was thirty-six years old when he wrote this, and already had written a masterøs thesis in elegant prose (a comparative study of *The Waste Land* and *The Sun Also Rises*) at New York University five years earlier, he frames himself as an apprentice to his own style, which he sees at this time as one without much of a past. Of course, Petry, Hurston, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown and Ellison had been exploring the same territory, with varying results, and perhaps not quite with the same intense emphasis on musical tropes within the writing process and structure (or scaffolding) as Murray.

õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö is about the adventure of an unnamed narrator (later named Scooter) and his friend and Lilø Buddy (later Little Buddy), both about ten years old, who run away from home in an attempt to emulate the õdonøt-carifiedö (234) blues singer, guitarist, gambler, World War I veteran, and all around bad man Luzana Cholly (õLouisiana Charlieö). Part of what makes Cholly an attractive and heroic figure to emulate, aside from his dashing, rogueish manner and musical skill, is his disregard for the pieties or conventions of the Jim Crow regime, indeed his very posturing as if it did not exist ó foreshadowing the rest of Murrayøs fiction. The narrator admiringly says:

> He was a Negro who was an out and out Nigger in the very best meaning of the word as Negroes use it among themselves (who are the only ones who can), and nobody in that time and that place seemed to know what to make of him. White folks said he was crazy, but what they really meant or should have meant was that he was confusing to them, because if they knew him well enough to say he was crazy they also had to know enough about him to know

> that he wasnøt even foolhardy, not even careless, not even what they wanted to mean by biggity. The funny thing is, as I remember it now, was how their confusion made them respect him in spite of themselves. Somehow or other it was as if they respected him precisely because he didnøt care anything about them one way or the other. They certainly respected the fact that he wasnøt going to take any foolishness off them. (234-35)

When Cholly catches the boys hoboing on a freight train out of town (knowing their journey is in emulation of him), he stops them, angrily, and makes them go home, but not before admonishing them to õuse your head like the smart white folksö (243). In the process of describing why they admire Luzana Cholly and why they want to run away, the narrator describes the community in some detail, and particularly his own immersion of the soundscape of that community: the attentively-listening ó indeed, hearkening ó narratorøs nights are filled with the sounds freight trains and live piano music in onomatopoeic emulation of those trains (231).

Lawrence Jackson, in his book *The Indignant Generation: A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics, 1934-1960* (2010), astutely recognizes the similar early career trajectories of Murray and James Baldwin, who became friends in Paris in 1950[145]. Yet their career trajectories did not align for long, as their aesthetic opinions and programs differed sharply. Baldwin was soon to achieve the success which would elude Murray for approximately twenty years. Jackson notes, echoing Murrayøs letter to Ellison in which Murray describes the manuscript that became *Go Tell it On the Mountain*, that for Baldwin, õthe literal poverty of that [storefront church] tradition had disabled his sensibility toward older cultural resourcesö (390). These õolder cultural resources,ö comprising the vernacular tradition; (the õblues,ö in the broad sense defined by Ronald A.T. Judy, quoted in the introduction), are what Murray and Ellison

[145] Jackson incorrectly gives the year as 1951. Murray traveled to the Sorbonne to study in the late spring of 1950. By late 1950 he was back at Tuskegee, on active duty in the Air Force, his time in Paris having been cut short by the Korean conflict. In 1951 Baldwin wrote him a warm letter, expressing that he missed their discussions in Paris. The letter also seethes with anxiety that the Korean conflict could spread into another world war, as Baldwin wonders if he and Murray might one day drink Coca-Cola in Red Square (Baldwin, Letter to Murray).

(and Hurston) tried to both preserve and recover as well as implement and translate into their modernist fictions. Lack of attention to or engagement with that those resources is what Murray again criticizes Baldwin for later, in his 1966 essay õSomething Different, Something Moreö in Herbert Hilløs anthology *Anger, and Beyond*, and later in the lightly revised version of the essay in *The Omni-Americans*. Jackson recognizes the similarities between the works of Murray and Baldwin (for instance, an absence of white characters early in their careers) but understands Murrayøs alternative strategy in terms of defiance of and diminution of the Jim Crow regime:

> Both Baldwin and Albert Murray were writing coming-of-age tales about young men and both came out, a year apart, in the high modernist journal *New World Writing*. Murrayøs ÷The Luzana Cholly Kickø introduced African Americans of the Deep South erecting standards of highly masculine heroic behavior on their own terms. If Baldwin was writing about a Harlem that had no tangible white presence, Murray suggested a different kind of black resistance to white domination. In the short story, the narrator actively seeks to diminish the crisis of black oppression. He makes a glancing remark, which Murray placed in parenthesis. (390)

Jackson goes on to quote the following õglancing remarkö in parenthesis from the narrator of õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö:

> (Naturally Lilø Buddy and I knew about Negroes and white folks, and we knew that there was something generally wrong with white folks, but it didnøt seem so very important then. We knew that if you hit a white boy he would turn red and call you nigger that did not sound[146] like the Nigger the Negroes said and he would run and get as many other white boys as he could and come back at you, and we knew that a full grown white had to get somebody to back him up too, but we didnøt really think about it much, because there were so many other things we were doing then[147]). (*New World Writing* 235; Jackson 391-92)

[146] Compare with Ellisonøs portrait of õReverenøMurrayö in *Three Days Before the Shooting…* who is particularly concerned with intonation and how words sounded (328).
[147] Compare with Hurstonøs claim in õHow It Feels to be Colored Me:ö õNo, I do not weep at the world ó I am too busy sharpening my oyster knifeö (*Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* 827).

This rumination did not make it into the version of the story that appeared in the novel in 1974. Murray instead included a discourse on the sound and intonation of the word õniggerö in *South to a Very Old Place* (159-62). It should be noted that Murrayøs somewhat sharp taunting of white people in õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö was not a form of posturing at a safe distance. Murray was actually living in Macon County, Alabama, in the town of Tuskegee, where he was planning to build (and would build) a house for himself, and his wife and daughter. Although this section quoted by Jackson ended up excised from the published novel, it made Murrayøs cut of revisions for inclusion in the anthology *Dark Symphony* (1968), which, incidentally, also included Baldwinøs õSonnyøs Blues.ö Jacksonøs following gloss on the quote is glib and full of inaccuracies, but is the only published commentary on the strange publishing limbo Murray found himself in. Jackson writes:

> Apparently even such gestures were not enough to convince publishers of the merits of a book trying to be an African American *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Even with the backing of Ralph Ellison, it would take Murray roughly twenty years to publish his paean to the blue-black railroad man Luzana Cholly, which eventually became *Train Whistle Guitar*. (392)

The first sentence can be dismissed out of hand. Aside from featuring energetic children who want to have an adventure away from home as characters, the story is not õtrying to beö an õAfrican American *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*ö at all. That is an exceedingly odd comparison and I do not know what to make of it, as the story has such little to do with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. But more crucially, Luzana Cholly is not a õrailroad man.ö He does not work for the railroad, he hoboes on the railroad. In a novel such as say, Rudolph Fisherøs *The Conjure-Man Dies* (1932) a õrailroad manö is an employee of the railroad. Luzana Cholly is primarily a blues guitarist and singer, and who makes his money as a gambler, and is õdonøt-carifiedö adventurer who hoboes on the railroad in defiance of the laws of the land.

Finally, the 1974 novel *Train Whistle Guitar* is much more than a paean to Cholly, who is mainly discussed in the first third of the novel. Jacksonøs book takes a fairly hostile approach to Hurston, Ellison, and Murray, (in favor of valorizing one Ellison and Murrayøs critics and stalwart antagonists, such as J. Saunders Redding) and in the process makes various critical mistakes about the trioøs careers. Despite his many mistakes, he does seem to perceive that there was something odd about Murrayøs publishing frustrations in the 1950s.

Murray wrote to Ellison on April 17, 1955 of his (Ellisonøs) editor at Random House, Albert Erskine, who did much to help shape *Invisible Man* into its published form, and Erskineøs opinion on Murrayøs manuscript: õThat Goddamn Albert Erskine said last summer that he liked it and that I should publish some more of them like in *New World Writing*, but that there was absolutely no market for volumes of short stories these daysö (Murray and Callahan 89). Jackson goes on to describe James Baldwinøs success following his story in *New World Writing* (õin vast distinction from Murrayö) but does not proceed to suggest why he thinks it might have come to pass. Yet Murray does, if indirectly, in his essay õSomething Different, Something Moreö (1966), republished with light revisions as õJames Baldwin, Protest Fiction, and the Blues Traditionö (1970). In short, Murray was writing in the blues idiom and tradition, and in celebration of it, in attempt to rescue an image (and the sounds) of an autonomous black community in 1920s Alabama. This was unfashionable in 1953 and would remain so until the late 1960s. As Jackson rightly notes, even Ellisonøs assistance could not get the book published. Ellison was also writing out of the blues tradition, but *Invisible Man* had numerous other elements that contributed to its success in spite its grounding in the black vernacular: narrative drama, social commentary, satire of powerful persons and institutions, comic pratfalls, finely honed irony, anti-Communism and anti-fascism, mythological and psychological overtones ó all

elements that Murrayøs poetic story does not have, aside from perhaps a sense of humor and mythic allusions. While Murray also aimed for mythological suggestion, what his manuscript mostly had to recommend it was its rich, playful musical language, a cheerfully honest but not sugar-coated representation growing up on the Gulf Coast, an irreverent sense of humor and perhaps most importantly, õsomething different, something moreö: a celebration of African American life through the lived soundscape, of which the blues was a major component.

In this section I will trace the fascinating and serendipitous orbits of õThe Luzana Cholly Kick.ö The story appeared in numerous contexts and at important historical moments. It is right there in *New World Writing* in 1953 around the outset of Baldwinøs career and alongside Borges at the moment when the English-speaking world was on the cusp of discovering him: in short, at a moment when the image of modernism was about to be expanded. It next appeared in 1966, in a volume along with Hurston and Rudolph Fisher; rediscovered alongside its idiomatic predecessors from the previous generation. Two years later it appeared again, in *Dark Symphony*, right in the center of the maelstrom at CCNY over how African American literature would be taught ó a moment of great importance for Kenneth Warren in *What Was African American Literature?*. The story was then viewed by Toni Cade Bambara (and by Toni Morrison reviewing an anthology edited by Bambara) as something like a work of paradigmatic blackness, particularly evocative of a kind of black masculinity they could both admire. Shortly thereafter, it appeared in a textbook from the Xerox-owned Ginn and Company, which somewhat alarmingly sought to frame the story pathologically and find a maudlin portrait where one was not. I will relay this unknown but illustrative history here and try to understand what the work meant and how it was read at various moments during the upheavals of the late 1960s and early 1970s and what work it performed as an object ideological contention. The churning, swirling, or bouncing

of the story around in various ideological environments from 1966-1974, along with the success of Murrayøs early books, is what helped clear a path for the publication of his four novels.

Severely out of step with the tradition of the õNegro novelö or õAfrican American novelö (Warrenøs terms) or novel of segregation, Murray could not find further traction for his 1953 excerpt, õThe Luzana Cholly Kick,ö until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. After appearing in Clarkeøs anthology in 1966 retitled as õTrain Whistle Guitar,ö õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö was selected for *Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America*, edited by James A. Emanuel and Theodore L. Gross, both professors at City College (CCNY) at the time, where the controversy over Herbert Hilløs anthology *Soon, One Morning* occurred. Kenneth Warrenøs narrative of this controversy is an important component of the second half of chapter two of *What Was African American Literature?* and is intended by Warren to carry much symbolic weight about the confusions regarding literature by African Americans at the liminal moment when both segregation and õAfrican American Literatureö came to an end. The controversy was that Addison Gayle pushed for *Soon, One Morning* (1963) to be taught at CCNY despite the objections of white faculty. Yet Warrenøs incomplete narrative is immensely troubled by the fact that two CCNY professors were, at that very same time, working on the hefty anthology *Dark Symphony*, in which work by African American writers from Frederick Douglass through the 1960s is interspersed with detailed, contextualizing, scholarly essays. Kenneth Warren leaves whatever role Emanuel and Gross may have had in the CCNY controversy out, but it seems unfair that Warren uncritically replicates Gayleøs claim that the white faculty members were õalmost unanimous in their oppositionö (75) to Hilløs anthology while Gross was working on his own much more comprehensive anthology, along with Emanuel, that undoubtedly owed a historical and practical debt (in publishing-business logic) to *Soon, One*

*Morning*. Perhaps some professors did not want to allow *Soon, One Morning* into the curriculum because they knew two of their colleagues were working on a similar but much more comprehensive anthology. (I do not say this to criticize *Soon, One Morning*, which only covers 1940-1962.) Since Murrayøs work appears in Hilløs second (1966) edited collection *Anger, And Beyond* and in *Dark Symphony*, his absence from Warrenøs narrative raises important questions.

This is not to say that Warren excluded mention of *Dark Symphony* and Murray in order to reach a historically untrue conclusion ó not at all. But, in order to have a more complete picture of the situation at CCNY, upon which Warren rests considerable weight, then all the pieces of the puzzle as known today should be brought together. Indeed, a glimpse of an alternative narrative to Warrenøs might be imagined as coalescing around Murrayøs pieces in these anthologies, most likely known to Gayle, as he had been a student of James A. Emanuel[148] (Yardley A20). Warren writes that õIn a very real way Gayle is straddling the historical divide Iøm sketching out hereö (79). Murray might as well be said to straddle this same divide. Somewhat confusingly, after advocating so strongly for *Soon, One Morning*, Gayle turned against it. Warren concludes this chapter in *What Was African American Literature?* as follows:

> It remains meaningful for Gayle in this essay [õNot So Soon One Morningö] to think of African American literature as simply an unacknowledged part of a canon whose values and standards can be applied universally. To draw a contrast between his moment and ours, it seems, if anything, a little harder to say something like that now ó at least not without qualification. But this difference makes it a little clearer for us to see what African American literature was ó which was a literature in which claiming to be *different from* and claiming to be *the same as* the dominant society could appear to have equal force. (79-80)

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[148] This was a very small academic and social world. Gayle deeply disliked the white critic Robert Bone and mentions him in various places. But Gayleøs mentor, Emanuel, met Murray at a party at Boneøs apartment. In the letter in which Emanuel asks Murray for permission to include õTrain Whistle Guitarö in *Dark Symphony* he adds at the end õI remember chatting with you at Bob Boneøs place the night Ralph Ellison was thereö (Emanuel, Letter).

A competing, alternative narrative and interpretation could have been drawn from the history at CCNY at the time. Of course, in any department any number of things could be occurring at once. In contrast to this moment sketched out by Warren, and in contrast to the conundrum Gayle later found himself in, when a few years later he was promoting a õblack aestheticö (having written a book by that title) Murray is offering õsomething different, something moreö ó an Omni-American aesthetic, the black dimension of which is sound-immersed if it is to have accurate idiomatic texture. Murray wanted to be read on the terms of õMann, Joyce, Hemingway, Eliot and the rest,ö but simultaneously in terms of õJelly Roll Morton, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington.ö Murray is not asking to be thought of as õdifferent fromö or õthe same as,ö for either and both ways (which Gayle argued for at different times) would constitute a kind of pleading with the white establishment. Murray is saying, to the contrary, much like James Joyce with his numerous Irish cultural signifiers unexplained for an outside audience: ÷this is what it is, go ahead and figure out, it may have universal implications if you do.ø Emanuel and Gross write in their introduction to Murrayøs story õTrain Whistle Guitarö (i.e, õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö with a new title and minor revisions) in *Dark Symphony*, that Murrayøs õaesthetic and historical approach to the craft of writing ó an attitude based not on the hope that Negroes will imitate the masters but ratherí [quoting Murray now] ÷begin playing the same highly imaginative improvisationsøö that black athletes have done in sports (374). Emanuel and Gross go on to note that õMurray has detailed his literary theories in a book-length manuscript,[149] the very existence of which heralds the birth and growth of that ÷Black Aestheticø lately the subject of much speculationö (374-75). This was two years before Gayleøs book *The Black Aesthetic* was published. That õspeculationö undoubtedly was occurring in circles in the CCNY orbit. But Murray was not advocating for a black aesthetic, though that could be an honestly incorrect

[149] This will be discussed below.

interpretation based on conversation in 1968. Murray was arguing for an Omni-American aesthetic with an idiomatically black component. The question is not whether literature by African Americans is the same as or different from white Americans ó to ask such a question would be like asking if Faulknerøs work was different from Fitzgeraldøs. Yes, idiomatically, but part of the wider American grain.

In the in his preface to *The Addison Gayle Jr. Reader*, Nathaniel Norment, Jr., the volumeøs editor, has harsh words for Gross (who later became president of Roosevelt University in Chicago), lumping him together with a disparate, and not at all similar group of whites including Herbert Hill, Norman Mailer, Robert Penn Warren, Robert Bone, and Irving Howe, as one who õjudged black authors by the standards of the dominating white cultureö (xl). He does not include Gross in a long list of CCNY colleagues that does include Emanuel. Itøs as if Gross and Emanuel never edited *Dark Symphony* together. Norment also writes of õGayleøs conflicts with and intense dislike of Gross,ö which Gayle writes about in numerous pieces, often lumping him together with Robert Bone. I quoted Norment above to show that even with the distance of time and the critical framing of an edited Reader, this conflict persisted. Murray and Gayle, incidentally, come together in their intense dislike of William Styronøs *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, which Murray subjects to a withering critique in *The Omni-Americans*. Gayle claims that õStyronøs novel reassures white Americans who had begun to believe that Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown posed a threat to the maintenance of the great societyö (191). I do not know if Gayle read Murrayøs devastating essay on Styron, but if he had, he may have been intrigued by the following. Murray critiques Styron through a folk song that illustrates the pride that black communities had in their image of themselves. Murray writes:

> There is an old song which goes:

> Well you can be milk-white and just as rich as
>
> Cream
>
> And buy a solid gold carriage with a four-horse
>
> Team
>
> But you caint keep the world from movering [sic] round
>
> Or stop old Nat Turner from gaining ground
>
> These folk lyrics are about a dedicated man who did far more than declaim great phrases (later to become national clichés) about taxation without representation, liberty or death, and the times that try menøs souls. He was, like all epic heroes, a special breed of man who had given his last full measure of devotion to liberty and dignity. (136)

Murrayøs work contains unmistakable approval of violent black resistance when necessary, as evinced by scenes in *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree* which shall be discussed at length in this chapter. In Murrayøs fiction, as in the essay on Styron quoted above, these scenes of violent resistance are not only remembered through music but are engendered through music. To paraphrase Jacques Attali, who shall be discussed at length below, the music contains a symbolic violence within it. When presented with an existential threat grounded in Jim Crow, the creators of the music reappropriated the symbolic violence across the threshold of the real. And music becomes the portal or frame through which they are recalled. It is these sound-guided memories that disallow the climate of fear, necessary for the segregation aesthetic (according to Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams), from materializing in Murrayøs fiction.

In short, Warren chooses Gayle on whom to build his narrative of the liminal moment between the end of õAfrican American Literatureö and a movement into something else, but Murray, who was writing something other than õAfrican American Literatureö (as understood by Warren, i.e. in the segregation aesthetic) during segregation (going back to the completion of his

manuscript in 1951) could have been part of Warrenøs narrative as well, as he was right in the same mix of the CCNY controversy (and larger questions of where African American writers would now turn) through his involvement with the anthologies of Hill and of Gross and Emanuel.

Returning to the manuscript that Murray told Gross and Emanuel about and which they speculated upon in *Dark Symphony*: it ended up being split approximately in two, with about half becoming *The Hero and the Blues* (1973) and the other half becoming Murrayøs long essay õThe Storyteller as Blues Singer: Ernest Hemingway Swinging the Blues and Taking Nothing,ö which was not published until Murray included it in his essay collection *The Blue Devils of Nada: A Contemporary Approach to Aesthetic Statement* in 1996.[150] Emanuel and Gross might have been in for quite a surprise, assuming (as they did) it was a manuscript along the lines of arguing for a õblack aestheticö (racially) and then going on to champion Hemingwayøs work as being the most representative of the spirit of the blues in literature thus far. In Murrayøs estimation, Hemingway completely intuited and represented the structure of feeling of the blues. Ellison wrote about being influenced by Hemingwayøs work as well. They recognized a familiar angle of vision in his work; in Hemingwayøs steely stoicism and recognition of the blisses of the commonplace. And yet, for Murray, in order for a work to be idiomatically accurate from the perspective of the African American experience and/or in dealing with African American life, it would have to sound a certain way and, for him, echo a certain soundscape óa claim which he never makes for Hemingwayøs work. Murray never argues for the õblacknessö of Hemingway but rather, he seeks to point out and explain the blues-ness of Hemingway. (Murray never wanted to speculate on

[150] The original idea, so Murray described it to me, was that a theory would be laid out in what became *The Hero and the Blues* and then illustrated with a detailed discussion of examples from Hemingwayøs work, but when he got the opportunity to give the a lecture series at the University of Missouri, he decided cut the section on Hemingway for the moment.

how Hemingway arrived where he arrived in terms of his feeling of the blues other than to say, he was an Omni-American.) But in that same essay collection in which Murray finally published his Hemingway essay, the other essays are on African American artists: Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Romare Bearden. As I claimed previously, perhaps the literature that African Americans would have composed had there been no segregation, a scenario Murray almost-imagines (by refusing to represent it), then perhaps the issue of African American literature being õsame as/different from,ö minus the overwhelming socio-political dimension from that literature, would have been thought of in a more õintegratedö way (to borrow Murrayøs description of his combination of the blues and literary modernism quoted in the previous section) in the first place. In other words, Murrayøs Omni-American aesthetic steers between Gayleøs same as/different from oscillation by being dynamically adjustable to idiomatic variation. And this idiomatic particularity, quite apart from political particularities, is what Hurston argued for going back to the 1920s. Murrayøs non-representation of segregation entails an as-deep-as-possible idiomatic thrust ó and that is accomplished through an aesthetic of sound.

Another CCNY professor during that time, Toni Cade Bambara, included õTrain Whistle Guitar,ö (that is, the 1968 version of õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö) in her 1971 anthology *Stories For Black Folks*, published by Doubleday, which was to publish Gayleøs *The Black Aesthetic* the following year[151]. In an appendix titled õNotes on the Authors in This Book,ö Bambara writes of

[151] At the same moment that the Ford Foundation, directed by McGeorge Bundy was creating institutionalized black studies as a tool of campus race-relations management (to echo Warren, *What Was* 53), Doubleday Books was suddenly interested in African American topics. Around this time Doubleday also acquired a new acquisitions editor: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. I was curious as to whether there was correspondence on the topic between Bundy, a former Kennedy White House official, and Onassis, on the link between promoting black studies institutionally and publishing books on black studies. Bundyøs correspondence from his time at the Ford Foundation is housed at The John F. Kennedy Library. The library informed me via email that while there is a letter exchange between Bundy and Onassis in their library, there is nothing in it pertaining to black studies. I would still not be surprised if there was a connection and the business was conducted in person or over the phone, as both were based in New York.

õTrain Whistle Guitar:ö õI love this story. I especially like the opening passage that contrasts a boyøs blue to a manøs blue. And I also like reading about bad dudes (or crazy niggers like they say) because when you come to think of it, itøs the not-so-respectable people who often have the greatest good influence on your life. Take Malcolm X for exampleö (161-62). Bambara's admiration for Cholly becomes a riff on Malcolm X (and how õhe gave such meaning to our livesö), as she draws the two figures together in an unexpected but not completely far-fetched juxtaposition, especially in light of Murrayøs take on the old Nat Turner rhyme and Malcolm Xøs emphasis on empowerment, the gospel of which Cholly preaches to young Scooter and Little Buddy.

If Murray ever read Bambara's riff at the end of the anthology, he did not underline anything or otherwise indicate that he read it in his copy. The signal that Bambara seems to be picking up here is one of a confident assertion of a non-bourgeois or anti-bourgeois roots of black empowerment (even if Malcolm X underplayed his middle class origins). Cholly essentially advises the boys join the middle class and become respectable ó for the sake of himself and their ancestors ó but his authority comes from his alternative, õdonøt-carified,ö swashbuckling lifestyle and the sounds he creates and the traditions he represents. Murray is writing both in the place of and for the benefit people who are missing just as Cholly is asking Scooter to make the old folks proud not for the benefit of himself, but for them and him (Cholly). Thus, Scooter's desire to succeed on conventional terms is not for its own sake, or to conform to any bourgeois expectations, but because Luzana Cholly told him to and made him promise to do so. It is a desire to conform to Cholly's expectations that propels Scooter through school and through college, not a desire for conventional success. Because nobody could be more tough than Cholly, Scooterøs future academic and musical success becomes a transposed form the kind of

õbadö that Cholly represented and thus, Scooter becomes a õbad manö as well, playing in a different key and register. Cholly, a sort of Whitmanian õroughö has no sanction but his own; his reputation has been gained through music, fighting, and gambling, and thus the authority imbricated by Cholly's reputation underwrites Scooter's drive for achievement.

In a 1996 interview on C-Span (17:20-21:20), when questioned by Brian Lamb about Malcolm X, Murray provides an incisive critique of what he saw as Xøs attempt to undermine the Civil Rights Movement. Murrayøs dislike of Malcolm X was nearly apoplectic, yet his copy of *Tales and Stories For Black Folks* contains no markings. And yet what Bambara seems to perceive is a connection between Murray's Cholly and the more assertive, militant phases of the Civil Rights Movement, which Murray critiques in *The Omni-Americans* as well, largely because of what he sees as the non-idiomatic inflections and thus non-idiomatic orientations (Freud, Marx, Mao, social science) of those phases. If the õoldö black upper class ó the segments of it embarrassed by jazz and the blues ó was comprised of stuffed-shirt cultural quasi-Victorians and Edwardians, the new black middle class, as envisioned by Cholly, and perhaps, in a roundabout way by Malcolm X, would not be embarrassed by black culture, but would succeed in the United States in terms of it and through love and appreciation of it. There perhaps is the connection Bambara envisioned.

Murrayøs narratorøs commentary on the color blue in the opening paragraph of õTrain Whistle Guitarö that impressed Bambara is also what impressed Toni Morrison when she reviewed the anthology in the *New York Times* in 1971 (several months prior to her review of Murrayøs *South to a Very Old Place* in January 1972). The inclusion of Murrayøs story õTrain Whistle Guitarö in Bambaraøs anthology came at a moment ó the cusp of national desegregation ó when Murrayøs poetic, bluesy evocation of a heroic, decidedly non-pathological African

American culture in his childhood in the 1920s gained a sort of vogue. But first it will be instructive to note that Morrison recognized exactly what the project entailed. She wrote in the *New York Times*:

> What makes this collection so spry, so healing, so genuinely good is what makes any book for children precious: (1) an assumption that the readers are alive and have something to bring to the reading experience. í .(2) That cultural lines of demarcation (in this case black) are worth hanging on to (not instead of something else, not because of something else, not even in spite of something else) because the culture is worthy in and of itself. (3) That books are written in language and that nothingí can give them permanent life except language. Take, for example, Albert Murrayøs opening passage in ÷Train Whistle Guitar:ø ÷Liøl Buddyøs color was that sky blue in which hens cackled; it was that smoke blue in which dogs barked and mosquito hawks lit on barbed-wire fences. It was the color above meadows. It was my color too because it was a boyøs color. It was whistling blue and hunting blue, and it went with baseballí .Steel blue was a manøs color. That was the clean, oil-smelling color of rifle barrels and railroad iron. That was the color that went with Luzana Chollyí .ø (Morrison, õGood, Bad, Neutral Black,ö 3)

Morrisonøs second point nearly closely described Murrayøs cultural recovery project through fiction. õCultural lines of demarcation,ö as Morrison puts it, õare worth hanging on toö not because of any genetic ties between the creators of the culture, but because õthe culture is worthy.ö The culture is a product of a shared experience from slavery through twentieth century, which future arrangements in the body politic and goals of the nation state will change and will have changed going forward. Though the quote from Murray she chose poetically meditates on color, color (as in õthe bluesö of the spectrum) is not nearly as important to the novel (or the excerpt) as sound, specifically the musical sounds made by African Americans, specifically õthe blues.ö

The opening theme on shades of blue that Bambara and Morrison appreciated is recapitulated with difference, in the manner of a jazz solo playing a variation on the first chorus, in the õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö section of the õHistory Lessonsö section of *Train Whistle Guitar* (55-75). This repetition-with-difference of a theme is part of Murrayøs musically informed strategy. Scooter relays part of a discourse by the philosophical stevedore Uncle Jerome, and his own antiphonal response to it:

> That was when he used to say that the color of freedom was blue. The Union Army came dressed in blue. The big hand that signed the freedom papers signed them in blue ink, which was also blood. The very sky itself was blue, limitless *(and gentlemen, sir, before I'd be a slave I'll be buried in my grave*). And I said My name is Jack the Rabbit and my home is the briarpatch.
>
> Sometimes he would also say that the freedom road was a road through the wilderness and sometimes it wasnøt any road at all because there never was any royal road to freedom for anybody (so donøt you let nobody turn you around. And donøt you let nobody know too much about your business either. And I said Call me Jack the Bear on my way somewhere). (67-68)

Blue, in the novel, is revealed as not only the color that õwent withö Luzana Cholly, but also is described the õcolor of freedomö: Scooter, as he gets a bit older, is thus learning about different associations of blue, other shades and echelons of blue (the shade Wallace Stevens might have meant when he named the õmore than casual blueö).[152]

The final phase of the circuitous second life of õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö/õTrain Whistle Guitarö is its having been framed as young adult fiction. After first appearing in the highbrow *New World Writing* in 1953 it became a story recruited for late Civil Rights Movement/burgeoning black arts movement anthologies such as *American Negro Stories* and *Dark Symphony* in 1966 and 1968 respectively. Once segregation ended, it was considered to be

[152] Curiously enough, the recapitulation of the theme that Morrison appreciated in her review contained lyrics to the spiritual on the theme central to the plot of *Beloved*.

a good fit for the young adult market, at which Bambaraøs anthology seems to be aimed (and which Morrison recognized). Bambara included the story in a section called õOur Great Kitchen Tradition,ö among stories she felt were similar to those heard õin the family kitchen among the eldersö (12). Bambara writes in her introduction to this section that õwhile it is very, very important for young folks to read, to read well, to read everything in sight, it is equally important for young folks to learn how to listen, to be proud of our oral tradition, our elders who tell their tales in the kitchen. For they are truthö (12). Bambara thus sees Murrayøs story as one in the spirit of that tradition, and one that until the roughly the present moment would have thus been confined to an oral discourse. Murray would have seen it generally that way as well. The õHistory Lessonsö section of Train Whistle Guitar approximates the õkitchen traditionö that Bambara describes: a tradition of black pride and resistance, limited, until recently, to oral narratives (partially because of the mutually reinforcing ideologies of the black middle class and the publishing world). These years are also the time, of course, of the rediscovery of Hurston. Murrayøs early success, subsequent obscurity, and rediscovery follows the arc of Hurstonøs path in miniature (though Murray, of course, pushed his own rediscovery through his own agency, while Hurston was deceased). Bambara recognized that Murrayøs story is part of a witness-bearing tradition that had been under the radar of literature and discourse about African American culture generally. Yet undoubtedly, her anthology is aimed at a young adult market. She concludes the õNotesö at the end of the book by imploring the reader to õone day soon, sit down and have a long talk with your great grandfolks, lettinø them do the talkinøö (164).

In 1973 õTrain Whistle Guitarö was included in what appears to have been a middle-school textbook, *Responding: Six* published by Ginn and Company, then a subsidiary of Xerox. The book includes many canonical white writers, as well as three black writers in addition to

Murray: Langston Hughes, Ernest Gaines, and Arna Bontemps. At the end of õTrain Whistle Guitar,ö the book includes a photograph of a young white(!) man relaxing on railroad tracks that appears beneath a bizarre gloss which (it seems) was supposed to be a suggestion for class discussion:

> Editor: A sad story. I keep wondering what will happen to those boys.
>
> Literary Sort: Surely theyøll survive.
>
> Editor: Like Old Luze? (*Responding: Six* 81)

It is extraordinary that these white editors, Wallace W. Douglas and Albert L. Lavin, who frame themselves as smarter than the õliterary sortsö they encounter, read the story as õa sad storyö while Bambara reads it as an uplifting, empowering story, as inspiring as she finds Malcolm X inspiring, while Morrison reads it as an important intervention on behalf of cultural recovery. Without making too much of a throwaway gloss in a middle-school textbook, Douglas and Lavinøs oddly maudlin reading of an inspiring story does seem to reflect how certain whites did not (and to some extent still do not) know how to approach Murrayøs work. (I do not want to push that too far. At the same time, one of the most brilliant and perceptive responses to the novel *Train Whistle Guitar* came to Murray in 1974 from the white novelist and historian of music James T. Maher.) It is not clear what Douglas and Lavin find õsadö about say, Chollyøs exhortation to õuse your head like the smart white folks.ö After all, Mister Goddamn Hellfied Luzana Cholly, representative of the baddest õbad manö in the African American tradition, is offering a new, integrated model of subjectivity still being pondered today (by Weheliye, for instance) in which õthe young generation of Negroes were supposed to be like Negroes and be like white folks too and still be Negroes.ö If anything it is a heroic story, signaling an aesthetic break from the literary past, reimagining/reclaiming the real past, and pointing to a bright future.

Scooter learns that õyou could be rawhide and you could be blue steel but you couldnøt really be Luzana Cholly, because he himself was not going to let youí .You had to be rawhide but you had to be patent leather too, then you would really be nimble, then you would not only be a man but a big manö (*New World Writing* 243). Murray (it seems) did not respond to a 1974 letter from Ginn and Company asking him to bowdlerize certain words (such as õhellö and õdamnö) from the story for a subsequent edition of the book, in order to make it easier to sell to school districts. Perhaps he did not think much of the gloss. Or the photograph.

## III. Mapping Murrayøs Revisions

The mapping of Murrayøs major revisions will illuminate aspects of his strategy for representing both his experience and his community. An important paragraph that appeared in all the published versions through 1973 has to do with Scooterøs attitude toward his given name. His given name essentially becomes or is transposed into his secret name. The traditional African (American) naming practice of the secret name is reversed in Murrayøs fiction, as given name becomes secret name. The sound of his secret name does not sound right outside of the community ó specifically, it does not sound right in the state-sanctioned realm of discipline and punishment, the school environment. He becomes alienated from the sound of his given name through the educational arm of the (Jim Crow) state apparatus. This passage appears in all versions until the 1974 novel:

> Mama said I was her little man, and Aun Tee always called me her little mister, but I wasnøt anybodyøs man and mister yet, and I knew it, and when I heard the sound of the name that Mama taught me how to write I always felt funny, and I always jumped even when I didnøt move. That was in school, and I wanted to hide, and I always said they are looking for me, they are trying to see who I

> am, and I had to answer because it would be the teacher calling the roll, and I said Present, and it sounded like somebody else.
>
> And when I found out what I found out about me and Aun Tee and knew that she was my flesh and blood mama, I also found out that I didnøt know my real name at all, because I didnøt know who my true father was. So I said My name is Reynard the Fox and Lilø Buddy said My name is Jack the Rabbit[153] and my home is in the briar patch. That was old Luzana too, and when you heard that holler coming suddenly out of nowhere just as old Luze himself always seemed to come, it was just like it was coming from the briarpatch. (*New World Writing* 236)

Murray must have realized that this section, however close it may (or may not) have hewed to his own experience, had to go. Any anxieties about school Scooter had had to be eliminated so that he could excel in school further in the novel.

In the 1974 novel, in a sort of Foucauldian switch, anxiety about the sound of his name at school is erased is replaced anxiety about imprisonment for truancy (in a juvenile detention center) should he and Little Buddy be caught trying to run away. In the short story, Scooter decides to run away from home because he has found out that Mama and Papa are not his real mother and father, but in fact, Aun Tee is his real mother. In the novel, Scooter discovers this instead in the final chapter, through a dramatically rendered over-hearing of the adults talking among themselves[154] (177-83). In õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö section of the novel (6-30), Scooter

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[153] Reynard the Fox and Jack the Rabbit represent two traditions from which Murray drew: the European picaresque tradition and African American oral/trickster tradition. In a 1971 article õReynard the Fox as ÷Pícaroø and ÷Reinaerts Historieø as Picaresque Fictionö Donald B. Sands makes a compelling case for Reynard the Fox to be understood as a picaresque figure.

[154] Robert Bone wrote perceptively to Murray on June 24, 1974: õAs for the novel, let me just say that at first I wasnøt convinced that the episodic, short-storyish materials were going to be properly assimilated to the novelistic form, but that once the question of the missing father and the two ÷mothersø had been faced in that very powerful and moving last chapter, everything seemed to have been moving inexorably to that revelation. At that point not only the whole book, but your own life and career, and beyond that, the symbolic dilemma of all Afro-Americans came into sharpest focus. I had just been watching *King John* at Stratford, and I suddenly realized that just as legitimacy is the central fact of English culture, with its implications for property, land, titles, and all the rest, so illegitimacy is the central factor (symbolically if not literally) in what it means to be black in America. Which is a hell of a thing to face, let along transcend! No wonder you have invented a theory of antagonistic cooperation! Suddenly the blues (and especially those Empty Bed Blues) began to make some senseö (Bone, Letter to Murray).

and Little Buddyøs motivation to run away is primarily a function of desiring to emulate Luzana Cholly, *not* due to Scooterøs discovery of his parentage, and ultimately just for something fun to do, an example of õboy blue dreaming and schemingö because they were õbuckskin pioneersö and õwilderness scoutsö (18). In the novel, the following section appears that is not in the versions of the short story:

> It was May but school was not out of session yet, so not only were we running away from home we were also playing hooky, for which the Truant Officer also known as the School Police could take you to Juvenile Court and have you detained and then sent to the Reformatory School (Mt. Meigs and Wetumpka were where they used to send you in those days. No wonder I still remember them as being two of the ugliest place names in the whole state of Alabama. Not as ugly as Bay Minette, which I still remember as a prototype of all the rattlesnake nests of rawboned hawkeyed nigger-fearing lynch-happy peckerwoods Iøve ever seen or heard tell of. But ugly enough to offset most of the things you didnøt like about grade school). (18)

Scooter doesnøt say (of course) whether or not Mt. Meigs or Wetumpka are segregated facilities (though of course they would have been), because he will not note the existence of de jure segregation at all. But the nearby town of Bay Minette, across the bay from Mobile, is described as an epicenter of race hatred, the sound of which, to Scooter, is even uglier than Mt. Meigs or Wetumpka. Aural aesthetic concerns, the desire to not inhabit places with ugly names, have thus helped to keep Scooter in school thus far. It is the way the names of these places *sound* to Scooter that keeps him in school despite whatever he may not like about it, which he does not say. The sound of his given name, which causes him anxiety in school in the short story versions, has been omitted from the novel. In the novel, after Luzana Cholly makes him promise to take school seriously, school then takes on new and exciting dimensions.

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This section on the revelation of Scooterøs parentage is also the section that Wynton Marsalis chose to read at Murrayøs memorial service on September 10, 2013.

Those new and exciting dimensions can be imagined through Chollyøs admonitions and the (non-verbal) promise he extracts through eye contact, but a more existential problem, such as the sound of Scooterøs given name on a teacherøs roll call could not be gotten over so quickly, and would create an anxiety about attending school that, by this point, Murray is keen to dispel, partially because of the ideas he has developed and expounded in *The Omni-Americans*, *South to a Very Old Place*, and *The Hero and the Blues*, with which it does not quite square very well. But, through the moment of transference of outlaw-hood from Cholly to Scooter, school can now be something daring and dangerous.

Along these lines, Michael Borshuk has noted in his book chapter õAlbert Murray Brings It On Home: Revisioning Black Modernism in *Train Whistle Guitar*ö (2006) why it is so important for the educational system and the vernacular community to be represented as it is in *Train Whistle Guitar*:

> Scooterøs recollections of Miss Teeøs[155] invitations to perform [perform what he has memorized in a textbook] are antiphonal, a signal that demands response. At the same time, her praise resembles blues verse in its tripartite structure: a repeated thought with subtle variation (÷This is my mister who can do X by himself. Show them My Misterø), followed by a more varied statement of resolution. In working this vernacular echo into his dramatization of the Talented Tenth concerns about education, Murray dismantles the division between so-called high and low cultures engendered by those bourgeois sentiments. In remember his scholastic achievement as a site of blues antiphony, Scooter explores the complex relationships and networks of cross-reference that inform his development. (181)

This occurs three chapters after the Cholly/runaway adventure. õMost of the things you didnøt like about grade school,ö which may have included (though it has now been omitted) something as momentous as jumping-without-moving at the sound of oneøs own name, have receded by this

[155] She is called õAun Teeö in earlier versions.

point. Luzana Chollyøs attributes; his power, glory, and grandeur, in the eyes of Scooter, have re-oriented Scooterøs opinion of school. In a sense he had to do this to maintain consistency with his non-fiction, with his condemnations of psychoanalysis, black pathology and neurosis, and anything that would suggest emotional weakness on the part of Scooter created by a practice of the state (even something as innocuous as attendance-taking at school, which happens to make public a name previously only available to the covert-public of the Gasoline Point community, and perhaps only in Scooterøs home, in the writing lessons between himself and Mama). Borshuk continues:

> In fact, what Murray does offer is a vision of hybridity, by juxtaposing the vernacular performance of the blues with the traditional academic performance at which Scooter excels. The boyøs facility with the fixed texts of American history is as much a part of his subject formation as is his ability to respond to the classic blues. Murray, I would argue, intends the two to be interdependent, complimentary. Neither constitutes a product of discrete blackness or whiteness: book learning is not the province of whiteness, nor is the blues a black form necessarily removed from the academy. Rather, both represent the organic processes of exchange always at work in American culture. Ultimately, African American potential lies not merely in pursuing conventional education, nor in exercising vernacular savvy, but in recognizing the inseparability of the two. The importance of this exchange is something Luzana Cholly realizes, and accordingly, Luze acknowledges and encourages Scooterøs ability. (181)

Borshuk is absolutely right (as he corrects Karrerøs 1982 essay) and notices something that Bernard Bell and Ellison noticed about Murray ó the extraordinary balance he struck between the downhome vernacular and the cosmopolitan and academic. Cholly is at a metaphorical crossroads between the state (school) and the vernacular (and not just because of music and his Legba-like limping walk, but partially through those attributes). Most importantly, it becomes acceptable for Scooter, in his mind, to not run away from home and instead continue in school (he is only about ten years old, after all) because Luzana Cholly said it was the right thing to do.

Earlier, Borshuk describes Scooter (who has excelled in school at Chollyøs behest) as a sort of cross-roads figure (but does not connect his limp to Legba, which I am doing here)[156]. For Scooter, the important issue is the flexibility of the name through the room to maneuver allowed by traditions of signifying. Murray chooses to represent this not through the trauma of the sound of the name in an institutionalized setting, but rather through the play re-naming (i.e., õmy name is Reynard the Fox,ö in the short story quoted above). Borshuk writes earlier:

> Foregrounding the improvisational nature of Scooterøs self-actualization, Murray shows his young hero here as unfixed in name: he is Scooter, yes, but ÷also Jack the Bear.ø Later, Scooter confirms his indeterminacy all the more, announcing that he ÷also used to call [himself] Jack the Nimble and Jack the Quickö (31). Murrayøs hero is willfully open to change and combinations: Scooterøs (and Murrayøs) oft-used verbal lick, ÷also and also,ø is itself a shorthand signifier for the heroøs figurative place at the crossroads. Fittingly, one of Scooterøs signature gestures in moments of personal, emotional importance is the crossing of his fingers. (175)

Such naming games are continued in volume three, *The Seven League Boots*, when he receives and accepts the name õSchoolboyö as a playful variation on Scooter, and further suggest (but more subtly than expressed in the first short story) a continued recoiling from the rigidity of the given name, as School, once feared, becomes part of his name, intricately tied to his identity at this point as a college-educated musician on the road with many musicians who had not had such opportunities. Nowhere in the four novels does the issue of Scooterøs given name arise with any weighty significance. Murray (or his agent) permitted republication the short story, *without* the naming section excised at least one more time after 1974, in the anthology *The New Cavalcade*, (1991).

[156] Murrayøs own signature, incidentally, featured stylized crossings, particularly a low, wide (completely superfluous) swooping loop in the letter l in õAlö (as he signed most of his books õAl Murrayö). The form of the loop of the l in his signature is suggestive of a crossing, particularly as it has no reason to be there.

Another reason or motive Murray may have had for minimizing concern with fretting over Scooterøs given name was sensitivity (which Murray had) about being perceived as too similar to Ellison, who never reveals the name of the protagonist of *Invisible Man*. Murrayøs fiction offers many responses to the calls of Ellison in *Invisible Man*, but perhaps he felt that such emphasis on naming was too close and potentially could seem too derivative. The issue of Scooterøs given name was to cross Murrayøs mind again, in either the late 1990s and as possibly late as 2001, when he wrote a draft of a blues ballad that was to be published in quite a different form. The draft reads as follows (I am typing it out as closely to the way it looks on the handwritten page as possible):

÷A man of no fortune and a name to comeøóPound, *Cantos* I

My nickname is Scooter

My real name ainøt never been told

My nick name is Scooter

My true name ainøt never been told

My home has been the briarpatch

Since before I was nine months old.

#

Now some call me school boy

and I donøt deny my name

Some folks call me school boy

and I never did deny my name

See me riffing them pages

Taking care of business is my game (Murray, Unpublished Draft, Variant of õThey Used to Call Me Schoolboyö)

By the time his volume of poetry, *Conjugations and Reiterations* was published in late 2001, he had excised any mention of Scooterøs õtrue name.ö The õpoundö sign between the stanzas could

be an allusion to the epigraph from Pound, but at the same time, more likely, it could be a symbol of crossing or crossroads, for which a õplusö sign might have seemed too religious or could have been misinterpreted. Murray was especially concerned in his later years with differentiating himself from Ellison and working out from under Ellisonøs shadow, a goal toward which the publication of their letter exchange, *Trading Twelves* (2000) performed much work. At the point when he wrote the poem in a notebook, perhaps he had forgotten momentarily that he had excised any mention of Scooterøs real name or true name from the novel. He must have remembered at some point, and remembered why, as the published version in the book *Conjugations and Reiterations* as follows:

> they used to call me schoolboy
>
> and I never did deny my name
>
> when folks called me schoolboy
>
> I never would deny my name
>
> I said youøve got to be a schoolboy
>
> if preparation is your aim (*Conjugations and Reiterations* 8)

Murray thus changes the poem from necessarily being voiced by Scooter to (as can be surmised) possibly voiced by himself (or, yet another personage). In the published version õschoolboyö is not capitalized, thus reducing the necessity of its relating to *The Seven League Boots*, published six years before the poem.

This question of naming and õtrue namesö (õtrue names,ö for Murray, being secret names, as the nickname becomes the public name) underscores a larger concern with sharing what is most covert within the African American community. Questions of how it works within the narrative, how it works within Murrayøs wider conceptions of culture in his non-fiction, and

anxiety about being conflated with Ellison aside, this was a topic that was on Murrayøs mind for fifty years: how can true identities be revealed and how much of them should be revealed, which can be imagined in a metonymic relationship with the question of how much within an African American community that would not otherwise be revealed (segregation or not) can and should be revealed to the wider, mass culture. Murray withholds Scooterøs real name. What else does he withhold? All writers who write about home, community, or the deep particularities of their own backgrounds faces this question. Murray appears to have reduced it to the question of Scooterøs true name, made his true name bear the metaphorical weight, and thus put enormous pressure on it, so much so that it re-appears in a piece of creating writing more than twenty years after Murray removed it from the novelized version of õThe Luzana Cholly Kick.ö

This connects exactly and directly with how Murray saw himself as distinct from Ellison aesthetically as well. Murray told an interviewer in 1994:

> [Ellisonøs writing] is more ó well, the political implications are more obvious. Whereas my aesthetic preoccupation and my sense of the total human context ó although I work as hard as I can to get the local color and idiomatic particulars right, but that to me is what a writer always does. But you want the political, the social to seem incidentalí .So heøs more ó Iøve been thinking about that. I was thinking about the differences in the sensibility. Thereøs a certain amount of explanation of black folk stuff for white folks, which I refuse to do. See, he would do that. He would say certain things which I wouldnøt say. (Maguire 88)

Certainly this statement is about much more than the naming question, but it is intricately related to it. This much larger question is at the heart of Murrayøs aesthetic program: the desire for the political and social to seem incidental and the refusal to explain õblack folk stuff for white folks.ö Within the grand scheme of these concerns, Murray flips the weight of the African American secret name onto Scooterøs real name, while refusing to mention the anxiety caused by

its being known to the state apparatus and deleting the initial mention of that anxiety. But Murrayøs quote also suggests what may be an illustrative analogy with the work of Chinua Achebe, or at least Simon Gikandiøs understanding of it. Gikandi writes in his book *Reading Chinua Achebe* (1991) that õAchebeøs archaeology of the African past, apart from trying to make the crucial connection between the real and discourse, is an attempt to evoke our stories to contest the claims of their historyö (21). This is very close to Murrayøs attempted archaeology of the African American past. Gikandi continues, õThe need to show the colonized culture as unknowable is particularly important because colonial power, and its attendant economy of representation ÷produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an ÷otherø and yet entirely knowable and visibleøö (22). The quoted section is a quote from Homi K. Bhabha. Murrayøs õrefusalö to explain õblack folk stuff for white folksö can perhaps be thus thought of part of a larger pattern or trend in a global context.

Another important revision concerns the way the age or ancientness of Chollyøs music is described. Initially, in the short story, there is a temporal non-specificity or non-specific temporality assigned to the vocal sounds Cholly makes:

> Mama always said he [Cholly] was whooping and hollering like somebody back in the rosin-woods country, and Papa said it was one of them old Luzana swamp hollers. I myself always thought it was like a train, like a bad train coming through saying look out, this is me, here I come, and Iøm coming through. (229)

Here is the 1974 text, with the crucial addition of õold plantations,ö in what comprises chapter two (6-30) of the novel:

> Mama always used to say he was whooping and hollering like somebody back on the old plantations and back in the turpentine woods, and one time Papa said maybe so but it was more like one of them old Luzana swamp hollers the Cajuns did in the shrimp bayous. But I myself always thought of it as being something else

> that was like a train, a bad express train saying Look out this me
> and here I come and Iøm on my way one more time (8).

The revised text, with the addition of õold plantationsö simultaneously suggests a critique of Amiri Barakaøs *Blues People* (which argues that the individualistic blues, as opposed to communal spirituals, developed in lone cabins on share-cropping plantations, rather than what seems to be implied by õoldö plantations) combined with a more explicit adoption of a õBergsonianö frame of memory that suggests long durations of past epochs that linger and co-exist in the present. (While it appears that neither Murray nor Ellison read Bergson, they were lifelong readers of Proust, Faulkner, and T.S. Eliot, from whom they seem to have gleaned basic Bergsonian concepts.) Murray inverts here what Leigh Anne Duck, in discussing Alain Locke and the creation of *The New Negro* calls, with opprobrium, õthe inscription of temporal differenceö on the folk (118). Duck claims (in the context of her chapter õZora Neale Hurston and the Chronotope of the Folkö) that õOne of the features of late modernity is the fascination of modernizing societies with their own newness and speed; concomitantly, such societies tend to understand cultures in which change occurs more slowly as fundamentally different from their ownö (117). Yet for Murray, African Americans, as a group, have never *not* been modern, as their ethnic identity itself is the result of the slave trade and thus of modernity (as he discusses in the introduction to *The Omni-Americans*). Toni Morrison wrote disapprovingly in her review of *South to a Very Old Place* that õThe history of black Americans neither begins not ends in Mobile, Ala.,ö but Murray does not argue that either: he argues, as Glissant will later regarding his own background, that the õincontestably mulattoö culture of United States begins with the Middle Passage (*The Omni Americans*, 17). Thus, having lived in and helped build the United States since long before its independence from Britain, all the movements and developments of modernity also belong to African Americans. For the narrator, the sound of the õold plantationsö

thus morph (and can morph) into õa bad express trainö because the fact of the matter is that African Americans would have heard trains ever since their invention. Murray writes, in liner notes to the soundtrack to Alvin Aileyøs *Revelations* and *Blues Suite*: õthe wide use of railroad imagery in church music seems to ante date by many years its use in blues musicö (Murray, Liner Notes). Thus, the blues may represent a secularization of an older onomatopoeic procedure, but not necessarily something new and modern and temporally disconnected from the world of the õold plantations,ö which thus, aurally, also becomes the Scooterøs world.

But the õCajunö interpretation simultaneously suggests a troubling of the definition as to what is necessarily black and what is necessary white, as all hear the same trains traveling day and night. Why would Cholly imitate Cajun sounds? When õinö sound (in the sense perhaps meant by Günther Anders), to an extent, the sound takes on cultural associations of what is brought into it. Papa, who can pass for white (as will be discussed later in the chapter) hears Chollyøs sound as õCajunö while for Mama, the sound is more specifically African American. And yet, most crucially, the sound is replicated by an African American in and for a predominantly African American audience, and its sound, for the narrator, becomes inextricably tied to the lack of sanctimony with which Cholly regards white people and their mores, which adds a dimension to his heroic persona.

In õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö there is a long paragraph about Chollyøs daring adventures on the Western Front in World War I, but this was excised from *Train Whistle Guitar*. Scooter says that it was Crawford who õused to tell me and Little Buddy Marshall about all of the things Luzana Cholly had done during the war. Because old Luze himself never did talk about any of that, not even when you asked him about itö (64). Listening to tales by African American veterans of World War I was an important part of Murrayøs youth. In the published novel he

chooses not to put a further burden on Chollyøs character, wishing instead to emphasize Chollyøs music and õdonøt-carifiedö attitude, and subsequently invents a new character for the purpose of telling tales of the war and informed by experience of France: Soldier Boy Crawford. Among the only moments in the eight-hundred pages of Scooterøs story when it is revealed that something (and that something is still heavily obscured) is not right and not equitable about the social situation of African Americans in the United States is when Scooter (or, in this case, Murray also) absolutely has to because he is contrasting the United States with Paris and seeking the bare minimum of historical verisimilitude while simultaneously refusing to discuss segregation or Jim Crow. One of the only other times that Scooter hints that something is unfair or askew about life in the United States is years later in Paris when he encounters the writer Danny Dennison, closely modeled on James Baldwin. I will discuss the Dennison below so as to compare and contrast his portrayal of Paris with Crawfordøs and discuss the convergence of the appeal of Paris for both. It is as if by mentioning Paris at all or having characters go there, Murray becomes forced in a sense to allude to Jim Crow, if not actually explain it.

This is crucial for understanding Murrayøs perspective on Paris in the African American bohemian imaginary (as Paris symbolized freedom for so many African American artists in the early and mid-twentieth century). He wanted to relay what it was like to hear reports of Paris from returning soldiers but realized he could not have had Cholly say this. This also sets up an attractive contrast with Dennisonøs explanation of the appeal of the Paris. Thus, in Murrayøs fiction there is found a folk explanation of the appeal of Paris as well as an educated artistøs explanation. I will first discuss Crawford in relation to France, then in relation to the legacy of slavery, on which he also makes a statement of central importance to the novel. Scooter relates

one of Crawfordøs discussions of Paris and attendant commentary on it in a Gasoline Point barbershop:

> He would always say that Gay Paree was the best city in the world, and that was also when he would always say A man is a man over there and if somebody said as somebody as often as not did that a man ainøt nothing but a man nowhere, you knew he was going to say Yeah but that ainøt what Iøm talking about, what Iøm talking about is somewhere you can go anywhere you big enough to go and do anything you big enough to do and have yourself some of anything you got the money to pay for. Thatøs what Iøm talking about. (63)

Only here in Murrayøs fiction, even if it is not spelled out explicitly, is the fact that even if an African American had money that money could not necessarily be spent in any establishment. When Scooter goes to Paris, toward the end of *The Seven League Boots*, he contrasts his own reasons for going, which did not have to do with segregation or Jim Crow, but rather were prodded by cultural curiosity and tourism, with those of Danny Dennison, a character closely modeled on James Baldwin. Here is Scooterøs portrait of Danny Dennison, complete with Dennisonøs reasons for going to Paris:

> Danny Dennison, a writer from New York was also somebody I had exchanged waves with in Vieux Colombier before we said hello and had a drink together at Le Petit Mabillon. I was to get the impression that he had become much more involved with my kind of music and musicians as such since coming to Paris than he had ever been back in New York. He had grown up in the very heart of Harlem, but his was the Harlem of church folks rather than the Harlem of bars, nightclubs, and ballrooms.í .To each his own is what I always say, he said in response to being told of my self limited stopover status. To each his own. He flourished his Gauloise bleue cigarette, his instantly friendly ÷smart cookieø eyes twinkling playfully. Or as they say over here, *Chacun selon son gout*. Or in my case, *selon* sa faim. Because in my case, it was truly a matter of life and death. No two ways about it, baby. When it really hit me. When I could no longer deny what those awful people over there really had in store for me was a matter of hauling my black ass out of there, pronto. Some stay and submit. Some

> stay and contend. And believe me when I say I honor and celebrate them because I really do. But these nevertheless are personal matters. Whatever they saw there must have inspired or indeed fired them oní .The existence of my soul depends on me being a writer and I could not become a writer in that place. It was as if it were against the law. Against the law for us, I mean. (335-37)

Dennison provides a strong contrast with Soldier Boy Crawford in the first volume. Dennison is shown to speak proper French, for instance, while Crawford teaches Scooter French expressions such as õgive me a bottle of cognac, pleaseö that sound to Scooter like õdonay me unbootay cornyak silver plateö (62). For Crawford, the freedom of Paris is the freedom to spend money anywhere one pleases, to be a super-consumer, while for Dennison the freedom of Paris is the freedom to be artist and feel more existentially at ease. Until Dennison comes along in *The Seven League Boots*, all of the African American characters in the United States had seemed remarkably at ease. By including Dennisonøs perspective, Murray adding a dose of reality (as he does also by including Gaynelle Whitlow who is skeptical about Scooterøs romantic relationship with a white movie actress) to a novel that in many ways strains credulity (but that straining of credulity will perhaps make more sense in the discussion of the picaresque, later in this chapter).

Soldier Boy Crawford also figures prominently in Murrayøs representation of the legacy of slavery as not something that African Americans should be ashamed of or try to deny. In this representation Murray goes against a prominent trend in African American history. According to Ashraf Rushdy in his book *Remembering Generations: Race and Family in Contemporary African American Fiction* (2001):

> Another reason oral histories have been dubious sources of information is that American families generally desire to invent a glorious rather than report a notorious past. In the case of African American families, that desire has been spurred by a prevalent feeling of ÷shameø attached to slave ancestry. A ÷slave heritage,ø Derrick Bell notes, is a most forceful shame ÷symbol of shame,ø

> one that black families historically attempt to hide, ignore, mute, or deny. Alice Walker noted in a BBC documentary that her family spoke in ÷whispersø about certain parts of their history. Margaret Walkerøs father was less subtle; when he found his mother-in-law telling you Margaret ÷stories of slave life in Georgia,ø he could cast aspersions on her ÷harrowingø fables and try to counter the effect they had on his daughter by calling the ÷tall tales.ø Dorothy Spruill Redford recalls that ÷[s]lavery was never mentioned around our house,ø and the ÷first time [she] heard the word [she] thought some shame was attached to you if you even uttered it.ø (17-18)

Murray understood this shame and consciously worked against it, in his fiction (through the signifying of Crawford and others, which will be discussed shortly), and in his life experience[157]. Having grown up a few miles north of downtown Mobile, Murray did not grow up around agriculture or cotton production. He told Robert OøMeally in a 1994 interview for the Smithsonian õI wanted to know something about a cotton field before going to collegeö (34). Murray took a summer job picking cotton, he says, to better understand the contexts of slavery. He continues in the interview with OøMeally:

> So I wanted to have that experience, you know?....My grandparents and all that ó and I had never really seen a cotton field. And so, it wasnøt a matter of beingí like I was ashamed and all ó it had nothing to do with that. It seemed heroic to me, that they did all this. The stuff I heard them talking about in slavery and all that. I would have been a fugitive slave, I would have been all that. So I reenacted all that stuffí .So, I got on the truck and went out there and picked cotton for a week to get the fare [laughs] to get the bus fare to get from Mobile to Tuskegee. (35)

Murrayøs picking cotton õfor a weekö might perhaps seem like slumming or a form of labor tourism, especially considering that many African Americans in 1935 time still picked cotton for their livelihoods. But he was just as poor as them; he just lived in such proximity to an urban

[157] Ellison was similarly concerned with working past and eliminating the shame of slavery. The Invisible Man says at the outset of chapter one: õI am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamedö (15). In chapter five, the Invisible Man says of Miss Susie Gresham, the matron of the college: õyou, relic of slavery whom the campus loved but did not understand, aged, of slavery, yet bearer of something warm and vital and all-enduring, of which in that island of shame we were not ashamedö (114).

center so as to have never seen a cotton field. Murray claims he õreenactedö the labor associated with slavery, perhaps not altogether unlike a Civil War re-enactor, to have a better grasp of his ancestorøs struggles and to thus better understand the present. But õreenactmentö is an important term in Murrayøs aesthetics. Wolfgang Karrer has perceptively observed õRecall, for Murray, becomes ritual reenactmentö (Karrer 131). With his fiction, Murray is reenacting a world, a world which has been obfuscated and even denied by the prominence of the narratives Rushdy describes in the quote above.

The class contrast between African Americans who had been slaves either inland or in Mobile and those Africans who settled in Mobile after the wreck of the *Clotilde* in 1858 in an important theme in *Train Whistle Guitar*. While Scooter acknowledges and celebrates the sage-like figure Unka Jo Jo (modeled on Cudjo Lewis) the conflict between the õHill Africansö and the African Americans of Gasoline Point becomes the fulcrum for the noveløs discussion of the legacy of slavery. For reasons that are not explained, the Hill Africans are slightly better off economically than the residents of Gasoline Point.[158] Thus, within the context of this economic discrepancy, Scooter acknowledges and celebrates his own class identity and not does shrink from acknowledging slavery:

> And when somebody from up there used to call us them old sawmill quarters niggers, section gang niggers and foggy bottom niggers who didnøt come from anywhere but from looking up a muleøs ass back on the old plantations back in slavery times, all I thought was that they were trying to get even because we were also not only closer to all the best places for hunting both land and water game, but we also had a baseball team that was in the same class as those from Chickasaw and Whistler and Maysville and Bayou La Batre and Biloxi. (81)

[158] The African Hill neighborhood of Plateau still exists. It was not cleared for industry, as the adjacent Magazine Point was in the 1960s. I have visited it, along with its graveyard, described in *Train Whistle Guitar*.

This quote is important for understanding Murrayøs revision of the description of Chollyøs sound as described by Mama because here õold plantationsö are described as existing õin slavery times.ö Thus, the narrator associates õold plantationsö with õslavery times,ö as opposed to the subsequent decades of share-cropping. This outlook of Scooterøs, to not be ashamed of the past of slavery, undoubtedly owes much to two outlooks that will be relayed in the following pages, those of the barber Papa Gumbo Willie McWorthy and Soldier Boy Crawford. The formidable entrepreneur McWorthy says, in the context of not allowing himself to be shamed by the Hill Africans, õYeah, my daddy come from off of old Marsterøs old Plantation, and my mammy used to belong to some white folks by the name of Shelby. Hell, wasnøt but just six years between me myself and slavery timesö (83). Crawford goes a step further, asserting his willingness to stand up for himself to the Hill Africans that may try to demean him, and bringing the Germans he had fought in the war into the conversation, suggesting that the Germans during World War I were playing the same game that the Hill Africans are:

> You know what I tell them? The same thing I told them goddamn Germans. Fuck that shit. Letøs go. Them somøiches over there talking about Nigger where your tail at. I said up your mamaøs ass, motherfucker, and this goddamn cold steel bayonet right here up yours. Because thatøs what I say. Donøt make a goddamn bit of difference to me if my goddamn granddaddy was a goddamn tadpole, LETøS GO. Because Iøm the somøich right here ready to go up side your head. Donøt care if my poor old grandmammy wasnøt nothing but a stump hole, LETøS GO. And thatøs exactly the same thing I say when another one of them Hill Africans come trying to make out like his granddady used to be sitting on a solid gold diamond studded stool somewhere on the left-handed side of the Zulu River with his own niggers waiting on him. I say thatøs all right with me. LETøS GO. I say, Man, my old granddaddy was so dumb Old Marster wouldnøt even trust him to pick cotton. I say Old Marster used to say the only thing my poor old granddady was good for was mixing cowshit and horseshit on the compost pile, so maybe thatøs how come Iøm so full of bullshit. BUT THATøS ALL RIGHT WITH ME, LETøS GO. (84)

Scooterøs vernacular environment is thus one in which the adults he looks up to do not hesitate to acknowledge slavery and acknowledge that their parents or grandparents had been slaves ó while rejecting the idea that this somehow bears negatively on them in the present. This separates Murray from the tradition described by Rushdy and also creates a crucial frame for the novels: acknowledgment of slavery without acknowledgement of segregation. This is one feature that makes the novels suggestive of a literature that may have been written if, in Kenneth Warrenøs words, segregation had been throttled in its fetid cradle.

## IV. The Logic, Contours, and Mode of the Picaresque in Murrayøs Fiction

Understanding Murrayøs employment of the picaresque mode is essential to understanding his project: his denial of segregationøs totalizing dominance of life (and the contrast of Jim Crow with the wily pícaro), his formal, intermedial relationship with the blues and jazz, and his commentary on (or at times, counter-statement of) Ellison and *Invisible Man* in particular. One problem of discussing the picaresque outside of its original historical context ó late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Spain ó is that it risks a dehistoricized understanding of the genre. Murray was not concerned with this problem. While his reading in the genre was deep and his understanding of its formal characteristics was thorough (as will be explored below), his own approach to and image of the genre is what scholar of the picaresque Ulrich Wicks would call a modal approach. In the 1970s Wicks was concerned with a problem of criticism posed by a recent group of picaresque-style works in the twentieth century, including *Invisible Man*. Wicks wondered what might be the proper way to understand and interpret narratives that employed formal features of the picaresque while being far removed from late

sixteenth and early seventeenth century Spain, or even eighteenth century England which saw another flowering of the genre. Wicks offers a solution to the problem by distinguishing between the picaresque genre and the picaresque mode. Yet even for Wicks, works that fit the criteria of the genre need not have been written in the early modern period (as is the case for other prominent scholars, understandably so). But the approach he takes is pragmatic and realistic, as there are works that adopt this form at the remove of centuries from the initial development of the form, and so if their forms are to be understood there has to be a procedure and vocabulary to do so. Wicks writes:

> What we want now is a modal generic balance, an awareness of the concrete work or works both from the larger perspective and from the thick of the phenomena. This modal-generic awareness ought to reconcile divergent uses of the term ÷picaresque.ø The concept of a primary fictional mode called ÷picaresqueø can account for both a historically definable genre and a broader tradition that departs from the strict attributes of that genre. A balanced modal-generic approach allows a perspective on fiction that is broad enough to recognize the larger fictional mixtures in any particular work ó ÷picaresque elements in *Don Quijote*,ø for example ó and specific enough to account for a particular group of works that share enough attributes to make them identifiable as belonging to a particular genre, to which *Don Quijote* may not belong. (243)

Wicksøs approach seems eminently reasonable: it does not seek to obscure the historical record, nor does it create an unproductive ban on discussing works as picaresque if they were not written in the early modern period. He goes on to describe what he calls õthe total picaresque situation.ö Wicks goes on to list eight features of the õtotal picaresque situation,ö with the eighth feature, picaresque motifs, having numerous sub-sections. I will focus on these sub-sections of feature eight, briefly, as each of them may be found in Murrayøs novels. This is not a trivial exercise. To a certain extent it is pointless to try to prove that a novel is a novel, a play is a play, or a poem is a poem. What I will be trying to do, as briefly as possible, is demonstrate the depth of Murrayøs

knowledge of what constitutes the picaresque. Commentary on the genre occurs in *The Magic Keys*, in relation to an *Invisible Man*-like novel and in relation to finishing the narrative at hand (Murrayøs four novels). A discussion of genre thus becomes inseparable from the explication of Murrayøs fiction.

Wicks offers eight categories (243-48): 1) dominance of the picaresque fictional mode 2) the panoramic structure (by which he somewhat obscurely means that the pícaro must change careers and start over ó as Scooter does between books three and four when he abandons music in order to try to become a writer) 3) first person-point of view 4) protagonist as pícaro 5) the pícaro-landscape relationship (meaning the pícaroøs movement inside and outside of society and back) 6) a vast gallery of human types 7) parody of other fictional types (romance) and of the picaresque itself (an argument could be made that Murray does parody the picaresque by inserting his pícaro into the lenient world of the bildungsroman ó to paraphrase John S. Wright, as will be discussed below; Murray may also parody the segregation aesthetic in the Will Spradley section of *The Spyglass Tree*) and 8) certain basic themes and motifs. Here are the themes and motifs as identified by Wicks as they appear in Murrayøs fiction:

a) õthe motif of unusual birth or childhoodö — *Train Whistle Guitar* (179-82)

b) õthe trick motifö — The grand and almost imperceptible trick Scooter plays is that his academic and social success is due to his promise made to the dashing rogue and bluesman, Luzana Cholly, thus making him something of a covert agentøs of Chollyøs. His success in

| | |
|---|---|
| | school is not guided by any bourgeois conventionality. |
| c) õthe role playing motifö | *Train Whistle Guitar* (4, 32, 36, 67) |
| d) õthe grotesque or horrible incidentö | *Train Whistle Guitar* (37-49, discovery of a dead body in a swamp) |
| e) õthe ejection motifö | Scooterøs leaving Gasoline Point for college, not to return in volumes two through four. |

Wicks claims õEjection is the pícaroøs second ÷birthø ó it comes before the worldøs first trick on him and is thus a kind of initiation shockö (247). The worldøs first and only trick on Scooter is that one afternoon in college he visits the home of the blues diva Hortense Hightower in order to listen to blues and jazz records only to end up caught up in what had the potential to be a deadly racial conflict (not prompted, incidentally, by any particular formal public policies of Jim Crow; an incident that could have happened had there been no Jim Crow). Hightower is aligned with black restaurateur Giles Cunningham, whose success has sparked the resentment of poor whites, is on the verge of being attacked. Cunningham offers Scooter the option of returning to campus as if nothing has happened, or staying with him and his cadre to fight. Scooter opts to fight, having been emulating the spirit of Cholly and Stagolee Dupas all his life. This is his initiation (and will be discussed at length). The above discussion is not meant to imply that Wicks is the ultimate authority on the picaresque, but rather to help frame the discussion below and to note that the following discussion of the picaresque will be, following Wicks, pragmatic, and yet not

intended to try universalize the particular genre that developed in early modern Spain or deny its historicity.

Luzana Cholly, from another critical perspective, dictates or makes possible the form of the novel, which Murray thought of as picaresque. Like the blues, the picaresque is episodic, and the picaresque, like the blues is often associated with low and roguish elements. For Murray, the picaresque as he understood it was perhaps, because of these similarities, the ideal form through which to try to render the form and spirit of blues in fiction. In the notebook which he worked out ideas for *The Magic Keys*, the problems of the picaresque and particularly the problem of how to end a picaresque narrative were very much on his mind. Murray thought of himself as writing a picaresque narrative specifically. He explained the connections between jazz and the episodic form of picaresque to audience at the MLA Convention in 1996 (on a panel promoting the recently published *Norton Anthology of African American literature*):

> My work is largely based on the same principle of organization as a jazz composition. In other words, itøs not a tightly knit plotí my stories are generally *picaresque* stories. Just as jazz has a vamp or improvised introduction, and then a series of choruses of different kinds; just like the structure of a skyscraper: you haveí the ground floor, then a *series or choruses* or *étages* that go up as far as you can go. How long is it? Well, how high is a skyscraper? Depends on how high as you want it to be ó how long as you want the story to run. And thatøs the way jam sessions go and the way jazz compositions go. (Murray, MLA Panel Comments 01:39:19 ó 01:40:16, emphasis based on the emphasis of his voice)

Though he had a historical understanding of the picaresque genre, or mode, he attempts to give it a particularly modern and American iteration here through aligning it with skyscrapers and jazz. This statement reflects his conclusion that the picaresque was the type of narrative most suited to a fiction self-consciously applying tropes of jazz composition to its structure. But simultaneously, and to my knowledge Murray never claims this, it may also be the narrative

form best suited to eliding segregation, as the pícaro may be allowed to seem ÷invincible,ø slick, or a cool customer. Nothing tragic or comedic has to happen. The protagonist need not be isolated or socially restricted either, as is Janie in the confines of Eatonville after the her marriage to Jody turned negative, or the *Invisible Man* in his living space. Like the true pícaro, Scooter can and does inhabit every level of society on his own terms, even white (though not Southern white) society. Murray takes pains in *The Hero and the Blues* to distinguish tragedy and comedy from farce, but perhaps the farce in his fiction is that the farcical situation never really comes up (for Scooter). When Murrayøs employment of the picaresque is contrasted with John S. Wrightøs reading of *Invisible Man* in relation to the picaresque (below), I hope that the logic of this puzzle begins reveal itself.

Definitions of picaresque that are bandied about in *The Magic Keys*, yet while works discussed in that novel that are labelled as picaresque, such as *Candide* and *Don Quixote*, would not be considered properly picaresque by scholars of the genre, the manner in which Murray actually portrays Scooter does seem to align with the picaresque as classically understood. Alexander A. Parker, in his book *Literature and the Delinquent: The Picaresque Novel in Spain and Europe 1599-1753* (1967), identifies the õdistinguishing feature of the genreö as õthe atmosphere of delinquency.ö[159] This atmosphere of delinquency is created in *Train Whistle Guitar* through Scooterøs admiration of Cholly (an ex-convict, in addition to a gambler and blues man) and then re-circuited by Cholly to re-route Scooterøs energy for delinquency into energy for education. Parker writes:

> The modern novel is born when realism first supplants the fanciful and idealistic romance, namely the novels of chivalry, and later the

[159] Another major scholar of the genre, Claudio Guillén, does not view delinquency in quite the same way. For Guillén, the pícaro is õan occasional delinquentö (138) and practices a õcertain mild form of delinquencyö (141).

> pastoral novels and the pseudo-historical romances. This realism is ushered in with the Spanish picaro who relates his life-story, generally from his childhood, in the form of an autobiography constituting an episodic narrative rather than a unified one. The autobiographical form, although adopted by the majority of the picaresque novelists, is not essential; the distinguishing feature of the genre is the atmosphere of delinquency. This begins in a setting of low life but generally ascends the social scale; the origins of the protagonist are usually disreputable. (5-6)

*Train Whistle Guitar* and Murrayøs subsequent novels contain these features: an atmosphere of delinquency, created by Chollyøs adventures but continuing long beyond Chollyøs (early) disappearance in the novel through the spirit, or attitude, or intangible but real legacy he has bestowed upon Scooter. Scooterøs actions, even when in accord with the rules and expectations of orderly society, are done in the name and under the banner, so to speak, of Cholly. Indeed, following Parker, *Train Whistle Guitar* does begin in õa setting of low life,ö in the rough and tumble world of the Gasoline Point sawmill bottoms, but ascends the social scale in volume two, as Scooter enters a Tuskegee-like college. In *The Seven League Boots*, when, following his success as a musician on the road, he settles in Hollywood to play music for film scores and eventually gets to hob nob with the international jet set. It is in *The Spyglass Tree*, through a different sort of õatmosphere of delinquency,ö that Scooter participates in the chain of the events that lead to him being given a bass fiddle, which becomes his ticket to Hollywood and higher rungs on the (conventional) social scale (which of course, for Scooter, are not necessarily portrayed any more desirable than the sawmill bottoms of Gasoline Point). Finally, the origins of the protagonist, Scooter, are indeed disreputable, as at the end of *Train Whistle Guitar*, when he is perhaps twelve or fourteen years old, he over-hears that his true origins have been hidden from him, as he over-hears that Miss Tee is his biologically mother and Mama and Papa, who have raised him, are his adoptive parents.

In his first chapter Parker laments the general misunderstanding and misapplication of the term to apply to novels that are not really picaresque at all, but merely episodic. (Indeed, Wicks notes his differences with Parker.) Murray (or Scooter), in Parkerøs opinion, would be guilty of doing this in *The Magic Keys*, as Scooter tries to explain Taft Edisonøs *Invisible Man*-like novel in terms of the õpicaresque misadventuresö of õCandide and Don Quixoteö (195) to their mutual friend Carlton õProf Dexö Poindexter, a stand-in for Morteza Drexel Sprague.[160] But while Parker might consider Scooter to have in mind an overly-broad and inexact group of works that constitute the picaresque, the form of Murrayøs work actually hews very close to Parkerøs list of distinguishing features of the genre (if the leap can be made, and I think it can, to understand atmosphere of delinquency continuing abstractly or in spirit after Cholly leaves the narrative in person).

Murrayøs commentary on *Invisible Man* has been discussed in the preceding chapter. But his most extensive commentary on it is probably through the form of his novels. I will be explaining this by building upon an intriguing observation about *Invisible Man* by John S. Wright and extending his observation to Murrayøs novels. I believe Wrightøs reading of *Invisible Man* reveals a clue about Murrayøs thought process and my extension of his observation will ultimately clear up several mysteries, misconceptions, and general puzzlement about Murrayøs protagonist. Wright observes:

[160] Incidentally, it is through Prof Dex that Scooter undergoes his third and final re-naming, which he reveals toward the end of *The Magic Keys*. õI would say, Hey, man and hey, Prof, but never hey, Dex, and he never did call me Scooter. He called me Don. Because from our Composition 102 self-portrait paper he had found out that when my roommate and I were not make-believe Belle Époque, Montmartre bohemian offspring the likes of François Villon, we were the local versions of Oxford and/or Cambridge dons, which was not only appropriately academic but also had the titular ring of jazz, kings, dukes, counts, earls, and barons as well as tongue-in-cheek- overtones of Don Juan and Don Quixoteö (193). This apparently occurred in *The Spyglass Tree*, before he was renamed õSchoolboyö in *The Seven League Boots*, but it is told in *The Magic Keys*.

> What indeed is programmatically ridiculous about the situation of Ellisonøs *Invisible Man* derives from his being, functionally, the bourgeois hero of a bildungsroman displaced, incongruously, into the realm of the picaresque. His apprenticeship to life and leadership, in the lenient logic of the bildungsroman, would have allowed him numerous mistakes of judgment and repeated chances to right himself without experiencing undue suffering. Instead, his ÷educationø is hyperbolized, by the brutal logic of the picaresque, into a chronicle of comic catastrophe; and he is caught in a labyrinth where his errors unerringly cause him pain and where only a true picaro, who is *born* knowing[161] and needs no education would not err. (105)

The situation in Murrayøs novels is actually the reverse of the scenario that Wright has brilliantly identified here. If the Invisible Man is the õbourgeois hero of a bildungsroman displaced, incongruously, into the realm of the picaresque,ö then Scooter is the low-born/born-knowing rogue of the picaresque displaced, incongruously into õlenient logic of the bildungsromanö and therefore, Scooterøs story appears to be one of the most conflict-free stories in the history of literature. It is hard to imagine a character with more lucky breaks than Scooter and fewer lucky breaks than the Invisible Man. Everything comes easily for Scooter: school, professional musicianship, romantic encounters, social interactions. As Wright notes above, the true pícaro does not need an education. *Train Whistle Guitar* is in some sense about Scooterøs education. But Scooterøs academic education largely consists of amassing trivial or encyclopedic knowledge. He needs no education in the ÷ways of the worldø as the Invisible Man does. The lack of awkward situations he encounters, it seems to me, is not because Murray was viewing the

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[161] õBorn knowingö is a phrase that appears several times in Murrayøs oeuvre, though not in the precise sense meant by Wright. Gaynelle Whitlow, a character in *The Seven League Boots*, and something of a rogue herself (in addition to being Murrayøs most realistically rendered female character) tells Scooter she was õborn knowingö more about the South than an academically trained historian working to design antebellum sets for Hollywood films (244). Murray probably did not associate the term with roguery per se, because he uses it to praise his wife, Mozelle (whom Gaynelle Whitlow is *not* an *a clef* representation of) in the dedication of *South to a Very Old Place*. In *Train Whistle Guitar*, Scooter says he was õborn knowingö not to make fun of the elderly (80). The phrase also appears in Faulknerøs õThe Bear,ö a work which Murray read (and taught) for forty years, but also not in the exact sense used by Wright: õthis boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowingö (237). With all that being said, Murray would undoubtedly understand Wrightøs term in relation to a characterøs õhipnessö or õunsquarenessö by which Murray did not mean popular or fashionable, but knowing.

world through rose-colored lenses, but because Scooter is true pícaro displaced into the languid world of the bildungsroman, and thus functions in situations that are the opposite of those that face the Invisible Man. Scooterøs easy, casual success and utterly smooth social paths has puzzled some readers of the three novels after *Train Whistle Guitar*, and has at times has created quandaries for even the most sympathetic readers. In *The Seven League Boots* Scooterøs time dating a famous white actress is so incident-free that it becomes rather dull, until Gaynelle Whitlowøs appearance in chapter thirty-five provides rhetorical pushback to and puts rhetorical pressure on various aspects of Scooterøs charmed life. (Perhaps the chapters preceding Whitlow are something of a set up for her wit.) But when thought of as an inversion of the predicament of the Invisible Man, it is clear how Scooterøs coasting through adult life occurs because he is a picaresque rogue displaced in a bildungsroman: his roguery, cleverness, and the resourcefulness of the born-knowing is not always perceived ó perhaps it is never perceived ó because he does not need to draw on its account, or does so in the most subtle possible manner.

Mikhail Bakhtinøs work provides a complimentary frame to Wrightøs for understanding Murrayøs novels in relation to *Invisible Man*, a relation in which they were consciously composed (as discussed in the previous chapter). Bakhtin claims õProse offers two responses to high pathos and to seriousness and conventionality of any sort: the gay deception of the rogue ó a lie justified because directed to liars ó and stupidity ó also justified, as it is the failure to understand a lieö (404). The õlieö in this case of Murray and Ellison is white supremacy, the monologic lies of Jim Crow; or particularizing the official de jure aspects of Jim Crow, the ÷monologic sign of the despot,ø to combine the terminology of Bakhtin and Deleuze. Murrayøs lie directed at liars says, in effect, ÷Jim Crow didnøt matter. Jim Crow didnøt mean anything to me. I proceeded as if it did not existø and the õgay deceptionö of his rogue, Scooter, is the

narration of deceptively charmed life[162]. For Murray, a variation on the lie itself would be protest fiction that without perhaps intending to, reinforces the lie; such as, for Murray, Richard Wrightøs fiction.[163] The Invisible Manøs failure to understand the lie for most of the narrative, on the other hand, is the cause of his problems. First his grandfather and later Bledsoe tried to teach him to accept the lie and work within the lie, but he fails to recognize the lie as a lie until the Epilogue. Meanwhile, he almost grasps, but allows to slip away, the alternative to the lie in the musical discourse of the Legba-figure Peter Wheatstraw. Scooter, on the other hand, as a child, recognized the alternative to the lie in the Legba-figure of Luzana Cholly, who establishes the narrativeøs õclefö of roguery.

Bakhtin continues in õDiscourse in the Novelö with another way of looking at the picaresque protagonist that, in many ways, also applies to Scooter. Bakthin writes:

> As opposed to the hero of novels of trial and temptation, the hero of picaresque novels is faithful to nothing, he betrays everything ó but he is nevertheless true to himself, to his *own* orientation, which scorns pathos and is full of scepticism. A new concept of human personality comes to fruition, one that is not rhetorical but not confessional either, still groping for a discourse of its own and preparing the ground for it. (408)

Indeed, Scooter is, in a sense, õfaithful to nothingö but his own orientation (through which he remains faithful to his promise to Luzana Cholly). He is not portrayed as being õfaithfulö (as in say, a faithful correspondent) to Mama, Papa, Miss Tee, or anyone else in Gasoline Point, even if he remembers them fondly, he is never portrayed as communicating with them (even as the narrative device of connecting characters through making telephone calls is frequently used in

[162] In his 1985 Wesleyan talk Murray puts a variation of the õlieö in the mouth of a lion, a lying lion: õSocial science is up there like a lion in the path. You know, it says, ÷Black boy, sing the blues.ø And I say ÷You donøt even know what the blues are about. Blues is good-time music. You think itøs lamentation. I know better.ø Just like every Baptist preacher knows betterö (OøMeally 572).

[163] Cf. *The Hero and Blues*, as quoted previously, in which Murray rhetorically asks if Richard Wrightøs work is really pleading õHave mercy, Massa?ö

*The Magic Keys*, Scooter never calls home). He is not faithful to Little Buddy; they grow apart. He is not faithful to the Bossmanøs band; he leaves it on a lark to work on Hollywood film scores, to the disappointment of his band mates. He is not portrayed as being faithful (in the sexual sense) to the woman he wishes to marry, Eunice Townsend. Though they are together when the narrative ends, he has had numerous affairs while traveling without her. The õfaithfulnessö that he demonstrates to the tap dancer Royal Highness, the drummer Joe States, the writer Taft Edison, and his old roommate T. Jerome Jefferson, is akin to his faithfulness to Luzana Cholly; for they all share a similar worldview and orientation. Bakhtinøs sense of the pícaro as being neither rhetorical nor confessional and groping toward a discourse also describes Scooter.

Thus, Murrayøs fiction may be looked at in a sense as an extended, subtle commentary on *Invisible Man*. As I have suggested before, if *Invisible Man* is, following Kenneth Warren, õthe apotheosis of the Negro novel,ö then it also looks forward to and contains a model for the fiction that will follow it (leaving aside for the moment that that fiction, Hurstonøs, in a sense already preceded it, though not on its scale of reception, through 1952). The Ellison-Murray call-response game (call of Ellison, response of Murray) is crucial for understanding why Murrayøs fiction took the form that it took.

## Chapter Five: Sound, Subjectivity, and Resistance in Albert Murray's Fiction: A Close Reading of Key Scenes in *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree*

### I. Vernacular and Official History: The Bad Man Tradition and the Founders of the United States in the õHistory Lessonsö Chapter of *Train Whistle Guitar*

> Why donøt you, by the way, do a short story about that bad cracker cop who got so puffed up with pride and recklessness that he kicked the keys off the piano? The son of a bitch, couldnøt he see that was sacrilege? Iød have blown him down my damn self!
>
> -Ellison to Murray, February 9, 1952 (*Trading Twelves* 31), on a segment of *Train Whistle Guitar* that will be the focal point of this section

One of the most important moments in Murrayøs fiction, important for understanding his approach to representing ethnic strife (though not de jure segregation) in the South, along with representing African American resistance to white aggression (and how this relates to aural phenomena), and the African American social enjoyment of music in the context of nightlife occurs from pages 123-138 of *Train Whistle Guitar* in what I am calling (since it is unnamed and unnumbered) the õStagolee Dupasö chapter. The goal for my interpretation of this crucial chapter, which will be broadly interrogated through the work of Jacques Attali (relating to music and violence) and Norman and Williams (in relation to defining the segregation aesthetic), is to try to understand what would appear to be Murrayøs alternative strategy for representing the economy of violence within the dual realities of segregation and assertive black resistance to a Jim Crow system that is only hinted in whispers, allusions, and euphemism at scattered moments at across Murrayøs four novels. This resistance becomes re-conjured through the soundscape. This chapter has not received anywhere near the amount of attention that the õLuzana Chollyö chapter has, so as far as I can determine, this will be the most comprehensive reading of the chapter to date. As it is monumentally significant in Murrayøs oeuvre, I will attempt to set up my

reading of it as thoroughly as possible, which will entail a somewhat lengthy explication of the õHistory Lessonsö chapter.

I will then discuss key sections of *The Spyglass Tree* which are among the most important in Murrayøs fiction for understanding his approach to resistance to Jim Crow, for which the Stagolee Dupas chapter in *Train Whistle Guitar*, which happens about ten years earlier in the timeline of the narrative, sets the tone and provides precedent for. Before embarking on my discussions of these chapters, I must first discuss Murrayøs representation of the õbad manö tradition in African American folk culture, on which Stagloeeøs moniker draws, as well as the õmoral hard manö tradition in African American folk culture. In the õHistory Lessonsö chapter of the novel the oral history tradition in which the õbad manö figures feature prominently is contrasted with Scooterøs simultaneous appreciation of the early history of the United States and the texts that formed the basis of the new nation. Before this, I must briefly discuss the image of boxer Jack Johnson (1878-1946) in *Train Whistle Guitar*.[164]

In Lawrence W. Levineøs *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (1977) he distinguishes between the õbad manö tradition (Railroad Bill, Aaron Harris, Stagolee) and the õmoral hard manö tradition (John Henry, Jack Johnson, Joe Louis) (407-440). Both traditions include historical and legendary figures. In *Train Whistle Guitar*, Murray understands and replicates this difference with Scooter first identifying with Johnson and Luzana Cholly (sort of a combination of bad man and moral hard man), but

[164] The discussion of Scooterøs relationship with the õbad manö oral narrative tradition will frame my discussion of the Stagolee chapter, which will in turn frame my discussion of *The Spyglass Tree*. *The Spyglass Tree*, incidentally, has not been written about anywhere, as far as I can tell, beyond the book reviews which greeted its publication in 1991. There have been numerous articles, book chapters, and dissertation chapters on various aspects of *Train Whistle Guitar* but none whatsoever, to the best of my knowledge, on Murrayøs subsequent three novels, of which *The Spyglass Tree* is the most conventional as a novel and will probably yield the widest array of interpretive possibilities of the three in the future. Thus, what will follow from this necessarily lengthy reading of important scenes in *Train Whistle Guitar*, which establish precedent for action taken in *The Spylgass Tree*, is the first sustained scholarly discussion of *The Spyglass Tree* (as late 2014).

also respecting and admiring Stagolee Dupas, primarily great musician and verbal artist who simultaneously lives up to his nickname (that of the legendary bad man Stagolee). Scooter excels in school and later at college through the promise he makes to Luzana Cholly to õuse your head like the smart white folks,ö but when he comes face to face with the prospect of having to support fellow African Americans in a gun battle against a white mob, he does not hesitate to let the example of Stagoleeøs confrontation (that heød witnessed approximately ten years earlier) with a white sheriff inform his choice of action. Scooter risks everything in that moment: his standing in the unnamed Tuskegee-like college, as well as his life, to potentially adopt the bad manøs course of action when circumstances demand such action.

For Levine, the bad man is an outlaw while the moral hard man is a culture hero. Levine is the ideal source on this topic in relation to Murrayøs fiction because Murrayøs deployment of these figures closely approximates Levineøs categories. Levineøs scholarship is comprehensive and sympathetic to (and admiring of) African American traditions, and Murray admired and respected Levineøs work and owned a copy of *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. Murray begins Scooterøs education by emulating moral hard men, like Luzana Cholly and Jack Johnson (whom Levine discusses at length) before also later learning about the bad man tradition. Scooter will then synthesize and understand that personally entering one tradition or the other at various moments may be necessary actions that circumstances might require at different moments.

Luzana Cholly, whom Scooter looks up to and tries to hobo on a freight train along with Little Buddy Marshall in emulation of, is not quite a bad man, but rather more of a moral hard man, though perhaps he may be said to be one or the other at various times. It would seem that he purposefully straddles both traditions to some extent, as Scooter will as well. But Luzana Cholly is much closer to Levineøs image of Jack Johnson (outside the ring): õa manipulator of

words, a master of the verbal assaultö (433). Scooter consciously exempts Luzana Cholly from the conventional bad man tradition, at least as Cholly seems to be living his life while Scooter knows him (having been released from an earlier stint on the chain gang):

> Mama used to say he was donøt-carified, and Little Buddy Marshall used to call him hellfied Mister Goddamn hellfied Luzana ass-kicking Cholly; and he didnøt mean hell-defying, or hell-fired either. Because you couldnøt say he was hell-defying because you couldnøt even say he ever really went for bad, not even when he was whooping that holler he was so notorious for. Perhaps that was somewhat hell-defying to some folks, but even so what it really meant as much as anything else was I donøt give a goddamn if I am hell-defying, which is something nobody driven by hell fire ever had time to say. (12-13)

After Cholly catches Scooter and Little Buddy trying to run away from home, he corrects and re-routes their ambitions, confirming the portrait above as someone more concerned with the performance of a hell-defying persona than someone who actually raised hell (even if Cholly remained in defiance of bourgeois social norms and expectations; he is more of a merry rogue than a mean figure to be afraid of). In the next chapter, after having his lifeøs priorities shifted by Chollyøs lecture by the railroad tracks, Scooter emphasizes his personal identification with Levineøs culture hero/moral hard man, Jack Johnson. Somewhat alarmingly, Scooter describes being a target of lynching as something like a badge of honor, but he is still about ten years old, after all, and may not fully grasp what that really means. Much like in Joyceøs *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the voice, consciousness, and worldview of the narrator develop along with his age. While working out with a punching bag in his yard, Scooter explains his identification with õthe nimblest footed quickest witted Jack of them allö:

> Because when the ku klux klan got mad and put on its white robes and started burning crosses just because somebody said bring me my coffee as black and strong as Jack Johnson and my scrambled eggs all beat up like poor old Jim Jeffries, I was the one they

> wanted to come and lynch. I was not as black or as big as Jack Johnson and I was never going to have all of my hair shaved off, but all the same as soon as I stepped into the prize ring I was the only who had set out from Galveston, Texas, not only to see the sights of the nation and seek my fortune wherever the chances were but also to become the undisputed champion of the world. (32)

After describing more of Johnsonøs exploits, he continues,

> I knew that the newspapers were all set to declare him [Steve Ketchell, an adversary of Johnsonøs] the undisputed champion if he would bring back old John L. Sullivanøs color line, which I crossed every time I stepped into the workout circle around the punching bag. (33)

This serves as a reminder that professional boxing (from Johnsonøs fight with Jim Jeffries in 1910) was one of the first spheres of integration in the United States, long before jazz (officially integrated through The Benny Goodman Quartet, 1937), baseball (1947), or the military (1948-1950s). Murray subtly contrasts õJohn L. Sullivanøs color lineö with what it cannot help but call to mind: Du Boisø color line, or the global color line. Sullivanøs color line was designed to protect the potential inferiority of white boxers from black competition. Sullivanøs color line refers to the refusal of boxing champion John L. Sullivan (1858-1918) to compete against black boxers. Through imagining himself as Jack Johnson, Scooter performs a fantasy of crossing one sort of color line, while never admitting that other color lines exist, are a matter of public policy (segregation) and custom (Jim Crow) and are enforced by the state. Sullivanøs color line, of course, only mirrors the one that was mandated by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, and so, metaphorically, though this may be too much of an extension, Scooter crosses that one as well, via his imagination, even if he will not narrate any details about what that color line practically means for African Americans. Still, most importantly, linking Johnson and Cholly (in adjacent chapters), when read through Levineøs assertion that Johnsonøs (and John Henryøs)

image represent a distinct separate tradition from that of the crime-and-mayhem creating bad men of legend, establishes Scooterøs primary identification with the õmoral hard manö figure. And this, incidentally, occurs through sound: Scooter õbecomesö Jack Johnson when Little Buddy says õchingalingö in imitation of a boxing bell (32). But all this is not to say Scooter rejects the bad man figure altogether, as he valorizes various bad men of folk history and legend in the crucial õHistory Lessonsö section. Even as he realizes that he is not exactly cut from the same cloth as the bad men, he respects their exploits (and the narratives of their exploits) while understanding (through the later Stagolee Dupas chapter) that at times it may be necessary proceed as they would have when faced determined white violence.

The õHistory Lessonsö section comprises pages 50-75 of *Train Whistle Guitar*. It contains a revised and expanded version of the short story õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö (55-75) which was the second piece of fiction that Murray published. It appeared in *Harper's* magazine in February, 1969 (59-64).[165]

The õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö segment as published in *Harper's* is a significant vernacular commentary, as well as a jazzy extension and elaboration, on the crucial statement in the Epilogue of *Invisible Man* about embracing the principles on which the United States was founded despite the personal moral failings of the framers of those principles. The section first published in *Harper's* consists in Scooter listening to his elders discuss the original leaders of the United States. In version in the novel, legendary bad men of African American folklore are

[165] õHistory Lessonsö is one of the most widely anthologized works by Murray. It was included in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* in 1996. Prior to that, the õStonewall Jacksonøs Waterlooö segment of it, was included in Quandra Prettyman Stadlerøs anthology *Out of Our Lives: A Selection of Contemporary Black Fiction* (1975) and prior to that, more shockingly, in *A Native Sons Reader: Selections By Outstanding Black American Authors of The Twentieth Century*, edited by Edward Margolies (1970). Wrightøs *Native Son* was probably Murrayøs least-favorite book by any African American, and one of his most disliked books generally, so it is surprising that he allowed his work to be included in an anthology with the words õNative Sonsö in its title. But, the year was 1970 and Murray was still trying to gain traction for his unusual fiction.

discussed first, followed by the discussion of early United States history that appears in the original version. The novel thus frames both traditions, vernacular/legendary/in-resistance-to-the-state and historical/official/involving-the-creation-of-the-state, as crucial to the formation of Scooterøs unusual outlook and consciousness, suspended between history and legend, between the establishment of authority and resistance to that authority. I will briefly discuss one major, illustrative revision and addition to the text between publication in *Harper's* and the publication of the novel, before moving on to discussing Murrayøs riff on the epilogue to *Invisible Man* (one of his most commentaries on Ellisonøs work) and finally, Scooterøs immersion in the bad man oral traditions, which it would appear are designed to help the reader process the end of the Stagolee Dupas chapter (while commenting on the murkiness of all history, both official and vernacular). Finally, this will be significant as well in understanding Murrayøs overall aesthetic strategy in his novels in general.

First, I will examine some important revisions. The 1969 text reads as follows:

> They would be talking, and, aware of the roof-sanding night weather outside, I would be listening, and above them on the mantelpiece was the old-fashioned pendulum clock, which was Papaøs heirloom from that old Manor of antebellum columns and calico kitchens in which his mulatto grandmother had herself been an inherited slave until Shermanøs March to the Sea. (*Harper's* February 1969, 59)

The 1974 text reads as follows:

> They would be talking and rocking and smoking and sometimes drinking, and, aware of the roof sanding, tree-shivering night weather outside, I would be listening and above us on the scalloped mantelpiece was the old-fashioned pendulum clock, which was Papaøs heirloom from that ancestral mansion of ante-bellum columns and gingham crisp kitchens in which his mulatto grandmother had herself been an inherited slave until Shermanøs March to the Sea but which I still remember as the Mother Goose clock; because it struck not only the hours but also the quarter-

> hours with the soft clanging sound you remember when you remember fairy tale steeples and the rainbow colors of nursery rhyme cobwebs; because it hickory dickory docked and clocked like a brass spittoon metronome above the steel blue syncopation of guitar string memories; because it hockey-tock rocked to jangle like such honky tonk piano mallets as echo midnight freight train distances beyond patch-quilt horizons and bedside windowpanes. (56)

The change from õold Manorö to õancestral mansionö is significant; suggesting both that Papa may be descended from an owner of that plantation in the distant past, as well as from slaves[166]. õShermanøs March to the Sea,ö a military campaign as opposed to a political act or document (such documents are valorized later in the section), is credited as the cause of Papaøs grandmotherøs emancipation. Thus, though the foundational documents of the United States are valorized later in the chapter, there is in this early statement a subtle recognition that the power of force is sometimes necessary to bring out the full meaning of the words in document. The reference to Shermanøs March also serves to suggest that Papaøs family came from Georgia, while also establishing that in the logic of Jim Crow, Papa was in fact õblackö and not õpassingö for black, (as will be discussed below) though he could easily have passed for white, as will be discussed below.

In the next sentence, added to the 1974 text, after the clock has been situated in historical time and given a clear provenance from the õancestral mansion,ö it is also situated in another time, a time of narrative and romance, as it becomes õthe Mother Goose clockö as well. By adding that the clock is also a quasi-mythic õthe Mother Goose clockö in addition to emphasizing its objecthood as an õheirloomö and therefore, an item acquired through the back-breaking labor

[166] This raises an interesting question. Was the õheirloomö stolen during the chaos/anarchy of Shermanøs March to the Sea or was it bestowed at some other time? Is õheirloomö a euphemism here?

of slaves, Murray foreshadows the juxtaposition of legend and history; African American oral folklore and the official history of õhistry-book whitefolksö (69).

Murray thus creates a strong parallel argument with thesis XVI of Walter Benjaminøs õTheses on the Philosophy of History,ö wherein Benjamin writes: õA historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the ÷eternalø image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the pastö (262)[167]. Benjaminøs definition of the difference between õhistoricismö and õhistorical materialismö nicely captures a paradox not only with the description of the clock and the õHistory Lessonsö chapter but of Murrayøs fiction overall: because Scooter will straddle the divide. He wants Scooter to be firmly and unequivocally grounded in African American vernacular cultures, communities, and historical time while, partially because of his hatred for segregation and subsequent refusal to portray its existence, he desires for Scooter to be a universally adequate metaphor and thus exempt not from the impact of racial strife but from historical de jure segregation. This is parallel to Murrayøs statement quoted earlier in this chapter in which he says, in effect, that he does not write about ethnicity but yet does not want anyone to be thought of as a greater authority on African American ethnicity than him. Traversing the razor-like border is one of the major challenges that Murray set up for himself in his fiction.

The other important addition to the section is the musical õsingsongsayingö (Murrayøs term) in the description of the clockøs otherwise perhaps unnoticed musicality. The clock would

[167] Benjaminøs Thesis XV deals with the uncoordinated and simultaneous attacks on clocks in Paris during the July Revolution of 1830. The revolutionaries wished to stop the clocks of Paris. Murray makes Scooter imagine two timelines, historical and mythic, thus while stopping neither, Scooterøs imagination can toggle from one to the other. Murrayøs dual-positioning of the clock on two temporal registers makes this section seem to interlock intriguingly with Benjaminøs theses XV and XVI.

õjangle like such honky tonk piano mallets as echo midnight freight train distancesö because, just like the blues and jazz musicians who perceive musical analogues in the trainøs sounds and this re-present musicalized renderings of those sounds, the narrator perceives musical analogues in the noises made by the workings of the clock. The chain of signification from clock noises to piano mallets to suggestions of distant train sounds situates Scooterøs imagination as working alongside those musicians he admires, Luzana Cholly and Stagolee Dupas, and later, the Bossman, whose blues riffs and structures are inspired by the sounds of the train. Murray is also keen to show his characters existing in post-bellum worlds that share a soundscapes with the world the slaves. Thus, the clock that Scooter hears and reimagines through his (1920s) train-filled soundscape is the same clock that Papaøs grandmother would have heard in the antebellum period. (Murray also fervently rejected the alleged house slave/field slave dichotomy or conflict.)

Before moving on to the chapterøs commentary on the epilogue to *Invisible Man*, it will be important to point out that in õHistory Lessonsö Murray is making a very significant comment on Ellisonøs second novel (which Ellison shared with Murray extensively as he was writing it) and on desegregation and integration more generally. Kenneth Warren writes in his 2005 essay õChaos Not Quite Controlled: Ellisonøs Uncompleted Transit to Juneteenthö that õThe question at the heart of Ellisonøs unfinished novel was, why would someone who didnøt have to be a Negro choose to become ÷one of usø? Blissøs tortured career was intended as an answer because the alternative to become ÷one of usø was self-destruction and self-denialö (199). It appears to me that Murray might have thought that Ellison engaged certain topics too obsessively, especially those related to desegregation. (This is evident, as discussed in a previous chapter, in Murrayøs playful, agile dismissal of Norman Mailer when juxtaposed with Ellisonøs heavy-handed and angry responses to Mailer.)

In õHistory Lessonsö Murray provides an answer, drawn from his own life experience, to the conundrum that obsessed Ellison, which Warren relays above: why would or should a white person pass for black if one did not have to. Murrayøs adoptive father, Hugh Murray, who closely resembled William Faulkner and could easily have passed for white, is the model for Papa/Whit in *Train Whistle Guitar*. Scooterøs adoptive father creates an atmosphere that places family and community ahead of monetary gain, and the imperatives of the ethnic management policies state apparatus. When shopping one day with Papa in downtown Mobile, Scooter overhears Papaøs friendly conversation (õthey were laughing and talkingö) with a white man Papa knew from somewhere:

> I heard the man say Papa was a fool for being a durned old niggie when he could be a wyat man. Hell Whit you wyat as I am any durned day of the week be durned if you ainøt, and Papa just shook his head and said You donøt understand, Pete. (61)

This is how Murray addresses the question at the heart of Ellisonøs novel. Ellison spends thousands of tortured pages pondering the problem via fascinating but elaborately contrived scenarios (i.e., involving Hickman and Bliss), but Murrayøs life experience presented an answer both deceptively more simple and emotionally more complex. Of course, Pete could not have known that Whit did in fact have a mulatto grandmother (in the novel, it is not known if Hugh Murray did). And so another level of commentary here suggests that if Whit is as õwyatö as Pete õany durned day of the week,ö then Pete might not actually be as wyat as he thinks he is.

In the following discussion here I will reverse the order of the õHistory Lessonsö chapter and begin with the discussion of United States history, which in its way forms a commentary on the epilogue of *Invisible Man*, and then proceed to the discussion of the bad men legends that preceded it, and from there move on to Murrayøs own Stagolee Dupas, who took his nickname

from the legendary bad man Stagolee. In the Epilogue to *Invisible Man*, the Invisible Manøs ruminations on his grandfatherøs cryptic dying words leads him to speculate on the disconnect between the abstract ideas of the original leaders of the United States and their historical moral failings:

> Could he have meant ó hell, he must have meant the principle, that we were to affirm the principle on which the country was built and not the men, or at least not the men who did the violence. Did he mean say ÷yesø because he knew that the principle was greater than the men, greater than the numbers and the vicious power and all the methods used to corrupt its name? Did he mean to affirm the principle, which they themselves had dreamed into being out of the chaos and darkness of the feudal past, and which they had violated and compromised to the point of absurdity even in their own corrupt minds? Or did he mean that we had to take the responsibility for all of it, for the men as well as the principle, because we were the heirs who must use the principle because no other fitted our needs? Not for the power or for vindication, but because we, with the given circumstance of our origin, could only thus find transcendence? Was is that we of all, we most of all, had to affirm the principle, the plan in whose name we had been brutalized and sacrificed ó not because we would always be weak nor because we were afraid or opportunistic, but because we were older than they, in the sense of what it took to live in the world with others and because they had exhausted in us, some ó not much, but some ó of the human greed and smallness, yes, and the fear and superstition that had kept them running. (Oh, yes, theyøre running too, running all over themselves). (574)

As discussed previously, Murrayøs fiction frequently comments on Ellisonøs fiction or essays in a more loose, vernacular style than Ellisonøs, in a manner analogous to jazz improvisations on Ellisonøs themes. An important moment that sets up the narratorøs crucial closing insight in *Invisible Man*, his insight that the African American experience might be in some ways in translatable or exist in metaphorical relation to aspects of the white American experience (or more broadly, ÷anyoneøsø experience, as õspeak for youö suggests) is expressed above in his reflections on the founders of the United States. The narrator foreshadows his forthcoming

suggestion that his tale may have universal applicability in the last parenthetical statement quoted above õ(í theyøre running tooí ).ö Affirming the principles of the United States despite the biographical shortcomings of those who framed those principles were important themes that Murray and Ellison discussed throughout their careers (as did Du Bois, for that matter). Through those themes, the emphasis on the recovery of the founding principles of the United States (parallel with the recovery of black aural/oral cultures) they engage in a kind of Levinasian responsibility-for-the-other by accepting the idea of the United States while inviting whites to explore the potential ÷blacknessø of their own experience. On several occasions in 1996 (published and/or recorded) Murray compares the Constitution of the United States to a jazz arrangement and adds, crucially, that how it õsoundsö depends on õwho is in the band.ö[168] In *The Omni-Americans* Murray writes of what õthe folk wisdom of the fugitive slave and the Reconstruction freedman took for granted long ago: *The Declaration of Independence at the Constitution are the social, economic, and political heritage of all Americans*ö (43-44, emphasis in original). Murray undoubtedly agreed with Ellison, but sought a more vernacular frame for the insights that they shared (exemplified by Sawmill Turnerøs monologue toward the end of the chapter[169]). Thus, in the õHistory Lessonsö section of *Train Whistle Guitar*, after having discussed legendary history (the bad man tradition) and legendarily-inflected official history (i.e., U.S. history from an African American vernacular perspective, with strong Biblical overtones)

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[168] Murray made this point at the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* panel at MLA in 1996 and also in an interview for *PBS Newshour* with Charlayne Hunter-Gault in 1996. He said to Hunter-Gault: õThe Constitution of the United States is very much like a jazz arrangement. It has vamp, you know, the preamble has a vamp, then you have a series of choruses, you know, and how it sounds depends on who's in the band.ö For what itøs worth, this also got a good laugh at the MLA panel (a laugh as if in recognition of the paradox of how obvious and yet not-at-all-obvious the observation is).

[169] Scooter narrates the wealthy black dandy Sawmill Turnerøs ÷history lessonø monologue as follows: õHe peeled off a crisp one-dollar bill and held it up and said, Old George Washington is number one because he was first in war and first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen. He got it started. And Old Abe Lincoln. (He held up a five-dollar bill.) Came along later on and had to save the Union. Old Alexander Hamilton didnøt get to be the President, but he was in there amongst them when they started talking about how they were going to handle the money, and here he is. (He pulled off a ten-dollar bill.)ö (73). It goes on through Benjamin Franklin and the hundred dollar bill.

the narrator bridges folk history (or underground, alternative history) with state-sanctioned history as he explains his facility with foundational political texts of the United States:

> That was also when I used to love to recite the Declaration of Independence, and the Gettysburg Address for them; and I could also recite the Preamble to the Constitution and part of the Emancipation Proclamation; and I could also quote from the famous speeches of Patrick Henry and James Otis and Citizen Tom Paine; and I knew all kinds of sayings from *Poor Richard's Almanac*. (68)

Scooter seems to enjoy the language and rhetoric of these texts as much as he enjoys the stories of the bad men Stagolee and Railroad Bill, for Scooter ultimately is an appreciator of words and thus, through his appreciation of rhetoric, sound and narrative, a connector of diverse American traditions that segregation would deny. The African American dimension of these canonical texts Scooter knows how to recite is understood implicitly. Implicit, if incredibly and almost imperceptibly subtle in this discussion is the idea that segregation is a nineteenth century policy and whiteness a construction that became more entrenched in the second half of the nineteenth century; certainly not yet solidified in those early (eighteenth century) documents that help to form Scooterøs outlook. Yet segregation, even if it is not called that and is only hinted at and again obscured[170] by indirection and euphemism quickly enters the minds of the adults.

The setting is informal. It is a get-together of relaxed, alcohol-drinking adults; friends of Scooterøs parents, on a rainy night, at which Scooter, as the only child present, becomes the center of attention. Just after the quotation above, Scooter transitions to inform the reader that not only is he well-schooled in the canonical texts of Patrick Henry, Tom Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln, et al, but that his school apparently celebrates National Negro History Week, which was founded by Carter G. Woodson in 1926.

[170] That is to say, obscured as with the discussions of it relating to Soldier Boy Crawfordøs commentary on Paris, discussed in the previous chapter.

Since Murray was born in 1916 and the novel is highly autobiographical, there is reason to suspect by virtue of the definite article that the text may refer to the very first National Negro History Week in 1926, as it refers to õtheö National Negro History Week pageant, as opposed to õaö or õthe annualö pageant. By juxtaposing Scooterøs facility with the canonical texts with texts that at that time would have been considered sub-canonical, he is uniting African American history with the textbook version of American history at that time:

> That boy can just about preach that thing right now, Mister Jeff Jefferson said one night after I had recited the William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass parts from the National Negro History Week pageant.
>
> That boy can talk straight out of a dictionary when he want to, Mister Big Martin said looking at me but talking to everybody.
>
> It just do you good to hear that kind of talk.
>
> Whitefolks need to hear some talk like that.
>
> The whitefolks the very one said all that, Jeff.
>
> What kind of whitefolks talking like that?
>
> Histry-book whitefolks.
>
> What kind of histry-book whitefolks?
>
> Whitefolks in that same book that child reading.
>
> I ainøt never heard no whitefolks believing nothing like that in all my born days.
>
> Whitefolks printed that book, didnøt they?
>
> I donøt care who printed that book, thatøs freedom talk.
>
> Well, the histry book whitefolks got up the Constitution, didnøt they?
>
> Yeah, and there was some histry book blackfolks in there somewhere too, you can just about bet

> on thatí .The very ones to come up with iron was them royal black Ethiopians.
>
> I know Iøm right, Mister Jeff said, And I still say these whitefolks need to hear some of that kind of gospel. These ainøt no histry book whitefolks around here and this ainøt no histry. This ainøt nothing but just a plain old everyday mess!
>
> Trying to keep the black man down.
>
> All whitefolks ainøt like that, Phil.
>
> Yeah, but them that is. (68-70)

The õplain old everyday messö is of course the reality of Jim Crow regime; the official policy actions and prescriptions of segregation and the unofficial but no less real unfairness and brutality of Jim Crow. From here Scooter segues into empathy for the ancestors of the whites and implicit connection of the daring of the (mostly white) Continental soldiers and the fugitive slaves, whose bravery in being willing to tackle both the wilderness and potential slave catchers Murray celebrates in numerous pieces and interviews. After the discussion of õhistry-book whitefolksö Scooter continues his reading that evening and encounters another kind of histry-book white person: the (probably poor) and now-anonymous soldier fighting for an idea of freedom (leaving aside for a moment classic and more recent economic interpretations of the motivations of the leaders[171]). Scooter continues his narration of the evening:

> I was reading about how the Redcoats were wining and dining and dancing warm in Philadelphia while the ragtag bobtail Continental Army was starving and freezing in makeshift huts and hovels, and about how General George Washington himself had to get out and personally whip slackers and stragglers and would-be deserters back into the ranks with the flat of his sword. All of which was what Give me liberty or give me death really meant, which was

[171] In *The Spyglass Tree* Scooter mentions reading Charles and Mary Beardøs *The Rise of American Civilization (*1927), while T. Jerome Jefferson asks Scooter if he has read Beard and Beardøs *[An] Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) (162). Thus, Scooter, narrating from a distant future, is shown to be aware of the then-recent scholarship on the economic motivations of the early leaders of the United States, yet the romanticized version of the struggle remains a powerful metaphor for him.

> why whenever you talked about following in the footsteps of our great American forefathers you were also talking about the bloody tracks the half barefooted troops left in the snow that fateful winter. (73)

The message, through Scooterøs discourses and his representation of the discourses of his parentsø friends, is that African Americans are entitled, equally entitled as any white American, to view the abstract principles of liberty, freedom and so on as their own, but such identification with such principles also, inherently, involves the identifications with white Americans[172], such as the majority of the soldiers at Valley Forge, who sacrificed for those principles. And there are two strong implications in this chapter: the identifications could and should work both ways, with whites potentially identifying with African American underdog figures and history must not be seen as static, but something which can and is manipulated by and on behalf of people in power.

I will now turn to the bad men section of õHistory Lessonsö (which precedes the official-history section by a few pages), in order to fully contextualize the Stagolee Dupas chapter, in which Scooter witnesses a historical event unfold before his eyes, and thus learns lessons about chance and assertive, heroic action, that will instantaneously inform his decision to take the side of the underdog when he is thrust into a rapidly unfolding dangerous situation in *The Spyglass Tree*. Both of these situations are bound up with representations of violence in relation to music, which may make Jacques Attaliøs theories useful for forming a broader perspective on what the action might mean. I will then extrapolate from there what this means for Murrayøs non-representation of segregation, as I think these two moments in these two novels are central to his project.

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[172] Compare with Hurstonøs õHigh John de Conquer,ö discussed in the first chapter.

Before arriving at that point, I will now turn to an earlier section in the õHistory Lessonsö chapter, on the African American folk tradition of the bad man, to fully contextualize the staging of the Stagolee Dupas chapter. In õHistory Lessons,ö prior to the vernacular jam session on early United States history, Scooter hears about the bad man tradition. It will be useful here to contrast Scooterøs take on the local (south-west Alabama) bad man Railroad Bill (whose real name was Morris Slater) and Lawrence Levineøs scholarly narrative of the Railroad Bill legend. *Train Whistle Guitar* was published three years before Levineøs *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* but Scooterøs narration almost reads like a rebuttal of Levineøs narrative. Levineøs take on Railroad Bill is as follows:

> More interesting that Hardy, and certainly more important in Negro lore, was Railroad Bill, a figure based upon the exploits of Morris Slater. In 1893, Slater, a black turpentine worker in the pine woods of Escambia County, Alabama, shot and killed a policeman during an argument and escaped on a freight train. For the next three years freight trains were to be his means of sustenance. He robbed trains throughout southwest Alabama, stealing canned good and selling it to the poor Negroes who lived in shacks along the rails, threatening their lives if they refused. In a gun battle on July 3, 1895, he shot and killed Sheriff E.S. McMillan who had been devoting himself to Slaterøs capture. Less than a year later Slaterøs career came to an abrupt end. As he entered Tidmoreøs Store in Atmore, Alabama in March 1896, his head was almost blown off by two men who ambushed him for the $1250 reward. (410-11)

This sort of proper, scholarly, official historiography becomes interrogated and critiqued through the vernacular historians (or perhaps, ÷griots,ø to use a term Murray did not care for or use) who (like the Lyndon Johnson monologist in *South to a Very Old Place*) would have had their voices potentially erased from history had Murray not re-presented them in works of imaginative literature. I will discuss the version of the Railroad Bill tales that Scooter heard (which contradicts Levineøs official version) below, but first must make a point about how these tales are understood metaphorically.

The paradox at the heart of the õHistory Lessonsö chapter, represented synecdochally through the dual-images of the clock (historical and mythical), is its goal of informing and contextualizing Scooterøs subjectivity while decontextualizing history: through the invitation to identify with the aims of figures who have otherwise failed morally (paralleling *Invisible Man*). Thus, in õHistory Lessons,ö Railroad Bill and the founding leaders of the United States are both presented as better than they actually were, because they are essentially metaphors that serve a personal and social function. Stagolee Dupas does not live up to his nickname until pushed to that point by Sheriff Timberlake. Until then, the Stagolee Kid is just a õbad manö on the piano. But when cornered, he taps into a tradition of resistance larger than the details of his personal life and daily practice as a committed musician-composer. Scooter, thus aware of these metaphorical maps, will also tap into this tradition of resistance in *The Spyglass Tree*. For his willingness to court certain death to defend a particular African American community, he is awarded a bass fiddle, through which he becomes a musician and composer.

Mister Doc Donohue, a friend of Scooterøs parents, is presented as a master of both African American oral-biographical traditions, that of the bad man and the moral hard man. For Scooter, Donohue õwas the one who could always remember something else about old John Henry, who went with blue steel sparks, and old John Hardy, who went with greased lightning. Once he held the floor all night just describing how old Stagolee shot and killed Billy Lyons, and what happened at that famous trialö (63-4). Hardy was among the first of the historically documented bad men. As Scooter continues, note the difference in the history that Scooter relays, undoubtedly paraphrasing or influenced by Donohue, from the official (white) history of his time (which undoubtedly influenced the later history reviewed by Levine):

> But the best of all the old so-called outlaws he used to tell about was always the one from Alabama named Railroad Bill. Who was so mean when somebody crossed him and so tricky that most people believed that there was something supernatural about him. He was the one that no jail could hold overnight and no bloodhounds could track beyond a certain point. Because he worked a mojo on them that nobody ever heard of before or sinceí .Naturally the whitefolks claimed they caught him and lynched him; but everybody knew better. The whitefolks were always claiming something like that. They claimed that they had caught old Pancho Villa and hung him for what he had done out in New Mexico; and they claimed that they had hemmed up old Robert Charles in a steeple and burned him alive; and they also claimed that Jessie Willard had salivated old Jack Johnson down in Havana that time!....The whitefolks claimed that they had finally caught up with old Railroad Bill at some crossroads store somewhere and had slipped up on him while he was sitting in the middle of the floor sopping molasses with his gun lying off to one side, and they swore they had blown the back of his head off with a double barrel charge of triple-ought buckshot. But in the first place Railroad Bill didnøt eat molasses, and in the second place he didnøt have to break into any store to get something to eat. Because folks kept him in plenty of rations everywhere he went by putting out buckets of it in certain places for him mostly along the Railroad which was what his name was all about; and in the third place he must have broken into more than fifty stores by that time and he didnøt just plain rob a store in the broad open daylight, not then and sit down in the middle of the floor and eat right thereí .Some claimed that they had hung him upside down on the drawbridge and then riddled him and let what was left of him there for the buzzards. But they never settled on which bridge. (64-66)

One significant difference between this vernacular (black) version and the official (white) version is that in the official version, Bill forces local African American residents to buy goods that he has stolen, but here, according to Scooter, Bill is instead aided by the people who live along the railroad: õfolks kept him in plenty of rations.ö Perhaps this is a romanticization of Billøs legend, concurrent with the distrust of the official history, as it is of course coming from the perspective of a precocious child, echoing the perspectives of the adults around him, for whom Bill was apparently a folk hero, and who may have even known him. (If Donohue is fifty years old in 1926, then he would have been twenty when Bill was killed in 1896.) Whether or not

one of the adults, perhaps Donohue, made the analogy between Bill and Pancho Villa and Scooter later comes to echo it is not clear (as children usually first gain a better grasp on the distant past than the recent past that has not necessarily made it into textbooks yet). But like Bill, Pancho Villa was also a threat to the state, an agent of potential anarchy or revolution or alternative order of things who had to be silenced. Perhaps there is not so much paradox after all in the valorization of outlaws such as Railroad Bill and õoutlawsö such as George Washington, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, and so on. In a 2003 article on the history and legend of Railroad Bill, Burgin Mathews claims that Morris Slater did indeed die on March 7, 1896, but the õdetails are rendered unknowable by the inconsistency of the reportsö (83). Mathews briefly mentions *Train Whistle Guitar* and claims that Murray õcaptures the persona celebrated by many south Alabama African Americans in their heroö (80).

Ultimately, African Americans valorized these figures for a variety of reasons, but Levine is keen to note that pathological interpretations must be avoided (418). Generally speaking, for Levine, at the bottom of these legends was the belief that õSociety had to be unhinged, undone, made overö (419). George Washington and Railroad Bill thus both help Scooter to form the image of himself, who will later narrate the lives of people who are missing for a people to come. That society had to be made over goes without saying, and Scooterøs presentation of his multi-valenced engagement with the way that society views its history informs his decision to present his own history informed by the two faces of the clock: deeply contextualized and historicized and yet also mythologized: specifically situated in historical time and yet missing an over-arching reality of that time ó segregation.

Railroad Bill is most significant for his association, through Donohue, with the legendary Stagolee, who lent his name to the father of Stagolee Dupas (*fils*), who is the hero of what is the

novelø second most important chapter (which is also the chapter that may be of the most contemporary critical interest, even if it is almost completely un-commented upon as of July 2014). Stagolee Dupas enters the novel on page 98. Something of his history is relayed on the following page:

> Mister Stagolee Dupas (*fils*), or the Stagolee Kid was also called Stagolee the Son of Stagolee and Stagolee the Younger and Stagolee Junior and Son Stag and Kid Stag not because he was the son of the original Mister Bad Bad Stagolee (who was sometimes referred to as old Trigger Fingered Stagolee) but because he had followed in the footsteps of and probably even surpassed his father (who was a piano player famous for making up verses about the original Bad Man Stagolee, the notorious gambler who packed a stack barrel Forty-four). Sometimes when Stagolee the Son of Stagolee used to start adding some of his own new verses, he would keep on going until he had a verse for every key on the piano (99).

Stagolee is a musical and verbal artist, who could play õuntil (as somebody was forever repeating) the king of the signifying monkeys was subject to the bout of tales to tell and out of breath to bootö (99). Thus, Stagolee is an artist working within a well understood cultural and familial tradition. But in the moment of truth, when the white Sheriff has forcibly stopped his music, itself a symbolic violence, and replaced it with actual violence, as he begins to destroy the piano Stagolee had been playing. At this point Stagolee, master of symbolic violence, transforms, in a sense, into õMister Bad Bad Stagolee.ö

The discussion that will follow encompasses two of the most critical scenes regarding Murrayø approach to segregation in fiction, namely, illustrations of the argument that segregation may have existed, but assertive African American resistance to it was just as real, and best understood in the context of secular vernacular music. First, I will compare Murrayø work with Jacques Attali and survey Attaliø õfour networksö of music as I see them represented

in *Train Whistle Guitar*. I will then argue that Stagolee Dupas almost perfectly represents Attaliøs fourth network, õcomposition.ö A complete comparative study of Murrayøs non-fiction music writing with Attaliøs could conceivably comprise a short book, so I will make the comparison as brief as I possibly can. Then, I will briefly establish that historians have understood the spaces of African American nightlife in the early twentieth century to have been largely autonomous, making Sheriff Timberlakeøs invasion of such a space in the novel all the more unprecedented and shocking (as it sets the stage for his demise). Then, I will interpret the scene. Following that, I will follow Murrayøs riff on the intonation of the term õwhite folksö to tether the Stagolee Dupas chapter to the Ed Riggins chapter in *The Spyglass Tree*.

From there, I will read the chapter that precedes the Ed Riggins section, which is the first fiction that Murray claimed he ever wrote: the chapter in which Will Spradley gets beaten by a white man. This is a jarring section because it is in a separate genre from the rest of the four novels: it is essentially a chapter reflecting the segregation aesthetic incongruously inserted within Murrayøs fiction. After that, much of the text of *The Spyglass Tree* coalesces around an African American communityøs need to defend itself from forces set in motion by the incident. During the planning of the resistance, Scooter reflects on barbershop tales he has heard of his collegeøs reaction and resistance to being marched on by the Ku Klux Klan in 1923. Finally, I will argue that in his moment of truth, the lessons of Stagolee Dupas inform Scooterøs judgment and lead him to join the black group against the white mob, a decision that results in the success he achieves in volumes three and four.

## II. Stagolee Dupas versus Sheriff Timberlake: Economies of Music and Violence

In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977, English translation 1985) Jacques Attali posits four õnetworksö of music. The first is the õsacrificial ritualö (õthe distributive networks for all the orders, myths, and religious, social, or economic relations of symbolic societiesí centralized on the level of ideology and decentralized on the economic levelö) (31). Next is õrepresentation,ö in which õMusic becomes a spectacle attended at specific placesö (e.g., the concert hall) (32). Then, õThe third network, that of repetition, appears at the end of the nineteenth century with the advent of recorded musicö (32). Attaliøs fourth network, õcomposition,ö is the most important, I think, for understanding *Train Whistle Guitar* and is indeed represented as critically important in *Train Whistle Guitar* (through the description of musical methods and processes of Stagolee Dupas). Attali defines õcompositionö as follows:

> Finally, we can envision one last network, beyond exchange, in which music could be lived as composition, in other words, in which it would be performed for the musicianøs own enjoyment, as self-communication, with no other goal than his own pleasure, as something fundamentally outside all communication, as self-transcendence, a solitary, egotistical, noncommercial act. In this network, what is heard by others would be a by-product of what the composer or interpreter wrote or performed for the sake of hearing it. (32)

This is a very close approximation of Scooterøs description of the playing of Stagolee Dupas:

> Sometimes Stagolee Dupas used to spend the whole afternoon alone at the piano in the empty dancing room of Sodawaterøs honky tonk playing for nobody but himself. That was when he used to sit patting his left foot and running blues progressions by the hour, touching the keys as gently as if he could actually feel the grain of each note with his finger tips, sustaining each chord and listening with his right ear cocked (and his right should sloped) as if to give it time to soak all the way into the core of his very being. (123)

In a sense *Train Whistle Guitar* is bracketed by representatives of Attaliøs fourth network, as the noveløs musical journey begins with Luzana Cholly and ends with Stagolee Dupas, who could

both be thought of as illustrative of the composition network.[173] In the sections preceding the Stagolee chapter, Scooter quickly cycles through the first three networks. He mentions music to accompany sacrifice, in his description of church music (94-95), then covers the second network, repetition, in discussing õDaddy Gladstone Gilesø Excelsior Marching and Social Bandö that would play in the Union Hall or Masonic Temple (96-97), and finally mentions the third network, representation, with discussion of the records of Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong (et al) and how õmusic used to sound on the old wind-up Grammophoneö (102-103). Cholly and Dupas are examples of õcompositionö that bracket (brief) references to the music of sacrificial ritual, representation, and repetition. None of the other three networks are as important to him at this point as õcomposition.ö In *The Spyglass Tree*, he will embrace repetition (becoming an incipient expert on recorded jazz) before entering the world of õcompositionö himself by being given a bass fiddle in recognition of his willingness to partake in the bad man tradition (though his participation in the race battle is not actually called for).

In *Noise*, Attali understands music as noise with culturally accepted meaning as symbolic violence. Murray would certainly have agreed, following Kenneth Burke, if õviolenceö could be replaced with õaction.ö Attali seeks to reground music in its social origins and re-understand music in its movement through time. Attaliøs Noise shares many of the same broad, general goals as Murrayøs book of jazz history and aesthetics, *Stomping the Blues* (1976), which seeks to emphasize that jazz is a fine art, its social dimension is genre-forming and informing, and its

[173] A. Yemisi Jimoh has observed in her book *Spiritual, Jazz, and Blues People in African American Fiction: Living in Paradox*: õStagolee Kid has taken the music of Luzana Cholly to another stage in its development by making the old music respond to new times. Murray even uses their instruments to suggest change. Luzanaøs guitar is always with him; he takes his musical instrument with him as he lives an itinerant life. There is nothing to interfere with his music and his freedom. Stagolee Kid, though, has to find a piano to play wherever he goes. While he may travel, he depends on finding a piano among the people he meets on the road, and in some ways he is tied to their expectations of him and his expectations of them.í A group connectioní is more firmly established for Stagolee.ö (181) And yet Stagolee does not need his audience; he is ultimately playing for himself.

composition is closely modeled on the onomatopoeic representation of the locomotive, and thus, many compositions (especially those of Duke Ellington and Count Basie) are idiomatic musical imitations of trains and thus should be understood as unfolding through time.

In her essay õThe Politics of Silence and Soundö (Afterword to the English translation of *Noise*), Susan McClary writes that õamong [Attaliøs] observations he includes remarks on the rise of positivistic musicology and pseudoscientific music theory, both of which depend upon and reenforce [sic] the concept that music is autonomous, unrelated to the turbulence of the outside, social worldö (149). *Stomping the Blues*, likewise, is something like a retroactive manifesto for the importance of jazz to the African American social world (retroactive in the sense that jazz had since largely faded from that social world, at least among the young, by 1976) and its parallel emergence from that social world of the 1910s through perhaps 1950s. The other important goal of *Stomping the Blues* is its framing and formulation of locomotive onomatopoeia[174]. Murray and Attali reconnect again as follows, through Murrayøs emphasis on a compositionøs sense of motion and formal unfolding ó in the journey of a train between two (or more) points. McClary continues:

> Musicians have been trained for the last two hundred years to perceive music in Rameauøs terms ó as sequences of chords ó and thus his formulations seem to us self-evident. Before Rameauøs *Traite de l'harmonie [Treatise on Harmony]* (1722), theories and pedagogical methods dealt principally with two aspects of music: coherence over time (mode) and the channeling of noise in the coordination of polyphonic voices (counterpoint). In this tradition, the integrity of a compositionøs sense of motion and formal unfolding was preserved, and simultaneities were treated contextually ó as formulations that emerged from communal activity and that continued on in accordance with the rules for dissonance control, with the verbal text, and with the modal

[174] Murrayøs insights in this regard have been expanded upon in books such as Joel Dinersteinøs *Swinging the Machine* (2003).

> structure. Rameau, in a striking reworking of Descartesø *Cogito* manifesto, declared this earlier tradition moribund and, in seeking to build a musical system from reason and science, hailed the triad as the basis of musicí .Breaking a piece of music down into a series of its smallest atomic units destroys whatever illusion of motion it might have had. It yields a chain of freeze-frame stills, all of which turn out to be instances of triads. Mathematical certainly and the acoustical seal of approval are bought at the price of silence and death, for text, continuity, color, inflection, expression, and social function are no longer relevant issues. The piece is paralyzed, laid out like a cadaver, dismembered, and cast aside. Heinrich Schenkerøs neo-Hegelian theoretical program early in this [the Twentieth] century attempted to restore to music theory the accounting for motion, the illusion of organically unfolding life he detected in German music from Bach to Brahms. (151)

Ellington, for example, also tried to bring õtext, continuity, color, inflection, expression, and social functionö back to the forefront of composition. Understanding and framing these elements of music in relation to jazz is a major goal of Murrayøs in *Stomping the Blues*. Like Breugheløs painting õCarnivaløs Quarrel with Lent,ö which Attali discusses in detail, Murrayøs work, particularly in *Stomping the Blues* and his in his novels may be thought of in a similar way to how Attali describes Breugheløs painting: õAn archaeology of resonances but also of marginalitiesö (22). Murray does not specifically claim, as Attali does, that õnoise is violenceö and õmusic is a channelization of noiseö and thus of violence (26) but also that õmusic is the eliminator of violenceö (29). Murray did not seem to make any specific statement about music in relation to violence, yet the Stagolee Dupas chapter can be read and understood best, it seems to me, along the lines of Attaliøs formulations.[175]

[175] There are more curious points of convergence. Attali claims in *Noise* that õmusic was a simulacrum of the sacrifice of the Scapegoat, and that it shared the same functionö (26). Murray claims in *The Hero and the Blues* õWhen [a writer] writes in terms of the story pattern known as tragedy, for instance ó which is in effect the retracing of the steps leading to destruction and which, as the name suggests, may well be the extension of the goat sacrifice song and dance or the Dance of the Scapegoat he is performing a purification ritual in imitation of the life process itselfö (25-26). Combining Attaliøs claim with Murrayøs claim would result in a concept something like õthe birth of tragedy from the spirit of music.ö I do not wish to push that too far, other than to point out, once again, another moment of possible convergence. Murray and Attali also valorize the importance of chance (Attali, õInterview with

In the Stagolee Dupas chapter, Dupas squares off against the white sheriff Earl Joe Timberlake, who violates established custom by invading and interrupting the good times (and a piano competition of sorts) late at night in a honky-tonk, a traditionally autonomous space for African American culture. Murray understood jook joints and honky-tonks as more or less interchangeable. In general, jook joints were rural while honky-tonks were urban. But Gasoline Point was strictly speaking suburban ó thus perhaps the interchangeability of the terms for Murray. In her book *Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African-American Culture* (1990), Katrina Hazzard-Gordon[176] claims:

> During the post-reconstruction era, African-Americans saw a need ó and an opportunity ó to relocate the clandestine social activities and dances of the plantation days. Their freedom, the reorganized labor system, and their cultural past determined the shape of the first secular cultural institution to emerge after emancipation ó the jook. Like the blues, the jook gave rise to and rejuvenated a variety of cultural forms. And, like the blues, the jook was a secular institution rooted in West African traditions that intertwined religious and secularized elements (77).

The mingling of the sacred and secular is important for understanding the numerous layers and magnitude of cultural violation and disrespect in Sheriff Timberlakeøs raid on Joe Lockettøs-in-the-Bottom. Understanding the sacred dimension, what Hazzard-Gordon calls a secular variation on a West African õparty for the godsö illuminates Ellisonøs rhetorical question in his 1952 letter to Murray, used as the epigraph at the outset of this chapter: õcouldnøt he [the sheriff] see [that his assault on the piano] was sacrilege?ö The action is taking place on a Saturday night (126), the major night for such parties. In their essay õExit, Voice, and Loyalty: African American Strategies for Day-to-Day Existence/Resistance in the Early-Twentieth Century Rural Southö Peter Coclanis and Bryant Simon claim:

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Jacques Attali,ö 11; *Train Whistle Guitar*, 107). They also share a mutual understanding, perhaps through reading Andre Malraux, of the role of music in pre-modern socieities.

[176] She is known today as Katrina Hazzard-Donald. Her latest book *Mojo Workin'* is discussed in my first chapter.

> Employers and landlords struggled to turn share-croppers, tenants, and laborers into sober, efficient, and disciplined laborers. To do this, they sought to control workers both on and off the job. On Saturday nights, however, black women and men took control over their time and their bodies. At rural bars, juke joints, and house parties they shook, sang, danced, gambled, drank, and boogied. Through these movements, African American laborers claimed control over their bodies. Whatøs more, they rejected ó at least symbolically ó the values of their white employers (203-4).

It may be too much to say that the Saturday night parties were a rejection of the values of white employers, since undoubtedly whites had their own parties and both whites and blacks would go to church on Sunday mornings. But the important part is the õcontrol over their time and their bodiesö that these spaces afforded and enabled. These nightlife spaces, like most businesses dealing with black bodies (funeral homes, barber shops, beauty salons) were often black-owned. According to Hazzard-Gordon,

> Jooks were generally black owned and, although landowners expressed some concern about laborersø social activity, their ability to regulate it was limited. Technically, freedmen could ÷jookø every night if they wanted, stopping by after work for drinking and fellowship, an option that had not existed under bondage. Some of the activity in the jook required monetary exchange ó gambling and purchasing of food and beverages ó and thus contributed to the formation of an underground cultural and recreational network. There was a constant, if limited, flow of cash in and out of the jooks that eventually supported the famous ÷chitlin circuit ø on which many African American musicians worked (82).

The action in the chapter takes place in Joe Lockettøs-in-the-Bottom, never described as honky-tonk per se, but described as being a comparable competitor to Sodawaterøs honky-tonk (and in walking distance of it). A honky-tonk was an urban jook joint. Jook joints catered mostly to African American sharecroppers and rural laborers (such as perhaps, laborers in the pine woods) while honky tonks had a clientele of urban African American laborers and others. Sodawaterøs would have been situated about three miles north of downtown Mobile, in an area that looks and

feels suburban today. Hazzard-Gordon described the honky-tonk as õthe first urban manifestation of the jook, and the name itself later became synonymous with a style of music.í Something resembling the modern-day honky-tonk first existed in urban centers like New Orleans, Memphis, Charleston, Mobile, and Birminghamö (84-85). (The action here is taking place a few miles north of downtown Mobile.) Following and drawing upon Hazzard-Gordonøs study of jooks and honky-tonks, Guthrie P. Ramsay, Jr. concurs with her, adding that across black America it was understood that these spaces were to a large degree autonomous. Ramsay claims that õ[after-hours nightclubs in Harlem] were considered safe spaces for the celebration of cultureö (124). Hurston includes an account of jooks nearly contemporaneous with the action in the story in her essay õCharacteristics of Negro Expressionö in the section subtitled õThe Jookö (Folklore 841-45). Hurston does not distinguish between a jook and a honky-tonk.[177]

The chapter begins with Scooterøs description of Stagolee Dupas playing music for himself, closely parallel to Attaliøs fourth musical network, õcompositionö[178]. From Scooterøs description of Dupas, the scene switches to Miss Paulineøs Cookshop, where Scooter and Little Buddy eat dinner, with Miss Pauline acting as their quasi-babysitter who expects them to go home after eating and prepare to attend Sunday school the next morning, when instead they plan to spend the evening smoking cigarettes and loitering outside outside of the honky-tonk, in an attempt to try to soak in the adult world. Scooter and Little Buddy plan to head from Miss Paulineøs over to Sodawaterøs, but instead first visit Joe Lockettøs-in-the-Bottom, which is where

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[177] She does note that õMusically speaking, the Jook is the most important place in America. For in its smelly, shoddy confines has been born the secular music known as the blues, and on blues has been founded jazzö (841). This is a monumentally important point of convergence between Hurston, Ellison, and Murray. The question of whether jazz grew or evolved out of the blues is still a contentious one in some circles and still causes much confusion and misapprehension. For Murray, jazz is the fully orchestrated blues statement.

[178] The description continues beyond the block quote above. Incidentally, like several other adults in Gasoline Point, Dupas has connections to western cities such as San Francisco and Reno (unexplained, but perhaps through Mobileøs port and the Panama Canal), where he has played before, thus õnationalizingö Scooterøs imagination and, like tales of õPhilamayork,ö drawing it out of the confines of the deep south.

the action happens to be on that evening (131). They find a perch in a tree above the venue from which they can hear the music of Claiborne Williams and Stagolee Dupas. Shortly after Dupas begins to play, Sheriff Earl Joe Timberlake raids the club, in violation of established custom. Timberlake had previously promised to õride herd on Gasoline Point niggers until times got tolerable on Saturday nightsö (128). He was õreported to have announcedö that intention when he took the position of Deputy Sherriff six months earlier (128). Timberlake invades the venue, õyelling All right in here you niggers, this is the LAW! All right in here you niggers, letøs GO, and people were already stampeding and breaking out through all the windows and hightailing it off in every directionö (135). Timberlake interrupts what had been a scene of symbolic (or at least sublimated) violence. The quote below begins in the voice of Stagolee before switching to Claiborne Williams in the fourth sentence:

> Man you was mean up there just now. You was cruel man. You didnøt show me no mercy at all man. Man I might as well turn around and go back where I come from. Yøall hear this lying dog. Stagolee Dupas you ought to be shame of yourself. Nigger cut out this shit and get your near-yaller ass down on that piano stool before these niggers realize how much time I done taken up from you already. Just donøt scandalize me too bad man. Just remember I still got to live with these niggers when you back over yonder. (134)

Timberlakeøs violence, shocking in its brashness, in its dissonant disregard for the established custom of jook/honky tonk Saturday night autonomy, abruptly puts an end to the Dupas-Williams battle, the symbolic violence of the music, just as Stagolee begins to play. What will become a problem for Timberlake is the fact that Stagolee Dupas has been generator of the symbolic violence, which turns physical on Timberlake once Timberlake begins kicking the keys off the piano that Dupas had been playing. The understanding of the motion of time through music was also abruptly cut short without the traditional moments to mentally prepare for the

forthcoming silence. Scooter notes that it was õas if stopping the music had somehow stopped time itselfö (136).

In their 1983 interview with Attali, Fredric Jameson and Jean-Joseph Goux quote (and presumably translate) Attaliøs preface to Michel Agliettaøs *La violence de la monnaie*: õI happen to believe myself that it is the object itself which is the bearer of violence, because it is the bearer of the living, magical power of its producerö (14). Dupas did not õproduceö the piano in question, but he had been playing it, thus producing the sound emanating from it. If he had õmagical powerö it was certainly in the piano at that time. Timberlake, parallel to Attali, seems to understand the object, the piano, as the õbearer of violenceö and proceeds to attempt to assault the object itself, rather than Stagolee, the only person who has not fled the venue. Scooter relays the incident as follows:

> And I will never forget what happened next, because that was the very last thing that either Little Buddy or I could or would have sworn before a Grand Jury that either of us had actually seen or heard: Earl Joe Timberlake with his thumbs still hooked in his pistol belt and his long-blocked, side-rolled sherifføs hat pushed back, walking over and raising his foot to start kicking the keys off the piano, and Stagolee saying I wouldnøt do that if I was you, whitefolks, and Earl Joe Timberlake whirling and grabbing for his .38 special. (136)

Timberlake turns up dead the next morning, and on Monday morning, his picture is on the front page of the *Mobile Register*. There are implications that his death was caused by bootleggers, but Scooter and Little Buddy suspect Stagolee had a hand in it. Scooter goes on to add that õkicking the keys off honky-tonk pianos was already known to be one of his special trademarksö (137). Thus, in a sense, Dupas could have been prepared. Or perhaps previous pianists that Timberlake encountered were not cut from the same cloth as Dupas, so to speak ó were not nicknamed Stagolee at any rate.

Scooter and Little Buddy then re-enact the scene, playfully improvising new lines for Stagolee Dupas. Little Buddy begins and then Scooter continues: õHey I wouldnøt do that if I was you Mister Goddamn Peckerwood Motherfucker. And that was when I said: When you come in here kicking on that piano, Mister Sommiching Whitefolks you kicking on meö (137). Stagolee, whose ritualized process of approaching the piano to begin his performance is described by Scooter, had become part of his instrument. Whether or not he had an audience, Stagolee was playing for himself, in the fourth network of composition; the only network, for Attali in which õpersonal transcendenceö is possible (32). Personal transcendence is what Dupas seems to achieve when playing for himself. Sheriff Timberlake encounters a talismanic piano that had been imbued with a kind of ritualized violence, extracted from the violence of life (even a peaceful life) and entered into the instrument. He then attempts to attack the instrument, after which its player, Dupas, living up to his õbad manö nickname, attacks him (as it is understood by Scooter and Little Buddy, though they õwould not have swornö that to a white Grand Jury ó perhaps echoing or alluding to Janieøs court room reticence in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.)

The circumstances surrounding Timberlakeøs death were full of õconflicting detailö according to Scooter (136). Thus, Timberlakeøs death, and its murky details parallels that of Railroad Bill. Railroad Bill was a bad man killed by the state, while Timberlake is a representative of the state killed by a bad man. In both cases the details are for various reasons thought by the powers that be to be better left un-sorted. Having already been exposed to the murkiness of history and competing ideological interpretations of historical events, Scooter knows how see through the layers of euphemism surrounding Timberlakeøs demise, even as he knows (or has a reasonably good idea that he knows) the real cause of Timberlakeøs death: Stagolee Dupas. Stagolee cannot publicly or privately take credit for killing Timberlake, and

Scooter understands this. Jim Crow media and power (the *Mobile Register*) will shape the narrative of Timberlakeøs death, aligning it with insinuations of conflict with powerful bootlegging operations, just as it had to find a narrative for Railroad Billøs death that did not necessarily cohere, but had to be offered anyway. Scooter thus understands the various micro-fictions upon which the master narrative of white supremacy is built. And in understanding them as fictions, can use the counter-information available in his community to begin to craft a counter-narrative. Simultaneously, Murrayøs novels are working as a counter-statement, counter-narrative, or counter-information not just to long-discredited narrative of white supremacy but to what he views as their twin: narratives of black pathology, which Murray is never keen to represent; the very existence of which is as anathema to Murray as representing segregation.

As a close follower of current events and as, for a time, Air Force ROTC Professor of Geopolitics at Tuskegee, Murray would not have been unaware that the boot was, in the twentieth century, widely used as and considered to be a symbol of a repressive, totalitarian, or fascist regime. When Sheriff Timberlake, with his õlace-up boots,ö attempts to kick the keys off the piano in a place that by custom he should not even be, he has over-extended the power the state into a realm where music, by sublimating violence, was creating order and defining the atmosphere in a black counter-space to the state through the symbolic violence represented doubly by the music itself and by the piano competition/battle taking place. Through the rigidity of his ideology and drunkenness on one kind of authorized power, Timberlake cannot see the counter-force present in the person of Dupas. Timberlake cannot see that Dupas, being immersed in his music to the õdepths of his beingö but more specifically, immersed in the õblack counter-culture of modernityö (to echo Paul Gilroyøs description of African diasporic music) is utterly

free from fear and has demonstrated as much by showing Timberlake a disrespectful nonchalance.

Historians or those concerned with accurately hewing to the historical record of official white savagery necessary to enforce the Jim Crow regime might decry such incidents as Dupas standing up to Timberlake as fantasy or wishful thinking ó or just a retelling of a õbad manö story. But who is to say that these events did in fact happen and were not reported or promoted, for various reasons: because the whites in power had an interest in keeping such resistance quiet and/or black communities had an interest in not stirring up white reprisals? This situation is mirrored in *The Spyglass Tree*, where Murray presents his version of a historical event of black resistance that runs counter to an interpretation of the outcome same incident offered by W.E.B. Du Bois in an editorial the *Crisis*. That will be discussed later in this chapter.

In this chapter Murray is also relaying an inversion of the defining element of the segregation aesthetic offered by Brian Norman and Piper Kendrix Williams in their introduction to *Representing Segregation*, in which they claim (described in more detail below) that the segregation aesthetic must contain the spatialization of race plus the spatialization of fear, along with keys scenes of cross-racial contact as a catalyst. In their introduction to *Representing Segregation*, Williams and Norman offer three õgeneralizationsö for what constitutes a õsegregation narrative tradition.ö These three aspects of a narrative include 1) õthe spatialization of raceö 2) õthe spatialization of fearö and 3) õkey scenes of cross-racial contactö that õset in motion the geography of race and climate of fearö in relation to one another in order to underscore õconscious strategies for representing compulsory race segregationö (5-7). Until the Stagolee Dupas chapter (123-38, though Dupas first appears on page 98) these elements have been entirely absent from *Train Whistle Guitar*. They would appear to be introduced here for the

purpose of inverting them. Murrayøs goal in this section would appear to entail the draining of any historical context and detail of Jim Crow that would necessarily or automatically endow whites with any greater social prestige or power than African Americans. Prior to the entrance of Sheriff Timberlake, a formidable representative of the power of the state and its Jim Crow regime, the only other white character of importance had been a pathetic one.

Ellison and Murray both create representations of musicøs symbolic and mediative role in the economy of violence necessary to maintain the order of society. Much of Murrayøs fiction may be thought of as having been written in response to Ellisonøs work, although perhaps Ellisonøs õCadillac Flambéö (1973) may in fact be partially in response to this chapter by Murray, which Ellison commented upon in his letter of February 4, 1952. Reading both narratives alongside Attali allows the action in them to be considered more abstractly in relation to the power of the state, and the goals of each chapter in commenting upon that power.[179]

This section also meditates upon the importance of intonation of racial terminology within the community and the sounds of words in general. In õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö (and subsequently the short story õTrain Whistle Guitarö) Murray tells rather than shows the importance of this difference, explaining what can be gathered from different intonations of õniggerö by whites and blacks. This statement, discussed in the previous chapter in regards to the publication history of Murrayøs fiction, does not appear in the published novel[180]. This has been omitted from *Train Whistle Guitar*, wherein instead Murray attempts to õshowö rather than õtellö the difference in the intonation of õniggerö in 1) the signifying between Stagolee Dupas and

[179] Jurgen E. Grandt, in his book *Kinds of Blue: The Jazz Aesthetic in African American Narrative* usefully interprets Ellisonøs õCadillac Flambéö in terms of Attaliøs theories of music and violence.
[180] õ(í We knew that if you hit a white boy he would turn red and call you nigger that did not sound like the Nigger the Negroes saidí )ö (*New World Writing* 235).

fellow African American pianist Claiborne Williams and 2) on the following page, Sherriff Timberlakeøs address to the patrons of the honky-tonk (õAll right you niggersí ö).

In *The Spyglass Tree* there are similarly closely juxtaposed discourses featuring term õwhite folks.ö There is the plaintive, pathetic, half-spoken half-cried õwhite folksö of Will Spradley, which I hear on the page in a manner akin to how it was spoken on film by Stepin Fetchit. This is juxtaposed with assertive, even aggressive õwhite folksö of Evil Ed Riggins, which echoes the õI wouldnøt do that if I was you, whitefolksö of Stagolee Dupas. At the outset of chapter fourteen of *The Spyglass Tree*, just after Will Spradleyøs beating has been narrated, Scooter reflects on a Gasoline Point denizen (who does not appear in *Train Whistle Guitar*) whom he considered something like Spradleyøs opposite (110-12). The two scenes of interracial violence in Murrayøs fiction hinge on and in some respects could be considered commentary on the intonation of the words õniggersö and õwhitefolks.ö The implication ó and I am not arguing for its historical accuracy, just pointing out its existence in the text ó is the difference between being the victim of violence or not depends on intonation.

## III. Violence, Resistance, and Cultures of Sound in *The Spyglass Tree*

> õWe donøt need any more horror stories trying to put the shame on those people as if they donøt know what the hell they themselves been doing to us all these years. Just look at what they did to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Those same people put on

> black faces and turned the whole goddamn thing into a big road-show minstrel, traveling all over the country.ö
>
> óDewitt Dawkins, baseball umpire (and literary critic) in *The Spyglass Tree* (150)

> õFor here is where our real sympathy and interest lies: with the people who, in the last half of the book, are the victims of injustice based on race and with those who perpetrate the injustice. This portion is a bitter, well-written, well-paced story standing quite apart from the rest of the novel.ö
>
> óanonymous readerøs report, written for either an agent or publishing house, rejecting the manuscript of Murrayøs first novel (õJack the Bearö), early-mid 1950s, and referring here to the second half of what was to become *The Spyglass Tree*

In Murrayøs second novel *The Spyglass Tree*, which narrates the college years of Scooter, the protagonist of *Train Whistle Guitar*, there is an episode (chapter thirteen, 95-109) that is aesthetically and emotionally unlike anything in Murrayøs prior or subsequent novels and unlike the other episodes in *The Spyglass Tree* itself. According to Murrayøs claim in a 1994 interview,

it is also the oldest extant fiction that he wrote. It might be possible to say that it is akin to õsegregation aesthetic novellaö within a tetralogy of novels that otherwise avoids the segregation aesthetic and elides the details of segregation. An atmosphere of racially-driven menace seems to drift in and out of the novel. This is not the case in novels one, three and four. Though it feints at the segregation aesthetic, *The Spyglass Tree* appears ultimately to not be a segregation narrative, at least in the sense as defined by Norman and Williams. There are two white attempts to spatialize fear: one is narrated in a flashback about the overhearing of a story of armed resistance to the Ku Klux Klan in 1923 and foreshadows the planned armed resistance to white mob at the time much of the action takes place, circa 1938. The central instance of white-on-black violence that precipitates the formation of the white mob occurs in a private office over a private transaction, not in a public space. In an epic anti-climax, the leader of the lower-class white mob falls ill and the mob dissolves rather than attack the black-owned restaurants that a black cohort was prepared to defend. At the same time, a member of the white upper-class, who had business connections with the black restaurateur, had already interceded with county (as opposed to town or city) authorities on behalf of the black cohort. Despite this anti-climax, which is in keeping with Murrayøs conception of farce, the untangling of the events preceding it, and trying to analyze them, within the context of Murrayøs life and work will perhaps prove a worthy endeavor.

Murrayøs initial idea seems to have been to counter-state the practices of Jim Crow and the segregation aesthetic by juxtaposing the experiences of two African American men of approximately the same age whose experiences result from their different orientations to whites; one who lives in fear and ends up receiving a bad beating (Will Spradley), and one who does not live in fear and hears and re-transmits the story of the other manøs beating (Scooter). Another

African American character, a female blues singer, after attending Spradleyøs injuries, blames him for his assault for not knowing how to conduct business with whites who are strangers. As problematic as this may be, it demands scrutiny as it sets up wider ruminations that engage in larger debates and commentaries.

*The Spyglass Tree* contains numerous instances that suggest that something is wrong with the society it is set in, but does not explain the details or mechanics. It ignores the causes and possible effects of the menace, in keeping with Murrayøs oft-repeated claim that something is amiss with every human society and therefore the hero deserves more attention than the threat to be defeated. The local white high school in the college town, for instance, is referred to by the narrator as not simply ÷the white high schoolø but õthe white supremacist high schoolö (77).

Much can be gleaned about Murrayøs portrait of the deep South as contrasted with Northern assumptions about the South in the exchange between Scooter and the roommate he admires and looks up to, T. Jerome Jefferson, on the subject of interracial sex, specifically sex between black men and white women. T. Jerome Jefferson, an inspiration to Scooter until the point of the following quote (at which point Scooter begins to see him in a different light), reveals a critical aspect of the world they inhabit:

> *So there is no way around it for us either, he said. If you're one of us, you have to commit a deliberate violation of that particular taboo before you can really call yourself a man. No matter what else you ever do, that's something you have to answer to yourself for, and you're either game or you're not, he said, and then he also said, Hey, but maybe all of this is all knee-high-to-a-duck stuff to you, and I said, Not really because I had never thought about it as being a matter of the kind of taboo and derring-do he was talking about*. (164, emphasis in original)

This is the first time that Scooterøs polymath roommate appears un-hip to Scooter and thus, for the reader. Jefferson, a native of Detroit, exoticizes the South and its mores and taboos.

Scooterøs nonchalant response seems to be an attempt to redirect Jeffersonøs reasoning. Scooter generally accepts the role of õWatsonö to Jeffersonøs Sherlock Holmes (170) but on this score feels compelled to first dissuade him through disinterested dismissal (õNot reallyí ,ö 164) and then, earnestly reminds him of the duty he owes to his ancestors not to get into trouble (169). For Scooter, an interracial dalliance is not a big deal in and of itself, but it can become a problem if one goes about it the wrong way, which is the way Jefferson seems to be going about it. In short, Jefferson is not familiar enough, so Scooter seems to think, with the nuances of Southern culture to be able to conduct the act and emerge unscathed. Jeffersonøs wish to have sexual relations with a white woman of somewhat high standing in the local hierarchy prods Scooter to reveal the following:

> *What Mama had always been saying about keeping out of trouble with girls and about not letting friendly white ones grin your neck into a noose was as much a part of my conception of the everyday facts of life in Gasoline Point as everything else I was always being warned about*. (164, emphasis in original)

Mamaøs warnings, including a graphic warning about the possibility of castration as a result of dalliances with white women (166), never appear in *Train Whistle Guitar*. They appear as remembrances in *The Spyglass Tree*, as the text is already proceeding in an occasional atmosphere of menace, or perhaps terror. Scooter here also recalls, after narrating his own sexual encounters with white women (on which he placed no symbolic burden) that occurred despite Mamaøs warnings, that õPapaí and Mama were dead set against ever hiring me out to white folksö (166). These previously elided details suggest myriad racial tensions and problems boiling under the surface of the generally cheerful narration, suggesting that Murray was not trying to create an alternative world but rather an alternative portrayal of something close to the real world

he experienced, through alternative emphases on alternative facts ó almost always relating to a soundscape and with crucial aural/oral associations.

Murray jotted in a note in circa 1954 that it seemed to him that an important aspect of segregation had to do with paternity and legitimacy (and thus ultimately with class): to keep white men away from black women and thus create fewer problems regarding inheritance. Segregation may have kept some white men away from black women and created plausible deniability for others. Murray writes in the note: õIt seems to me that anti-Negro marriage laws are not really designed to protect ÷Southern white womanhood,ø they are really [to] protect the white man from the consequences of ÷inter-racialø sex. No suits for support. No shotgun weddingsö (Murray, Note on Interracial Marriage 1). Murray understood the roots of the taboo to be money, which is also to say class[181]. T. Jerome Jefferson has concocted an idea about interracial sex and masculinity that to Scooterøs ear is incorrect and inauthentic. The actual texture of life was much finer and at the same time simpler: Scooterøs interracial relationships were nonchalant, matter-of-fact discreet dalliances. It is as if Scooter senses the danger in Jeffersonøs overburdening the situation with metaphor; creating an abstract picture of the South at odds with the actuality of everyday life. This corresponds with Murrayøs note in his copy of Robert Penn Warrenøs book *Segregation: The Inner Conflict of the South* (quoted in the first chapter): what he (Murray) dislikes most about segregation is the resulting abstractions that can obscure the actual texture of life. Much can be extrapolated from Scooterøs criticism of Jefferson here; it speaks volumes about Murrayøs skepticism of northern analyses of the South, whether black or white.

[181] This makes one wonder: if Strom Thurmondøs child with a black woman had been male instead of female, would he have provided the financial support that enabled his daughter, Essie Mae Washington-Williams, to go to college and join the middle class?

Murrayøs first novel, completed by late 1951 and no longer extant, contained many of the events narrated in his first two published novels, *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree*. This can be deduced from Ralph Ellisonøs letter to Murray of February 4, 1952 and an undated (probably early 1950s) anonymous readerøs report from a publishing house. The assault and its aftermath, central to the second half of that unpublished first novel, seems to have receded in importance in Murrayøs thinking, because although the aftermath of the assault sets the trajectory of the narratorøs life in the next two novels, the next two novels do not even mention the victim of the assault, Will Spradley.

Chapter thirteen features an African American man, Will Spradley, taking a beating from a much older white man, Dudley Philpot, over a misunderstanding involving a business transaction. Spradley meekly accepts the beating from Philpot, because he thinks that if he were to fight back, he might inadvertently kill the frail Philpot and thus find himself in more trouble. Although the crux of the scene is a racially motivated beating (the only such incident in Murrayøs fiction), the legal and political apparatus of segregation is not foregrounded. The conflict could just as easily occurred between two white people or two black people. But implicit in the violence, minus its specific politics, is that Philpot knows he can get away with the beating. He knows that Spradley has no legal recourse. Through becoming entangled in the aftermath of the incident, Scooterøs engagement with the historically related and interconnected technologies of phonograph and tommy gun (a õChicago Typewriterö) comes to the fore. More specifically, because he had been in the habit of listening to the phonograph and record collection of the blues diva Hortense Hightower, he finds himself in a circumstance where he is asked to wield the Chicago Typewriter. This leads directly to his ownership and mastery of a bass fiddle, which leads him back through the world of phonograph records (their creation) and to the actual

typewriter, from which he creates his narrative. Friedrich A. Kittlerøs landmark history of technology *Grammophone, Film, Typewriter* may provide a useful lens for understanding the second half of *The Spyglass Tree*, which is a dramatic springboard for the next two novels (in which drama is absent). Understanding Murrayøs arrangement of technology in the narrative, through Kittlerøs study, may also shed light on what I see as an implied commentary on segregation through narrating interactions with this technology and its *sounds* (technology that evolved parallel to the evolution of segregation). The episode also gives Murray a chance to admit that such things happened, and thus add what could be considered an element of realism to his fiction, while also contrasting Spradleyøs retiring approach to whites with that of the assertive Ed Riggins, who in many ways is similar to (but more domestic than) Luzana Cholly (with whom he emerged from the turpentine woods). Moreover, the loud, public contempt that Riggins shows for capitalism and its mores (in Scooterøs flashback) provides a balance to the aggressive capital acquisition of Giles Cunningham ó suggesting that mockery of the folklore of capitalism and its aggressive acquisition were both valid competing responses to monopoly capitalismøs logic of diverse population management: segregation. Finally, another flashback that the conflict ensuing from the Spradley episode creates is Scooterøs recollection of a telling in the barbershop of the oral history of the 1923 defense of the campus of the unnamed, Tuskegee-like[182] college from the Ku Klux Klan. Here, consciously or not, Murray counter-states Du Boisø interpretation

[182] The campus is described very much like the Tuskegee where Murray attended from 1935-1939, and taught from 1940-1943. The unnamed town in the novel is described much like the town of Tuskegee, with its Confederate monument on a pedestal in the town square. Diverging significantly from the real Tuskegeeøs famous statue of Booker T. Washington and the unnamed freedman alongside Washington, as well as from the similar statue in *Invisible Man*, Murray presents a more imaginative statue: õIt had a triangular base that supported three bronze men, the one on the right holding a seed in one hand and a hoe in the other, the one on the left with a hammer and an anvil, and the one in the center seated with an open book on his knee, and not only had it been the most famous landmark on the campus ever since it was dedicated, it had also been one of the national emblems of Afro-American aspirations and achievement through educationö (22).

of the Klanøs 1923 march on Tuskegee, drawing on oral sources (that have since worked their way into conventional histories) that Du Bois apparently did not have access to in 1923.

A brief summary of the episode in chapter thirteen is as follows: Spradley owes money to both the upwardly-mobile African American entrepreneur and restaurateur Giles Cunningham (a mentor to and role model for Scooter, and partially based on Murrayøs biological father, John Young) and the small-time, lower-class white merchant, Dudley Philpot. Spradley has agreed to let Philpot cash his paycheck on a weekly basis and take out a fee for it. When Cunningham is about to embark on a business trip, he happens to see Spradley on pay day and requests payment of his debt. Cunningham cashes Spradleyøs paycheck and withholds the debt he is owed. When Spradley arrives at Philpotøs for the weekly pay-down of his debt balance, he thus already has cash, whereas normally he would be letting Philpot cash the check for a fee. Philpot, enraged that Spradley has let Cunningham cash his check, gives Spradley a vicious beating, which Spradley accepts due to Philpotøs fragility (and whiteness). Spradley figures he can neither run nor fight back in the situation. Philpot is not satisfied with his brutal attack on Spradley. He re-focuses his anger on the Cunningham, he decides to try to round up a mob to attack the dashing, debonair and successful entrepreneur, an owner of popular black restaurants and live music venues. The scene is of the utmost importance for the way the rest of the novel and Murrayøs next two novels unfold, because functions as a hinge of Scooterøs fate. (The Invisible Man might call it a moment from which time leaps forward.) Scooter and Spradley soon cross paths. At the beginning of chapter twenty-one, Scooter arrives at the home of the Hortense Hightower for a planned visit to

listen to her phonograph records of jazz classics.[183] While he is there, the badly beaten Spradley arrives looking for medical assistance from Hightower.

One major purpose of the episode within the logic of the tetralogy is to create an opportunity for Scooter to take a chance on performing heroic action. He ultimately does so, and though he does not actually have to engage in combat between Giles Cunninghamøs circle of friends and Philpotøs white mob, he did volunteer to do so, and acknowledged that it would likely mean the end of his academic career, and possibly his life.  According to Murray in a 1994 oral history interview for the Smithsonian, the Spradley beating was the first episode, indeed the first mature fiction, that he composed[184]. Murray told Robert OøMeally in the interview:

> I know at one time when I started, I started out with the Will Spradley-Dud Philpot episode. Then I backed up and went from there, but I had done some ó I had some of that stuff around before that. But another time, I started there, and then I backed up to this. You see? And then I backed all the way up and made a whole book before you got to it, and itøs in the second volume. For all the time I knew it, so when somebody comes and says, ÷Well, he sort of concocted the Will Spradley thingø and whatnot. I mean, that was the germinal idea, you see? Who is this guy [Scooter]? Heøs going to see this ó heøs in college andí .÷This guy has a background and that he knows what this stuff is about.ø You see? So heød start back there in another series of things. (89-90)

OøMeally does not ask a follow up question and moves on to another topic. What Murray is complaining about in his paraphrase of a critique he received (õ÷he sort of concocted the Will Spradley thingøö) is Michiko Kakutaniøs review of *The Spyglass Tree* in the *New York Times*. Kakutani wrote, in an otherwise positive review in 1991, that õportions of *The Spyglass Tree* are mannered and forced ó an extended sequence about Scooterøs involvement in a violent dispute

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[183] õAll the way out from the campus that Thursday evening the main thing on my mind was the stack of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington recordings that Hortense Hightower and I had pulled out and started playing the week beforeö (171).

[184] Elsewhere Murray has said that in the early 1940s he was writing one-act plays and dramatic sequences, none of which have survived, nor did he ever describe what they were about.

between a white moneylender and a black restaurant owner seems especially melodramatic and contrivedö (C29). Kakutani is not entirely wrong: the section feels out of place because of the introduction of both melodrama and a different narrative technique (derivative of Faulkner) and atmosphere. But it feels out of place, for the most part, because it is composed in another aesthetic frame: that of segregation fiction. This is precisely the section that appealed to the author of the anonymous readerøs report on Murrayøs manuscript in the 1950s (quoted at the outset of this section). The opposite reactions of the anonymous reader and Kakutani reflect how tastes changed from segregation well into desegregation. Murray was at the forefront of that shift in aesthetics as he embedded the kind of narrative he was critiquing within the narrative intended to counter-state it, thereby acknowledging the horrors of Jim Crow, which he undoubtedly knew very well with a desire to see them counter-stated in fiction. This is not to suggest that Kakutani is a faultless arbiter of taste. That is most certainly not the case. But that her opinion in 1991 was essentially the inverted opinion of the generally negative anonymous reader of the 1950s and is illustrative of the shift into another aesthetic ó of which Murray and the narrative itself is conscious ó and that Murray perhaps waited too long to publish for it to have the desired effect.[185]

Murray renders Spradleyøs beating graphically, while leaning heavily on a Faulkner-inspired interior monologue in the process for the style of narration, which begins with Scooter relaying Will Spradleyøs story (heard by Scooter at Hortense Hightowerøs place, where he,

[185] Incidentally, Murray told Herbert Mitgang in a 1979 interview in the *New York Times* that he was at that time working on *The Spyglass Tree* for McGraw Hill (BR17). In 1971, Murray had received a two-book contract from McGraw Hill. The contract was for *South to a Very Old Place* and a never-written/never-drafted õUntitled Book on Africa.ö The second book that seems to have fulfilled that contract was *Stomping the Blues* (1976). The interruption in years between *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree* is due to Murrayøs having written Count Basieøs *Good Morning Blues* from 1976-1985, though as he told Mitgang, he was apparently trying to write both at once as of 1979. *Good Morning Blues* was published by Random House, as were all of Murrayøs subsequent books (by Pantheon, a division of Random House). The logistics of moving contracts around and such must have also added to the delay.

Scooter, had come to listen to and discuss music) and gradually morphs into an italicized representation of the incident as narrated by Spradley. This is significant, not just because it coming from another aesthetic angle of vision, but because it appears to be the only extended moment in the four novels where Scooter does not seem to be fully in charge of the narration. The chapter does actually feel contrived, partially because it begins after twelve chapters in which nothing similar occurs, and the events have more nuanced causes and convoluted backstory than say, Stagolee Dupas straightforward encounter with Sheriff Timberlake in *Train Whistle Guitar*. But one purpose it serves is to contrast Scooter with Will Spradley and to create the opportunity for Scooter, Spradley, Cunningham, and Hightower, et al, to heroically resist *anarchic* (i.e., outside of official state sanction) white mob violence much as Stagolee Dupas had resisted the state-sanctioned violence Sheriff Earl Joe Timberlake. Here Murray contrasts responses to the two forms of Jim Crow violence: state-sanctioned and anarchic or at least state-acquiesced. (Murray then creates a commentary on white inter-class issues, when wealthy white investor Augustus Strickland alerts the sheriff to the intentions of the mob, and his disapproval of those intentions.)

Following the formulations of Norman and Williams, chapter thirteen is not exactly segregation fiction par excellence: it introduces the spatialization of race and the spatialization of fear catalyzed by cross-racial contact (Norman and Williams 5-6). But it seems significant that race is not spatialized in public. There are other significant scenes of cross-racial contact in the novel, none of which involve the spatialization of race or fear: a white taxi driver drops into a black barbershop in a manner that appears routine; Scooter reflects on a teenage liaison with a poor white girl back home, and his friendship with her brother; T. Jerome Jefferson seduces an upper-class white woman who manages a department store, and local white magnate and

dignitary Augustus Strickland is painted in a benevolent light. (Strickland wants to enter into business ventures with Cunningham and thus does not want to see him attacked by Philpotøs mob). The non-segregated (146-47) off-campus barbershop will be an important space for Scooterøs understanding of black resistance (to be discussed below), where and when he hears the story of the 1923 resistance to the Klan.

Just as *Train Whistle Guitar* features juxtaposed intonations of õnigger,ö in *The Spyglass Tree* there are similarly closely juxtaposed discourses featuring term õwhite folks.ö The question of intonation, of how these epithets sound and are consciously deployed, are crucial to Murrayøs mirrored commentary on state sanctioned violence against African Americans and violence outside of specific state sanction. Whether the words are uttered out of fear or contempt depends on the intonation. The intonation becomes an inherent character trait of the speakers who are thus juxtaposed for the effect, Spradley and Old Man Evil Ed Riggins. First, Scooter narrates the plaintive, pathetic, half-spoken/half-cried õwhite folksö of Will Spradley, which, as mentioned above, I hear on the page in a manner akin to how the phrase was spoken on film by Stepin Fetchit[186]. Scooter hears Spradleyøs story as õan almost exact verbal parallel toö Ellingtonøs composition *In a Jam* (178). The simile then imagined by Scooter is with Spradleyøs voice compared to the style of Duke Ellingtonøs long-time trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton, whose ÷sad tromboneø is featured on *In a Jam*:

> In any case, it was as if Will Spradleyøs plaintive voice, which already sounded so much like Tricky Sam Nantonøs plunger-muted

[186] Murray was fond of Fetchitøs work and believed Fetchitøs portrayals to be more complex than he is or was given credit for. Cf. *Rifftide* (87). Murray may have had Fetchit in mind when creating Spradley. Fetchit was known for an ineffectual and exaggerated anxiety, marked by his whining and worrying, reminiscent of Spradleyøs. The repetition of õwhite folksö (108) by Spradley may allude to Fetchitøs line in the 1935 film *Steamboat 'Round the Bend*, õdonøt shoot, white folks!ö which he exclaims when he tumbles out of a carved wooden whale meant to represent the whale that swallowed Jonah. Murray admired Fetchit as a comedian because he mocked white assumptions. Spradley seems like an imitation of Fetchit consciously designed without Fetchitøs irony and signification.

> trombone to begin with, was also by turns all of the hoarse ensemble shouts plus the sometimes tearful piano comps and fills of Duke Ellington himself as well as each solo instrument including the alto of Johnny Hodges, the clarinet of Barney Bigard, and so on through the call and response dialogue to the somewhat bugle/trumpet tattoo sound of Rex Stuartøs [sic] cornet out-chorus solo that you heard every time he made any mention of Giles Cunningham. (179)

Teasing out and giving verbal form to the abstract narratives he heard embedded in Ellingtonøs compositions (something that Ellington was keen to point out as well) is a feature of Murrayøs fiction, and in this case seems to hinge on õwhite folks.ö This is juxtaposed with assertive, even aggressively barked õwhite folksö of Old Evil Ed Riggins, which clearly echoes that of Stagolee Dupas (described briefly at the end of the last section). At the outset of chapter fourteen of *The Spyglass Tree*, just after Will Spradleyøs beating is narrated, Scooter reflects on a Gasoline Point denizen (who does not appear in *Train Whistle Guitar*), Riggins, whom he juxtaposes as Spradleyøs opposite:

> Not that I didnøt already know people like Will Spradley. I have always known and heard about people like him. But I must say that it has also been my good fortune to have also always known quite a few who could easily have been very much like him but were not. There was Ed Riggins, for instance, better known as Evil Ed Riggins, and perhaps even better as Old Man Evil Edí .He was the one I found myself remembering again as soon as I realized what turn the story Will Spradley was telling me was about to take. Any time his name used to be mentioned around the fireside or on the swing porch, somebody always had to say something about how he never was one to take any stuff from anybody, especially white people, whom he almost always called white folks. Even when addressing them individually, he would say What say white folks or, Howdo white folks or say, Lookahere white folks and so on, and he was the one who referred to important looking white women not as Miss Ann or Miss Lady but as Miss I Am. (110-11)

This contrasts sharply with Spradleyøs exasperated/defeated õ*White folks. White folks. White folks."* a few pages earlier (106). Clear of debt, unlike Spradley, and having no reverence for the

employer-employee relationship, Riggins, in Scooterøs recollection, is a zealous guardian of the hours for which he is not receiving an hourly wage and through his intonation of õwhite manö counteracts the spell of ideology that the paymaster tries to weave by employing the word õniggerö:

> Where the hell is that goddamn old white man with my money I done sweated all the week for? I said, This is Sadday night. I said, I done give him the time he hire me for and now this here is my goddamn time he messing with.
>
> I said, Man, where you been, white man, just coming in here this time of night? I said, Man, you know this is Sadday. And he come talking about nigger, and I said, Man, nigger nothing. I said, Business is business. I said, Nigger ainøt got nothing to do with this. I said, What about all these old hungry white folks around here? Just like everybody else. And he said, Yeah, but nigger. And I said, Man, how you going to nigger your way out of something like this? (111)

Riggins takes the idea of the hourly wage and uses its sacrosanct status within capitalism to supersede the paymasterøs fallback position of invoking white supremacy. Riggins understands how white supremacy and capitalism are both designed to create reflexive reverence in those it seeks to control. The reflexive reverence of Spradley for Philpot would be inconceivable in Riggins, who uses the volume of his voice to critique and to let others know he understands how ideologies of the control of sound are constructed to ensure reverence for certain norms and mores:

> I also knew what people in Gasoline Point meant when they said Old Evil Ed Riggins *didn't even lower his voice in the bank* because I was there one day when he came in. It was not that he was loud. He wasnøt. But when he spoke in his normal tone of voice, you suddenly realized that the tone everybody else was using was hardly above a whisper and also that they were moving about as if they were not only church but at a funeral. (112, italics in original)

The implication here is that they were somewhere more important than a church or a funeral. Scooter is signifying on the quasi-religious decorum associated with banking, which even extended down to the shadow-banking engaged in by the likes of Philpot. Incidentally, Murray mentioned to me in conversation several times that one of his goals for this bank scene recollection was to use Riggins to illustrate, in the vernacular, a point made by John Dewey[187] in his 1929 essay õThe House Divided Against Itself.ö Specifically, Murrayøs interest was in giving form to Deweyøs claim that õAnthropologically speaking, we live in a money culture. Its cult and rites dominateö (Dewey 45).

The barber shop in *Train Whistle Guitar* is an important place of social and political discussion, but in the barber shop in *The Spyglass Tree*, the discussions are on a somewhat higher level of sophistication, or at least abstraction. This could be due to the fact that it is a college town barbershop, or due to the fact that the narrator is older and more savvy and more able to grasp the abstract elements of the discussion, or both. The barber shop is a place of vernacular political theorizing and critique, in which the owner, Deke Whatley, interjects his political discourses on the practical elements of angling for power with statements such as õ*You don't have to have no Ph.D. to dig that*ö and õ*Don't care what they got in them books up there*ö (144-45, emphasis in original). Whatleyøs barber shop is also un-segregated, as white taxi cab driver Pete Carmichael drops in and out and participates in discussions (147). Quincy T. Mills, in

[187] According to Ross Posnock, Dewey was in 1929 working with Du Bois in the League of Independent Political Action (115). For Posnock, õDeweyøs notion of democracy was staunchly participatory and resisted Walter Lippmannøs argument that creating a technocratic power elite was essentialí .Du Boisøs desire that a black aristocracy would guide and elevate the masses places him somewhere between Dewey and Lippmann, for he used elitist means to nurture democratic populist potentialö (116). Though Murray praised emphasis on the õtalented tenthö by his high school principal Benjamin Franklin Baker (in fiction: Benjamin Franklin Fisher) as an effective ideology to employ in a black Mobile County high school in the 1920s and 1930s, Murrayøs own conception of democracy was much closer to Deweyøs. As will be seen in the following analysis, Murray was more comfortable with downhome, working class theories and practices of resistance that those of Du Bois, whose 1923 editorial for *Crisis* on the Tuskegee Veterans Hospital he implicitly critiques in the novel.

his 2013 book *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America* presents a cogent summary and analysis of what barber shops meant in black communities:

> black consumers wanted their own racial privacy in barber shops, not because they wanted to exclude whites, but because they did not trust them. Because of this intimacy, barber shops stand apart from traditional debates about segregation and separation, which differentiates them from other spaces in the black public sphere. Black men sought out barber shops because they wanted to willingly congregate with other black people out of the purview of white surveillance. Patrons and customers determined whom they wanted to bear witness to both their grooming and their conversations. At stake were alternative class formations and contested ideologies of race and manhood. The intimacy and inclusion within barber shops thus offer a more nuanced window into the rise and fall of Jim Crow America. (Mills 8)

Undoubtedly Millsø assessment is compatible with Murrayøs rendering (up to the point of including the white interlocutor, Carmichael). But it also raises the question of what constitutes õwhite surveillance.ö Carmichaeløs position in the barber shop discourse remains enigmatic, as he freely insults the black workers and clientele in a way that suggests he cannot mean it and is only signifying with them. While black barber shops that catered to white clientele were common, what cannot be gleaned from Millsø comprehensive history is whether or not barber shops with white and black male customer bases existed and would have existed in the Tuskegee-like college town of the novel. However, Mills notes that some barber shops that catered to black men also, surprisingly, catered to white women, especially during the upheavals in womenøs hairstyles during the 1920s. Mills writes:

> Many African Americans across the country believed Atlantaøs proposed 1926 ordinance to ban white women from black barber shops was a response to the popularity of the bobí .White barbers had been pushing for years to capture white male patronage by lobbying for various kinds of regulationí .The bob may have concerned white men who abhorred the idea of white women

> occupying the same space with black men, which was what segregation ultimately was meant to minimize. (161-62)

Mills notes earlier in his study that the 1926 Atlanta ordinance applied to white men as well. Protests from white men, including the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (in a spirit of paternalism and old south romanticism for black barbers), led to an amendment of the ruling in which only white women and children were banned from being served by black barbers (Mills 136). Mills is unclear on whether a black shop that served mostly black clientele would also serve white clientele. Where and how such a thing would be recorded, outside of a novel such as *The Spyglass Tree*, is also unclear. For the Invisible Man, such spaces and places generally end up outside recorded history. The Invisible Man tells Brother Tobitt in chapter twenty-two:

> Ask your wife to take you around to the gin mills and the barber shops and the juke joints and the churches, Brother. Yes, and the beauty parlors on Saturdays when theyøre frying hair. A whole unrecorded history is spoken then, Brother. You wouldnøt believe it but itøs true. (471)

Clearly Murray felt the same way as Ellison about the potential importance of the unrecorded barbershop discourses, and has Scooter overhear a then-as-yet unrecorded historical truth about his collegeøs 1923 resistance to the Ku Klux Klan (which worked its way into recorded history years later). Whether or not the real life analogue of the barber shop in *The Spyglass Tree* would or could have been un-segregated is ultimately beside the point, but as the space is un-segregated in the text, it then raises a curious question: what does it mean for the oral rendering of the following story to have occurred in an un-segregated space?

During the preparations for the resistance to Philpotøs mob, preparations that Scooter finds himself involved with because of his extracurricular study of music with Hortense Hightower, he recalls Deke Whatleyøs barber shop version of the history of the Klanøs march on the campus:

*Hey, remember that time when a bunch of them Old Ku Kluxers put on all of them sheets and shit and come talking about they going to bring a motorcade through the campus to show niggers that white folk really mean for them to say in their place? Well, gentlemen, the whole goddamn crew of them goddamn drunk-ass rednecks were all the way onto the grounds before it finally hit their dumb-ass asses that they hadn't seen a soul, not because everybody was either up there hiding under the bed or peeping out from behind the curtains, but because there were all of them combat-seasoned AEF veterans in the student body at that time and they and the ROTC cadets were all deployed in them hedges and behind them knolls and on top of them buildings, all them goddamn sharp-shooters and bayonet fighters and ain't no telling what else, gentlemen. Sheeet, them goddamn crackers got on the hell on through here in a hurry, then, and went on out somewhere and found themselves a hill a burned a chickenshit cross*[188] *and went back on home and went to bed. Now that's what I'm talking about when I'm talking about organization. Them white folks said, Oh shit, these niggers up here* organized! *Let's get the hell out of here* (184-5, emphasis in original).

This remembrance of this otherwise unrecorded oral history ó indeed a more or less historically true account of what happened in 1923 ó is critical to Scooterøs motivations when he decides to throw in his lot with Cunningham, Hightower, and the other defenders of Cunninghamøs business interests, knowing that heøll likely be either ruining or losing his life. Like the young men in 1861 who had heard their grandfathers talk of the War or 1812, or the young men in 1812 who had heard their fathers talk of 1776, Scooter wants to participate in the sort of action he has heard about. Of course, Scooter has also witnessed the conflict between Stagolee Dupas and Sherriff Timberlake, and knew of its outcome, and that is a crucial part of the history of his subjectivity. The exchange in which he decides to take up arms against the (rumored) white mob is as follows, beginning with Cunningham:

[188] Historical accounts of the incident at Tuskegee describe it as a forty-foot cross. Lerone Bennett, Jr., in a 1983 article for *Ebony* magazine, places the burning cross in something like the frame of the sublime: õthe man-made lava exploded with the lighting of a forty-foot cross in the town of Tuskegee. As the flames leaped into the air, a caravan of 70 cars headed for the school and the nearby hospitalö (133). Murrayøs decision to have Whatley employ the less dramatic õchickenshit crossö could be a form of signification at Bennett, of whom he was generally critical.

> Hey now look if you have some concern about getting yourself in trouble with the school authorities, I can understand that. And I said, Iøll take my chances. And we both knew that it was not just a manner of speaking what with the general campus discipline and specific dormitory rules being what they were in those days, and he said, See there, she [Hightower] knew she could count on you. (189)

Certainly there is signifying in the sense of Ellisonøs definition of õrhetorical understatementö involved here, as the situation will necessitate breaking much more than õspecific dormitory rules.ö On the preceding page Scooter describes his familiarity with firearms, noting that õhunting, like fishing, was so much a party of everyday life in Gasoline Point back there that you didnøt think much about using guns and riflesö (188). (Although Magazine Point was about few miles from the center of downtown Mobile to the south, it was also only a few miles from wilderness to the north and east; there is still much wilderness to the east today.) The firearms in the noveløs present action include õa rack of shotguns and riflesö but also heavier weaponry, revealed after the unstable Will Spradley has been escorted from the room:

> Then when he [Cunningham] opened the footlockers, I saw that there were also three Thompson submachine guns, also known as Tommy guns. And I said, Chicago Typewriters because that was what we used to call the ones you saw (and heard!) in the gangster movies in those days, and I said, These are the very first *real* ones Iøve ever actually seen, and he said, One for each place, but just in case. (188)

Scooter appears to be commenting on the history of technology in relation to the soundscape. If in *Train Whistle Guitar* Scooter can hear sounds that his ancestors would have heard õon the old plantationö (from Luzana Chollyøs swamp hollers to the old Mother Goose Clock), in *The Spyglass Tree* a twentieth century soundscape is more prominently foregrounded: radio, phonograph, film, Chicago Typewriter. And it is Scooterøs willingness to wield the Chicago

Typewriter in *The Spyglass Tree* that ultimately leads him back to the campus, after a few years as a musician, to settle in with a real typewriter in *The Magic Keys*.

With the importance of Scooterøs recollection of hearing Whatleyøs oral history in the barbershop, Murray is also making a significant statement about the real defense of Tuskegee that occurred in early July 1923 and perhaps counter-stating Du Boisøs stated opinion of what happened. In 1923, President Harding struck a deal with R.R. Moton to establish the nationøs only hospital for African American veterans, which was to be located at Tuskegee. Many people were baffled by this, as Tuskegee did not have a medical school and was in one of the most racist areas of the deep south. Why should black veterans who lived in the North, who perhaps had never even visited the South, be forced to relocate to one of the most hostile sections of the South for health care? Why not establish the hospital at say, Howard University, where there was a medical school? Du Bois opposed the placement of the hospital in Tuskegee, writing in a 1923 editorial in *The Crisis*[189]:

> They [õblack soldiersö] ought to have been cared for without discrimination in the same hospitals and under the same circumstances as white soldiers. But even if this were impossible because of race hatred, certainly the last place on Godøs green earth to put a segregated Negro hospital was in the lynching belt of mob-ridden Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and their ilk. (107)

He recommends that the best course of action would be to õtear the hospital down and rebuild it within the confines of civilizationö (107). These are valid points and Murray does not revisit this particular debate. In fact, he does not mention the hospital at all as the impetus for the Klanøs march to the campus, but he certainly shows that he agrees with Du Bois that the õlynching beltö is õmob-ridden.ö Where he disagrees with Du Bois, or where he seeks to counter-state Du Bois,

[189] Du Bois consolidated some of his thoughts on the hospital the following year in his essay õThe Dilemma of the Negro.ö

is the method or means by which Tuskegee was protected from those mobs. By not mentioning the hospital, Murray makes the Klanøs march seem even more menacing ó that is to say, occasioned by nothing in particular, except perhaps for race hatred.

In that same editorial in *Crisis* in 1923, Du Bois wrote:

> The only interest of white people in Alabama in this hospital is economic and racial. They want to draw government salaries and they do not want any Negro officials in Alabama whom the state cannot dominate. To illustrate this: the contract for burying soldiers was given to a white undertaker from Greenville, South Carolina, before the bids of local colored undertakers had a chance even to be submitted. Tuskegee is no place for such a hospital. It is not and cannot be an integral part of the school, *which the public opinion of the world of the memory of Booker T. Washington partially protects from Alabama mobs*. (107, emphasis added).

It is in the means of protection that Murray is taking issue with Du Bois. For Murray, the campus was not protected by õthe public opinion of the worldö and õthe memory of Booker T. Washingtonö but rather by õcombat-seasoned AEF veteransö and õROTC cadets;ö õgoddamn sharp-shooters and bayonet fighters and ainøt no telling what elseö (184). Contrary to the speculative opinion of Du Bois, who seemed to have an intrinsic faith in affective elements such as õpublic opinion,ö Scooter is instead claiming that the average Macon County barber shop customer knew, or would have and could have heard, that guns and bullets are what protected it. Scooter notes that õEverybody there remembered what had happenedö (184).

The story of the protection of the campus by force did not just emerge from Murrayøs imagination, but was in fact Tuskegee lore that Murray heard in the 1930s. He told the story several times to me, and separately, several times, to his attorney and executor, Lewis P. Jones, III. Murray probably told it to many others as well. It was not something that he only rendered into fiction, but a non-fiction story he liked to tell as non-fiction.

The Ku Klux Klanøs march on Tuskegee was reported by the *Washington Post* and *Time* magazine in 1923, but neither of these outlets mentions black snipers training guns on the Klan. Curiously, the incident does not seem to have been covered by the major black newspapers. It took decades for the events to filter into written history. Pete Danieløs 1970 article õBlack Power in the 1920s: The Case of the Tuskegee Veterans Hospitalö in *The Journal of Southern History* seems to be among the earliest accounts of the situation by a historian.[190] Daniel wrote:

> Yet the whites did not enter the Tuskegee Institute grounds. No doubt they had learned that other automobiles had arrived the same afternoon from Montgomery, Birmingham, and Mobile. Instead of bearing Klansmen, these automobiles brought graduates and friends of Tuskegee Institute, armed and outraged that whites were planning violence against Booker T. Washingtonøs school. Colonel William H. Walcott[191], commander of the Tuskegee Institute Cadet Corps, stationed these black militants about the buildings, along the highway, and across the access routes, allowing his reserves to remain nearby in the countryside ready to speed in if trouble broke out. (378)

Vanessa Northington Gamble offers a description of the event in her book *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945*:

> The silent procession stretched two miles. On the outskirts of town the Klan members burned a forty-foot cross. They then headed toward Tuskegee Institute and the veterans hospital. The Klan did not enter the grounds of the school. If they had, there might have been bloodshed. Faculty members then at the school later recollected that Colonel William H. Walcott, commander of the Tuskegee Institute Cadet Corps, had placed armed students, who were prepared to defend their school, around the campus. Accounts differ as to the next action of the Klan members. Some state they

[190] Lerone Bennett, Jr. drew upon Danieløs article in his 1983 article for *Ebony* magazine on the 1923 conflict.

[191] The orally transmitted memory of this was highly personal for Murray. Colonel William H. Walcottøs daughter, Carolyn Walcott Ford, attended my talk on *The Spyglass Tree* at Tuskegee University on March 17, 2011. Mrs. Ford, who must have been in her 90s, asked me to please give my best to Murray and his family with whom sheød been close friends for decades, but especially when they all lived at Tuskegee in the 1950s. At that time I did not yet know about her fatherøs role in defending the campus and thus I regret not knowing to ask her about it. I also did not talk much about the 1923 Klan march in my talk to a large group of undergraduates, but rather discussed Murrayøs years at Tuskegee and contrasted the image of the college in *The Spyglass Tree* with the image of the college in *Invisible Man*.

> slowly proceeded past the hospital and then dispersed. Others state that they entered the hospital grounds before disassembling.
>
> Although the march was not violent, the NAACPøs Walter White later reported that his fair-skinned brother had infiltrated the Klan by passing as white and learned that it had made plans to kill Major [President] Moton and blow up Tuskegee Institute. (93)[192]

It took decades for this history to work its way into articles and books. It was initially preserved orally. As Whatley (the barber) notes, the history of the resistance had to remain oral and could not be printed (as in the analogous situation of the Stagolee Dupas story) because of how it would upset the social order. Whatley notes that printed news[193] of such resistance was likely to õ*drive white folks crazier than the Brownsville raid*ö (185, emphasis in original). The display of resistance had practical consequences. For better or worse, the hospital remained at Tuskegee, but at least it was soon to have an all-black staff. Grace Elizabeth Hale writes in her book *Making Whiteness*: õBy 1924, Tuskegee Veterans Hospital had an entirely black staff. Necessitated by segregation, the hospital became another space of southern black autonomyö (195). Black autonomy is on Scooterøs mind as well, as he follows up his relaying of his memory of the barbershop story of resistance to the Klan circa fifteen years earlier with a reflection on black autonomy in the college town at the current moment. After recalling Whatleyøs remarks about keeping the story out of the newspapers, Scooter remembers in the next paragraph how Whatley described the power relations between white sheriff Cat Rogers and the autonomous black neighborhood of Gin Mill Crossing:

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[192] Military historian John Robert Schneller has written of General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.øs vocally silent but strongly defiant opinion of the Klanøs march: õThe Davis house stood on the route of the march. Although black families had been advised to remain indoors with their lights off, the Davis family witnessed the march from their front porch with the lights on, with Davis Sr. wearing his white dress uniformö (Schneller 70). Murray was to become good friends with General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who was eleven years old at the time of the incident.

[193] Scooter understands the public relations dynamic at work, and applies this insight of Whatleyøs to the topic of keeping Cunninghamøs arsenal a secret if his guns do not end up being used (189).

> Iøm talking about just letting them get the goddamn message that itøs going to cost them something because youøre willing to put your ass on the line. Otherwise, here they come with some old foolishness like itøs their birthright to make niggers jump. But now you take them people over in Gin Mill Crossing. Old bad-assed Cat Rogers himself donøt go messing around over in there without first off giving somebody some advance notice, and heøs the high sheriff and a tough somitch by any standard. Even if Cat want to get somebody that everybody already knows broke the law and got to go to jail, Cat always going to call Yank Williams or Big Eag, and theyøll either say come on in or weøll send him out or he ainøt here, and thatøs good enough for Cat Rogers. (185)

Gin Mill Crossing, in the sense that it is a quasi-autonomous black community, sounds very much like the Gasoline Point of Scooterøs youth (not to mention Hurstonøs Eatonville). Cat Rogers respects the autonomy of the Gin Mill Crossing neighborhood in general, whereas Sheriff Earl Joe Timberlake had violated not only the Gasoline Point neighborhood, but the *customary* autonomy of the honky-tonk, and pays the price at the hands of Stagolee Dupas. Whatleyøs connection of the defense of the campus with the autonomy of Gin Mill Crossing is important as well. The reader does not learn how Gin Mill Crossing carved out its niche of autonomy but it did so without white, Northern money that bought weapons for the college, which was licensed or accredited by the state to provide military training.

Scooterøs recollection of Deke Whatleyøs history of the incident (which never actually mentions that it was about the hospital *per se*) foreshadows the conclusion of the novel, in which nothing happens. But covert preparation had been made for overt action, should Philpotøs mob have materialized, should Strickland have been out of reach, and the Cunningham groupøs need for self-defense have arisen. The hospital, of course, takes center stage in American literary history as its Veteran residents cross paths with Mr. Norton and the Invisible Man at the Golden Day. Once again commenting on Ellison, Murray is emphasizing the point that all African American veterans of the first World War I were not all suffering from mental ailments like the

veterans the Invisible Man meets, but rather, many õcombat-seasoned AEF veteransö were ready, willing and able to defend the Tuskegee. Giles Cunningham himself is a World War I veteran as well. For Murray, African American veterans of World War I (including his own father, John Young, whose doughboy helmet adorned the wall in Murrayøs bathroom until Murray died) were heroic figures, not the pathetic or grotesque figures in chapter three of *Invisible Man*.

This valorization of black World War I veterans is certainly part of Murrayøs ongoing dialogue, debate, counter-statement of and õtrading twelvesö with Ellison. But it is precipitated not only by engagement with Ellisonøs work, but also by his own personal admiration for those who were almost lost to history. Their history of resistance to white supremacy could not be told during segregation and thus had to be told after it was long ended and enters the historical record at that point.

The subplot generated by the assault on Will Spradley but Dudley Philpot creates a series of circumstances that ends with Scooter being awarded a bass fiddle by Hortense Hightower (206), who had been giving him an ongoing seminar in jazz *listening*, and becomes one of his most important teachers, along with Luzana Cholly and Stagolee Dupas. The reason Scooter gets mixed up in what almost becomes a deadly racial conflagration is because he was at Hightowerøs in order to listen to her records. Murray was always thinking in terms of fairy tale logic, and the award that Scooter receives is perhaps best understood along those lines. It is a very substantial prize. According to Jo Jones in *Rifftide*, a nice bass fiddle (õan old good oneö) cost about $5,000 in the early 1940s (61). The instrument given to Scooter by Hightower had been õdownstairs in the closet since I donøt know when,ö so presumably it is an old good one (206). As far-fetched as this exchange is in terms of realist or naturalist fiction often employed in the contestation of segregation and exposition of pernicious nature and effects, it is makes sense within the logic of

a fairy tale, which is what Murray insisted he was writing. The titles of the next two novels (*The Seven League Boots* and *The Magic Keys*), written later in Murrayøs life, suggest further divergence from realism or naturalism and indeed, are utterly unrealistic ó a feature that bothers some readers. But after the exchange of the bass fiddle for the willingness to risk life and limb in the performance of heroism, the pretense of realism dissipates. Though none of the subsequent action can be said to be supernatural or even magically-realistic, Scooter simply has the sort of good fortune that does not generally take shape in life the way it takes shape in the novels. Indeed, as mentioned above, just at the point where *The Seven League Boots* strains even the most sympathetic readerøs credulity, Murrayøs most realistic and best-rendered female character, Gaynelle Whitlow, helps to bring Scooter and the narration back down to earth (229-53). Most importantly, the action in *The Spyglass Tree* enables the future position from which the narrator can narrate the four novels ó that of a writer.

In *The Spyglass Tree* the oral histories of the barber shop and the aural history Scooter studies with Hightower intersect at the moment of resistance to the kind of anarchic violence sanctioned by Jim Crow. The everyday nature of the Jim Crow regime is elided. It is only shown at its most heinous, with its day to day mechanics remaining invisible. It becomes a more dramatic and thus in some ways a more directly combatted evil. But still it remains something like an abstract evil ó the sort of evil of the fairy tale that Murray was trying to emulate and recreate outside and apart from the mode that dominated fiction written by African Americans. The off-campus world of Murrayøs college novel does not feature characters like Jim Trueblood or the patrons of the Golden Day, but rather characters such as Giles Cunningham, Deke Whatley, and Hortense Hightower who understand and refract the relationships between sound and resistance.

## Chapter Six: Percival Everett's *Suder*: Evading Segregation in the Segregated South and a Neo-Segregation Narrative in the 1980s.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand and explain the significance of Percival Everettøs first novel *Suder* (1983) in relation to my study of sound, cultural recovery, and the evasion of segregation in Hurston, Ellison, and Murray and its inter-generational extension of their cultural recovery project that sought to preserve in literature (through a strategy that tied memory and subjectivity to the aural) of what desegregation threatened to obfuscate (and what the segregation aesthetic often obfuscated). This chapter will also discuss *Suder* in relation to Everettøs later works (many of which travel along a trajectory familiar to readers of Ellison and Murray), thus, in relation to a body of work that has made important interventions in debates about novelistic representations of African American life during and after de jure segregation (and õJim Crow,ö a term which implies and encompasses the subtle, unwritten, and more sinister and insidious layer of oppression than õsegregationö). *Suder* may be understood metaphorically as a bebop improvisation on the blues-and-swing underlying and informing the work of Hurston, Ellison, and Murray.[194] *Suder* is about and is narrated by an African American baseball player, Craig Suder, who circa 1981, at thirty-two years old, and reaching the twilight of a successful career, suddenly encounters racial violence. Craig Suder does not say if is the first moment of racial violence he has encountered or the most recent of many, but because of his elaborate and extended reaction it the days following it can be reasonably surmised that if this is not the first,

[194] Although Murray wrote to Ellison that his characters were õrendered in bop,ö Murray did not represent bop musicians or the bop moment in his fiction. This combined with Ellisonøs well known ambivalence about bop (section about McIntyre in Mintonøs aside) I think makes it possible to say, in a limited but illustrative short-hand way, that part of Everettøs goal in *Suder* is a bop improvisation on Ellison and Murray, just as Charlie Parker and Bud Powell (important in *Suder*) created bop improvisations on Duke Ellington, who was so strongly championed by Ellison and Murray.

then it is the first in a long while. This incident, in which he assaulted by several white men outside a bar in Baltimore after a game, opens up pathways of memory that lead him back to serene memories of African American music and naming practices, shared with him by a sage-like fictional version of jazz pianist Bud Powell in 1958-59, minus most of Powellø historical eccentricities and mental illness (real or alleged). Like Ellison and Murray, Everett is using the soundscape and particularly blues idiom music as a substrate for memory to return to the era of de jure segregation and retrieve something useful from it that had been obscured (for him) during his baseball career.

In juxtaposing Craig Suder and Bud Powell, both between ages thrity-two and thirty-three, and while setting himself in relation to them, Everett in 1983 was thinking along the lines of or on the same wavelength that musicologist Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. does his book *The Amazing Bud Powell: Black Genius, Jazz History, and the Challenge of Bebop* (2013). Ramsey writes:

> The idea of musical genius in jazz gets its logic from a number of cultural configurations. Underpinning the black musical genius notion are historical patterns that situate musical talent on a continuum between literacy and athletic ability. Literary production is, of course, the most prestigious of the three; after all, this activity reflects the kind of cultural capital most closely linked to western cultural dominance. The physical labor associated with legacies of slavery, sharecropping, and the institutionalization of a black service class continues to shape how black achievements in other spheres are interpreted. Toiling black bodies became distanced from associations with intellectual pursuits. Musical ability seems to occupy a middle ground in this configuration. It requires a combination of physical and intellectual activity, and depictions of Powellø genius are always cast as a public, voyeuristic, drama involving either a tug-of-war or a temporary truce between the two types of activity. (88)

Everett was concerned with these same relations of activity as he explored the shifting of expectations of a black athlete in the early years of integration. Powell is a master musician, while Craig Suder is, until the outset of the novel, a star baseball player. As his athletic abilities fail him, he attempts and fails to become a musician, but does, since he narrates the story, become a writer or at least a storyteller. He tries to become a musician without any sort of regiment or discipline and fails, but does invent a new sort of athleticism (flying through the air on wings he constructs from plastic bags) outside of any previous conception of exploited black labor. At the same time, since he is telling the story from some point in the future, he has also, in this future, become a writer.

The initial moment of slippage in his athletic ability exposes him to racial violence that, as the text would appear to imply, his star status on the field may have blinded him to or exempted him from in his career up to this point. Craig Suderøs failing athletic abilities set the stage for the 1981 narrative to become a õneo-segregation narrativeö while his search in his memory for the wonders of black musicianship under segregation become what I am tentatively calling an evasion-of-segregation narrative similar in form and feeling to works by Hurston, Ellison, and Murray and comprising an alternative tradition to the one Kenneth Warren seems to be subsuming in a too-totalizing master narrative.

*Suder* is not mentioned by Brian Norman, one of the premier theorists of neo-segregation fiction, yet fifty percent of the novel appears to be an ideal example of what Norman would classify as a õneo-segregation narrative.ö For Norman, a õneo-segregation narrativeö is one that õreturns to the Jim Crow era with one eye on the historical record and one eye on the presentö (155). *Suder* achieves this one-eye-here and one-eye-there effect almost literally, as the 1981 narrative and the 1958-59 narrative are interwoven or interleaved tightly so that few moments in

1981 are not immediately followed by recollections of 1958-9.[195] As Craig Suder fights the ennui of a declining baseball career, jarring physical and verbal encounters with the lingering residual traces of Jim Crowøs hegemony open up a path, through memory, to a new kind of freedom (which I describe as a õbecoming-birdö), where he is guided to recollecting his 1958-59 friendship (micro-community, or covert public, or assemblage) with Bud Powell; a winding, complex, and (possibly hitherto repressed) personal history, triggered and guided by intense listening to Charlie Parkerøs õOrnithology,ö a record he rediscovers in his own house after his encounters with post-segregation racism (the circumstances created by which lead to the rediscovery of the record).

The neo-segregation narrative that comprises the 1981 sections of *Suder* are partially about the failure of the state to live up to the promises of desegregation and integration. Craig Suder is unmoored from conventional life by his failing baseball career. His slipping prowess on the field has made him the target of racist hooligans in Baltimore. His (forced, although supposedly temporary) departure from his team leads him to encounter racist law enforcement figures in rural Oregon. His flight from the life he has known in baseball, which can be thought of as an adjunct of the state (õAmericaøs past time,ö after all), brings him into encounters with the others or alternatives of the state: a black member of the Narragansett tribe who lives on a boat, and a Mao Zedong study group made up of Chinese immigrants in Portland. While Craig is fleeing (to where, he does not know), traveling a line of flight that culminates in a radical departure from any arrangement of human life yet known, he is undergoing a series of vivid

[195] The c. 1981 sections take place on pages: 3-6, 10-13, 17-20, 23-6, 27-9, 34-8, 41-3, 47-50, 54-7, 60-2, 65-72, 77-9, 82-7, 89-92, 95-8, 99-100, 102-5, 108-10, 113-15, 119-24, 127-28, 129-32, 133-38, 139-40, 142-45, 146-47, 148-49, 152-57, 159-60, 162-70, 171. The c. 1958-59 sections take place on pages: 7-9, 13-17, 21-2, 26-7, 30-4, 39-41, 43-7, 51-4, 58-60, 72-7, 79-82, 87-9, 93-5, 99, 100-1, 105-7, 116-18, 124-26, 128-29, 132-33, 141, 145-46, 147-48, 151, 157-58, 160-61.

flashbacks that bring him face to face with the dysfunctional if successful family in which he grew up in Fayetteville, North Carolina in the late 1950s, but more importantly, to his relationship with family friend Bud Powell, as he tries to recall, reframe, and reprocess what Powell taught him about both music and chance.

In 1958, Powell granted previously nickname-less Craig (age ten) the name õBird,ö after Charlie Parker. In 1959, Powell taught him a cryptic lesson about chance. In 1981, Craig is literally fleeing the power of the state (running naked through the woods after being falsely accused of raping a white woman) when he leaps off a cliff and flies like a bird (with plastic garbage bags for wings). Heød been preparing to õbeö a bird for some time. In fact, he had indeed kissed the accusing woman a bar: she had a cold and heød wanted to catch it in order to try to raise his body temperature to that of a bird. I will attempt in this chapter to understand this outrageous novel, the first in Everettøs complex and prolific career, and attempt to situate it within several realms of discourse.

Everett is forty-three years younger than Ellison and forty years younger than Murray, and yet in many ways he has shared their concerns, their irreverent humor, and their narrative strategies with respect to sound and memory, especially in *Suder*. In his prolific career Everett has engaged with important issues facing questions of the representation of African American life and culture. The study of Everettøs work can open up new perspectives on some of the questions raised in Warrenøs *What Was African American Literature?* and perhaps complicate and/or build upon some of Warrenøs subsequent assertions on the topics at hand.

Before embarking on a close reading of *Suder*, it may be instructive to briefly consider Everettøs best-known novel *Erasure* (2001). Everettøs inter-generational extension of and

elaboration on the strategies of Ellison and Murray in *Suder* ó strategies for preserving the memories of African American culture and community through music ó could help shed light on Everettøs strategies and goals for *Erasure*. As mentioned above, Brian Norman does not mention *Suder* in his book *Neo-Segregation Narratives: Jim Crow in Post-Civil Rights American Literature* (2010). But he does select *Erasure* as an example to illustrate what a neo-segregation narrative is *not*.

> In Percival Everettøs *Erasure* (2001), the unquestionable backwardness of minstrelsy, darkies, and segregation artifacts provides a language to articulate modern-day racial protest. Specifically, the protagonist expresses exasperated rage that marketable depictions of African Americans fail to speak to the full register of his (and othersø) experiences. The protagonist, writer Thelonius ÷Monkø Ellison, fumes at the blockbuster success of a novel called *We's Lives in Da Ghetto*: õThe reality of popular culture was nothing new. The truth of the world landing on me daily, or hourly, was nothing I did not expect. But this book was a real slap in the face. It was like strolling through an antique mall, feeling good, liking the sunny day and then turning the corner to find a display of watermelon-eating, banjo-playing darkie carvings and a pyramid of Mammy cookie jars. 3 million dollars.ø For post-Jim Crow subjects such as Thelonius, the obvious ridiculousness of segregationøs cardboard caricatures and racist stereotypes can clarify more elusive race politics today. Still, Erasure isnøt a neo-segregation narrative because Everett imports segregationøs artifacts into the contemporary momentí .Neo-segregation narratives consciously induce what I call temporal dysphoria because we encounter Jim Crow today when we think ó and know! ó he should be then. There is a strange contradiction when contemporary writers return to a Jim Crow period to comment on post-civil rights concerts: the simplicity of Jim Crow thinking is simultaneously absurd and useful. (155)

This õtemporal dysphoriaö Norman describes is not only what Craig Suder seems to be feeling but is also the intended effect on the reader. *Suder* becomes neo-segregation fiction in the 1981 sections while evading segregation in the other sections. The spatialization of race and spatialization of fear, combined with key scenes of cross racial contact (to once again reprise

Normanøs and Williamsøs definition in *Representing Segregation*) are represented in the 1981 chapters in a way that includes menace and physical danger. The racism in the 1958-59 chapters is rhetorical. Like in Murrayøs fiction, it is countered by assertive black ripostes. The 1958-59 sections, focusing on what Deleuze might call the õpetty familyö are largely unpleasant, even actively irritating, with the exceptions of the scenes featuring Powell, through whom Everett can enter what Deleuze might call a (world-historical) õdelirium,ö which is the opposite of the Oedipal (or allegedly Oedipal) family drama.

*Erasure*, on the other hand, takes place very much in 2001; its present is one of rap and Oprah. A loose satire of the ignorance and grim dysfunction in Sapphireøs novel *Push* (1996), *Erasure* thus (unintentionally) doubles as a satire of the 2007 film *Precious*, which is based upon *Push*, and which writers such as Ishmael Reed feel has had a pernicious impact on the black image in the United States. *Push*, with its African American father-daughter incest story, it could be argued, owes a cynical debt to, and in a sense arrives pre-parodied by Ellison in *Invisible Man*, which anticipated the pseudo-solemnity with which white audiences regard such stories, as they ravenously consume them. In *The Omni-Americans* Murray refers to such works as õsocial science fiction,ö and additionally in *The Hero and the Blues*, as õfinger-pointing fiction.ö They are more or less examples of what Hurston called õthe sobbing school of Negrohood.ö Everett, like Murray and Ellison, recognizes such works and the tradition that they come from, as an off-shoot of the segregation aesthetic, and as a form of propaganda for white supremacy.

In his 1991 essay õSinging to the Blind[196],ö Everett wrote, õSimply put, our readers are white. Black people do not buy books. We are at the mercy of a market which seeks to affirm its

[196] The essay is partially about the attempt by the Hollywood studio Embassy Pictures to create a film adaptation of *Suder* that was to cast Craig Suder as white. Everett resisted this and the studio agreed to cast Suder as black, and sought Eddie Murphy or Richard Pryor for the role. The film was never made, but in the essay Everett claims a

beliefs about African-Americansö (10). With this position in mind, it is not surprising that he saw, five years later, how *Push* could potentially be harmful and, five years hence, wrote a devastating parody of it. In that same essay he wrote that Suder was õa novel about an African-American shedding the baggage of Americaö (9). In a sense it was also Everettøs attempt to engage and shed the baggage of two traditions (segregation, via a neo-segregation narrative and an otherwise-than-segregation narrative). Erasure, for which he has thus become best known, is a re-engagement of the kind of social science fiction (i.e. *Push*) that is not contesting Jim Crow but rather exhibiting black pathology with no Jim Crow to contest.

A thorough investigation of *Suder* might more fully aid in understanding the context and intellectual roots of *Erasure*, but more pertinently it might reveal how, having already written a neo-segregation narrative, Everett could, nearly two decades later, experiment with its precursor(s). At the same time, understanding the goals, interventions, and work performed by *Erasure* might enrich the critical understanding of *Suder*. In a practical sense, the success of *Erasure*, (along with the success of number of Everettøs other recent novels, such as *I Am Not Sidney Poitier*) creates a space and/or occasion for *Suder* to be an object of relevant critical scrutiny in literary history and not as an obscure curiosity. In *Erasure*, an obscure African American writer named Thelonious õMonkö Ellison crafts a scathing satire of a current bestseller, *We's Lives in Da Ghetto*, in which a woman from the black middle class, Juanita Mae Jenkins, spends a few days in Harlem and writes it up with a focus on the negative aspects of African American life. *Push* (and thus, *Precious*), widely admired by well-meaning whites and African Americans, nevertheless paints bleak picture of African American life that Everett does not feel is an adequate metaphor for complexity of ÷the life he knows,ø to echo Ralph Ellison.

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friend of his in Hollywood saw advance promotional artwork that portrayed Suder as white anyway, despite the studioøs promises to the contrary.

õMonkö Ellison responds to *We's Lives in Da Ghetto* with the satirical broadside *My Pafology*, the narrative of Van Go Jenkins by one õStagg R. Leigh,ö mocking the genre of the pathological black representation in which *We's Lives in Da Ghetto* indulges, and which Ellison and Murray railed against.

In the most comprehensive and critically astute essay on Everettøs career to date, Margaret Russett employs terms and frames a debate that can be understood (in context) as analogues to Warrenøs õAfrican American literature.ö Understanding *Erasure* as a commentary on the resuscitation of this tradition may assist in understanding how *Suder* is of course related to and yet working in and through the alternate tradition I have been striving to locate and analyze, that is, the tradition that searches for, through the memory of a music-dominated soundscape, the retrieval, recovery, and preservation of positive elements of African American culture that thrived in spite of segregation. Russett, a scholar of British Romanticism (and longtime colleague of Everett at the University of Southern California) has ventured far afield in her comprehensive essay on Everettøs career through 2005, yet appears, with a slightly different vocabulary, to intuit claims later made by Warren. Russett writes:

> for all its parodic intention, *My Pafology* is for many readers the most compelling section of *Erasure* ó fast, mean, and very funny. It is also, in its plot outline, a transparent updating of Richard Wrightøs *Native Son*, the foundational text in the construction of the category ÷African-American novel.ø
>
> While affiliating the meta-diegesis of *Erasure* with Wright, Everett associates his persona with a competing, avant-garde version of African-American culture: Thelonious Ellison is an obvious composite of the jazz innovator and the author of *Invisible Man*. The double narrative of *Erasure* might then be understood as a dialectical reading of ÷the African-American novel,ø suggesting that this category is less unified than publishers or academic syllabi often imply. By characterizing Van Go and his author, Stagg, as iterations of a pernicious stereotype, Everett seems to contend for

> the ethicoóaesthetic superiority of the Ellison tradition over Wrightøs gritty realist legacy. But if we assume this to be the case, we must also note that the structure of the argument depends on and perpetuates the presence of Van Go, Bigger Thomas, and their ilk. Furthermore, this thesis calls attention to another ó first suggested by Ralph Ellison and then elaborated by Henry Louis Gates. If it is theoretically indefensible to classify literary works by the genetic traits of their writers, a tradition may still be constituted by the way those writers allude to, ÷assault,ø and revise their literary inheritance. Simply put, an African-American novel is one that ÷signifies onø earlier African-American novels. By this measure, *Erasure* is indisputably an African-American novel, with and without irony. (364-5)

Writing five years before Warrenøs *What Was African American Literature?,* was published and two years before his Du Bois Lectures at Harvard that became the book, Russett seems to presage his terms and his argument, as well as his response to Glenda R. Carpioøs critique (discussed in the first chapter), in which he claims that an alternative to õAfrican American Literatureö (written by Hurston, in Carpioøs example) is still õAfrican American Literature.ö If Everettøs intention in his mid-career critically acclaimed novel was to parody the neo-õsobbing school of Negrohoodö that found a new market in the 1990s, his intention at the outset of his career seems to have been an attempt to write, while in acknowledgement of non-disappearance of Jim Crowøs hegemony in 1981, a kind of fiction that elides Jim Crowøs existence in 1958-59, to show the richness of African American life in the period in spite of the system. Russettøs quote also speaks to Everettøs oft-mentioned anxiety about being thought of as a õblack writer.ö Very much like Murray[197], Everett recoils from the label.

Before Sapphireøs *Push*, Everett had been moving in other directions far afield from race or race relations in the United States. His 1997 novel *Frenzy*, for instance, takes place among the

[197] In a 1973 statement published in 2005, Murray wrote: õWhen I hear the term black writer; certain alarms go off. Remember, the last thing I want to be mistaken for is a spokesman. If Iøm not one of the best living American writers, no thanks for being one of the best living black writersí You achieve universality through particulars, so if a critic says ÷Murray has mastered the black idiom,ø Iøm proud of that. I would also be proud of somebody said Iød mastered French, Italian, Latin, or the stream-of-consciousness techniqueö (Cranston 26).

ancient Greek gods and characters from Greek mythology, and has little to nothing ostensibly to do with race in the United States. It is much closer to say, Roberto Calassoøs academically informed novelistic re-imagination of the Greek myths in *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* (1994) than say, *Native Son* or *A Raisin in the Sun*. Everett re-enters one aspect of the African American tradition (the protest-aspect, social science-oriented aspect) when he apparently felt the need to counter-state *Push*. Everett wanted to (and did) branch off from õblackö topics, but was clearly drawn back in through his desire to counter-state *Push* out of a sense of responsibility to (echoing Ellison) the ÷richness of a life he knows.ø

Yet this still returns to the question of what makes a writer a õblackö writer. Russett calls *Suder* õthe ÷blackestø of allö of Everettøs novels (360). She puts õblackestö in appropriate scare quotes, but it is clear what she means. The book is, after all, (I am arguing) a neo-segregation narrative coupled with a narrative that evades segregation. Part of this taxonomic problem seems to stem from a desire to create succint labels. Everett is both a ÷black writer,ø in that he is African American and can comment authentically on the African American experience in a way that white writers cannot, and he is also a ÷black writerø in the sense that he sometimes inserts himself, through his work, into debates about how African Americans have been and should be represented in fiction.

Where then does a novel such as upper-middle class Jewish writer Adam Mansbachøs *Angry Black White Boy* (2005), which comments on Wright, Ellison, Malcolm X, and hip-hop (among many other topics in African American culture) fall in to such a tradition? (Everett blurbed *Angry Black White Boy* and Mansbach counts him as a major influence.)[198] This is

[198] Or, since white male Jewish writers such Mansbach have been commenting on African American literature and culture for nearly one hundred years, and their commentary has become part of the narrative history of African American literature, what becomes the best way to think about say, Korean American Young Jeanøs Leeøs startling

related to the question posed by Eric Sundquist in his review of *What Was African American Literature?* Here Sundquist asks of Warrenøs formulation, õIf African American literature is strictly defined as a response to Jim Crow, could it not be proposed that white writers like Lillian Smith or John Howard Griffin, whatever we think of their efforts, wrote African American literatureö (551)? But then, what to call this literature and what should the terms imply? Segregation, neo-segregation, and desegregation fiction are ultimately terms that can reduce literature to stark political readings while obscuring the aesthetic procedures initiated by say, Toomer, Brown, Fisher, Hughes, and Hurston and continued, in various ways, by Petry, Ellison, Murray, Morrison, Everett and many others. õBlues fictionö might have been a good term for this other tradition, but for Murray, it is fiction of a particular existential cast and not essentially relating to blues music per se or black life (as Hemingway is the exemplary practitioner of blues fiction for Murray, as related my chapter on Murray). As Murray has shown in his essay on James Baldwin, there is a difference between using the blues in a setting and using it structurally/aesthetically or philosophically. Perhaps something akin to õAfro-aural-memory-fiction,ö which is intended to allude to what Alexander Weheliye has called õsonic Afro-modernity,ö would work for a convenient if imperfect label. The larger question seems to revolve around the question of writers (and critics) being õblack writersö in the sense that they can speak from a privileged position about black life and issues and white writers (and critics) who comment on these issues.

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and hilarious 2009 play *The Shipment*, which dissects and interrogates numerous clichés of many of hip-hopøs and Hollywoodøs stock representations of African American urban life in integration, and calls for and has been staged with an all-black cast. Leeøs other plays, all quite witty and surreal, include works inspired by her own Korean American experience, a reimagining of Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth on vacation together, a re-telling of *King Lear*, and other seemingly eclectic and apparently disconnected topics. In *The Shipment* does she become an õAfrican American writerö? It does not seem appropriate at all to say so. She is commenting on African American culture in one discreet work. She is an observer of the American scene, in which representations of African American life comprise a major slice of mass media. (The title of *The Shipment* alludes the packaging and commodification of African American culture for mass consumption.)

Mansbach, like his contemporary Young Jean Lee and like Sinclair Lewis and Saul Bellow before them, is a keen observer of African American culture who has also written about his own specific ethnic background and history. Mansbach is a novelist, poet, and critic and great admirer of Baldwin, Everett, Ellison, and Murray. He uses *Native Son* as a key intertext in his novel *Angry Black White Boy*, in addition to riffing on Martin Luther King Jr.øs õLetter From a Birmingham Jailö (in an obvious manner, as the protagonist writes a poem called õLetter From a Birmingham Busö) and, more obliquely, Du Boisøs 1924 essay õThe Dilemma of the Negro,ö which is not mentioned in the novel but informs the moral of the story: that the opposite of white power is not black power, but a dismantling of white privilege. One question that arises from this analysis is the question of whether or not the term õAfrican American Literatureö equates (as it does to a large extent for Warren) with the segregation aesthetic or a desire to indexically contest segregation. If every black personøs life in the United States somehow fell under the umbrella of Jim Crow, then how could any work of literature not address Jim Crow in some way, even if it does not address it directly? This reductive analysis (a paraphrase of Warrenøs argument) is compelling to an extent, but it does not account for significant aesthetic differences hashed out the Wright-Hurston debate of 1937-38 or the Murrayøs 1966/1970 critique of Baldwin. And where and how to then classify a novel such as *Angry Black White Boy*, taking place in 1998 and written by a white man born in 1976, yet commenting on a variety of õblackö texts from across the span of American history? There is no need to foist an arbitrary binary on a work of art. *Angry Black White Boy* like *Kingsblood Royal* (1947) by Sinclair Lewis, both *is and is not* õAfrican American Literature.ö

In *Kingsblood Royal*, a prosperous young white bank executive in the upper mid-west discovers that his ancestry is one-thirty-second African. Troubled by the moral dilemma of

passing for white, and after having studied African American culture first hand for some time, he decides to make his African ancestry public, and thus loses his position in the bank, his considerable social prestige, and nearly his life. These novels are African American literature in the sense that they are commentary upon and engagement with a specific textual and social dimensions of African American history and not African American literature because they were written by writers of non-African American backgrounds.. And yet, a figure of no less importance to the understanding of African American life and history than Carter G. Woodson found *Kingsblood Royal* to be brilliant and praiseworthy when he reviewed it in *The Journal of Negro History* and wrote: õthere is hardly a Negro twenty-five years old who from his own knowledge cannot document *Kingsblood Royal*ö (364). Sinclair Lewis may have been (following Sundquistøs logical extension of Warren) an ÷African American writerø when writing *Kingsblood Royal* (which is not to say in blackface, because the emphatic antiracist spirit of that novel would not make such a statement remotely fair or accurate), but he was not when he was writing say, *Main Street*. In short, these terms simply do not work as they now are widely understood and need to be expanded and understood as fluid. Richard Wrightøs oeuvre is õAfrican American literatureö (in Warrenøs sense) par excellence. Ellison, Murray, and Everett are all responding to Wright in numerous ways, but clearly their work is on a different wavelength. Warren claims that if there had been no Hayes-Tilden compromise and if Reconstruction had thus not failed, but been carried through, African Americans would still have created literature. What then would this literature have looked like? It seems to me it would have been built on oral/aural traditions, (due to historical/economic conditions created and instituted by slavery) and thus would have resembled the fiction of Hurston, Petry (in parts), Ellison, Murray, and Everett (at least in *Suder*). As mentioned above, Russett colloquially suggests a clue to *Suder*. She refers to it as õ[P]robably

the ÷blackestø of allö of Everettøs novels (360). What she is aiming for through that slippery and imprecise term (which I assume she assumes that readers practically know what she means) is the noveløs embrace of black music and black rhetorical traditions.

Following Russett on *Erasure*øs relation to broader literary history, it becomes clear how Everett, while responding to Sapphire, rejects her portrayal of a bleak post-segregation African American life while simultaneously rejecting Wrightøs strategy of pointing out, through a similar aesthetic, the pernicious effects of segregation. If *Erasure*, as Brian Norman has argued, is not neo-segregation fiction, then neither is its object of mockery, *Push*. *Push*, along with the *My Pafology* narrative embedded in *Erasure*, is cast in the aesthetic mold of fiction designed to combat de jure Jim Crow without Jim Crowøs defeat as a goal, even if Jim Crowøs ghost haunts a world where racism is still endemic, and that is unfair to many people of color.

In *Suder*, Everett has created an early example neo-segregation fiction (contemporary to 1981) but uses it as a foil to offset the noveløs flashback-narrative. Certainly it could reflect a continuing adjustment of someone who came of age during the contentious period of desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement (even if Craig Suder does not share any memories of his life from 1959-1981 whatsoever). The neo-segregation narrative may be a cover from under which something else emerges. Segregation creates the material and historical conditions that result in Bud Powelløs respite(s) in the Suder home (as opposed to presumably unavailable commercial lodging), but it does not govern the human interactions between Craig and Powell. Thus, rather than discuss the heralded *Erasure* at further length, the themes and goals of which are clear, surgically precise, and devastating in comic effect, it may be more instructive to consider the more unusual *Suder*, Everettøs first effort in a long career that has made and

continue to make significant interventions in the understanding of the complex world(s) of African Americans in the United States in the early twenty-first century.

The old conflict between Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright ó the conflict between evasive-of-segregation fiction (imprecisely, broadly speaking) and segregation fiction, replayed with a twist in Murrayøs critique of James Baldwin (since Murray and Baldwin were personal friends who differed in opinion), plays (in broad outlines) out again in the conflict between Everett and Sapphire. Everettøs goal is to expose the sad fact that it is easy to get rich peddling black pathology and fewer ways to go broke faster than to counter-state it. In light of Everettøs subsequent success with other acclaimed novels such as *God's Country*, *Glyph*, and *I Am Not Sidney Poitier,* it will be instructive to subject his first novel to what is intended here to be the most thorough close reading to date.

## II. *Suder* in a Variety of Critical Contexts

To distinguish Craig Suder from the other members of the Suder family, who will also be discussed, and also to avoid mixing up the protagonist with the title of the novel, I will refer to Craig Suder as õCraigö and avoid using his last name. Craigøs United States in 1981 is desegregated, but racism lurks in pockets and around corners and in dark alleys. This leads, to once again quote Brian Norman, to the temporal dysphoria generated by encountering Jim Crow where he should not be. These experiences (which Craig shares with the reader but appears to withhold from his wife, Thelma, and his teamøs manager, Lou Tyler) take a toll on his baseball career, which had been suffering of late, as well as his marriage, which had been strained by his recent problems with impotence. After two traumatic events ó a racially motivated beating Craig

sustains and his teamøs decision to put him on the õdisabled listö for a contrived reason (that will, apparently unbeknownst to him, bring him into a symbolic association with the African deity Legba) so that he can get himself together, he rediscovers his long lost love of jazz, particularly of Charlie Parkerøs landmark composition õOrnithology.ö His intense listening to õOrnithology,ö a thirty-seven year old piece (in 1981) on a portable phonograph, may be analogous in some ways to the Invisible Manøs listening to Louis Armstrongøs recording of Andy Razaføs õWhat Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue,ö a twenty-three year old piece in 1952, though Craigøs listening conditions are much less ideal than the Invisible Manøs. By becoming a successful major league baseball player, Craig has adopted a bourgeois conventionality that will not permit him to listen under isolated, underground, sloe-gin-and-ice-cream-accompanied, otherwise-silent conditions under which Invisible Man listens. In fact, Craig must õstealö his sonøs portable record player to listen and has to flee the house to do so, in order to not have to hear his wife, Thelmaøs critique of the music. (He also abandons his family for other reasons, which will be discussed below.) Significantly, Craig chooses the signature technology of what Alexander Weheliye calls õsonic Afro-modernityö ó the phonograph ó to re-engage with sonic Afro-modernity, even though the boom box, Walkman, and eight-track players all existed in 1981 and Craig could have afforded any or all of these new technologies.

The significance of the choice of a phonograph as opposed to a more current technology for Craigøs intensive listening may be illuminated by Weheliyeøs discussion of Homi K. Bhabhaøs conception of modernity, which he addresses in his book *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*. Incidentally, affinities between Bhabhaøs work and Murrayøs work have been noticed by critics Philip Page (Page 5) and Carolyn M. Jones (Jones, õRace and Intimacyö 64). According to Weheliye:

> [Bhabhaøs] ÷modernity otherwiseø disrupts and displaces the grand narratives of reason and technological progress by incorporating those who fall outside of these categories into the mix, which disruption, in turn, revamps the meanings of modernity as it resists separating these two spheres (modernity and minority cultures) into neatly distinct categories, asking us to rethink the very source of this putatively universal and homogenous sphere. Modernity, according to Bhabha, is transformed into a series of competing and, at times, conflicting singular spatiotemporal terrains marked by constitutive lagí .This lag, imagined by Bhabha as primarily temporal, suffuses the (anti)ontology of the modern and finds its uncanny home in the poetics of relation that mark the node where the phono joins the graph and/or optic. (22)

The way I see this statement aligning with the way I intend to read *Suder* is that since the time of official de jure segregation in the United States, measured from either 1877 or 1896 is also at the approximate moment of the modern: of the birth of the phonograph, electric power, psychoanalysis, and the blues, then Craigøs embracing of the phonograph is a return to the scene of the modern in an era of the õpost-modernö (Walkman, integration), which makes possible the cognitive leap back to a õmodernö Anglo-American mode of structuring multi-ethnic societies (an apartheid system) in which he nevertheless achieved a moment of serenity, in an alternative world or covert public (with Bud Powell) that he has been unable to access in his integrated, and until-this-moment comfortable life free from racial strife. As his baseball skills begin to fail, his world suddenly becomes a õneo-segregationö world, and in order to rescue what has lagged behind ó his love of African American music and the wisdom imparted to him by one of the giants of that music ó he must reconnect with the technology of that segregated world.

Listening to õOrnithologyö opens up his pathways of memory for Craig to recall life around ten years old in 1958-59, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, when Parkerøs friend and collaborator, the jazz pianist Bud Powell, came to stay with Craigøs family. Powell initiates Craig into black music, black naming practices, and the idea of the importance of chance, all of

which have been missing from Craigøs life ever since Powell left for Europe, twenty three years before the noveløs present action.

Following Warrenøs formulation in *What Was African American Literature?*, *Suder* could be thought of as neatly following up the tradition of protest against Jim Crow through literature to what Warren says followed that protest: literature that is a search for identity. Ellisonøs fiction can perhaps be read as such but Murrayøs cannot, unless read as a search for vocational identity. Plenty of examples of African American literature/segregation fiction disrupt this dichotomy of Warrenøs as well. Especially in passing narratives, a line of flight, or deterritorialization, is part of the process of a characterøs search for identity which is simultaneously a contestation of Jim Crow.[199]

I note that to the extent that these strategies of Ellison, Murray, and Everett constitute a search for identity they are not the crude sort of ethnically chauvinistic embraces of identity critiqued by Walter Benn Michaels as obscuring class relations ó something which Warren would also like to reduce, as he would like to see a renewed interest in and focus on class rather than on race (õA Reply to My Criticsö 407-8). Rather, they are searches for identity that are more properly expeditions of recovery of what might be lost in the relentless maelstrom of the mass-media driven, ever-homogenizing American culture industry. Craig Suder has grown

[199] Walter Whiteøs *Flight* (1926) for instance, comes to mind, as protagonist Mimi Daquinøs identity as a member of the Francophone/Francophile creole community in New Orleans becomes obscured and subsumed by the harshness of segregation in Atlanta. She leaves New Orleans with her father and moves to Atlanta in 1906, where the nuances of her Francophone heritage, understood in New Orleans, are not recognized by the cruel logic of the Jim Crow regime. In Atlanta, where Mimiøs father has taken her to live with his new wife (heiress to an African American insurance fortune based in Chicago), he is denied the right to practice his Catholic faith in Atlantaøs whites-only Catholic church, must follow the strictures of Jim Crow not extant to the same degree in New Orleans, and must simultaneously embrace a more aggressive form of capitalism, selling insurance under his new father-in-law. After Mimi makes her way north, to Harlem, then to midtown, she works in the fashion industry, speaks French, and passes for white. She then leaves for France, before returning to Harlem, where decides she would rather embrace an African American identity. *Flight* is undoubtedly a protest against Jim Crow, but also, like many narratives of passing, a search for or exploration of identity.

disillusioned with (or suspicious of) his identity as õCraig Suder the ball playerö (43). Through õOrnithology,ö as a kind of sonic lantern to probe the dark recesses of his memory, Craig searches for a particular identity he had under segregation: õBirdö ó the nickname bestowed upon him by Bud Powell. Craig Suder the ballplayer reimagines his previous identity as õBirdö Suder, disciple of Bud Powell. Like Ellison and Murray, Everett is engaged, through sound in general but specifically through the sound of his re-naming and jazz, in recovering and preserving positive elements of black life under segregation, not in the name of nostalgia or trivia, but to make the present under desegregation more bearable and authentic.

An abundance of evidence in the text would suggest that Everett had Ellison and Murray in mind when writing *Suder*. James Baldwinøs short story õSonnyøs Bluesö could be another inspiration, but unlike Baldwinøs Sonny, Craig does not actually learn to play the saxophone after admiring Charlie Parker. Craig does not take it seriously, then convinces himself that Parker was not the sort of õbirdö he was meant to become. õSonnyøs Bluesö is not exactly a tragedy, but it is earnest, while *Suder* is certainly a farce. There could be an element of recognition that unlike Sonny, the style Craigøs admiration for Parker is generationally out of place, and thus a farcical attempt to re-live an authentic moment when Parker inspired young men like Sonny. When Craig tries to explain to the irate bartender who Charlie Parker was at the end of chapter seven, there could be an echo of Sonnyøs trying to explain who Charlie Parker is to his brother. Another important echo here could be the contrast exemplified by Baldwinøs use of Louis Armstrong as a kind of generational foil for Charlie Parker. õLouis Armstrongö is understood by the narrator as being typical of a jazz musician. Sonny explains to his brother that he admires Parker and õnone of that old-time, downhome crapö (332). If Armstrong is a musician associated with *Invisible Man*, and Parker, through Baldwin (in literature) is associated with a generational break or

extension, then his use by Everett could signal this intergenerational rift. (Charlie Parker, born in 1920, has been a great influence on writers and critics of the baby-boom generation, with baby-boom figures such as Stanley Crouch, Gary Giddins, Phil Schaap, and Robert G. OøMeally devoting an enormous amount of attention to Parkerøs work.) Craig, like Sonny, also has an older brother who has no interest in music. It would be difficult to imagine that õSonnyøs Bluesö had no influence on *Suder* whatsoever, but I would like to focus on what I perceive as the Ellison-Murray influence.

Darryl Dickson-Carr has observed general parallels between Everett and Ellison and Murray (and their strong mutual influence, William Faulkner), claiming õEverettøs mixing of genres and concern with the conflict between tradition and modernity also takes a clear cue from the innovations of such literary modernists as William Faulkner, Ralph Ellison, and Albert Murrayö (102). While I would take issue with Dickson-Carrøs terminology in some respects (õtraditionö and õmodernityö) I would also add more important points of similarity between Everett and Ellison and Murray (such as a strong distaste for what Murray calls õsocial science fictionö and its representations of black pathology). I am quoting Dickson-Carr to show that thinking of Everett and Ellison and Murray together is a mainstream connection that presents itself after studying their works. More specifically, it seems as though Everett began his career with an attempt to engage with these formidable literary ancestors across a variety of topics. Most crucially, I will discuss how Everett, like Ellison and Murray, creates an aurally-driven path through memory to moments of private black autonomy under segregation. Sonic Afro-modernity, to once again borrow the phrase from Alexander Weheliye, becomes the conduit for recovery of what threatens to be obscured by desegregation. Thus, moments in *Suder* feel like a response to the published texts of both Ellison and Murray and it shares points of contact with

their unpublished texts that hovers around the definition of uncanny. For an example of what might be said to skirt the uncanny: Everett and Ellisonøs parallel use of dead birds to shock and unnerve the mind of a child beginning to understand race relations in the United States. This can be found in an early draft of *Invisible Man* not now or ever publicly available, but quoted by Barbara Foley in her book *Wrestling with the Left: Ralph Ellison and the Making of Invisible Man* (193-94).

Whether or not he had them in mind, *Suder* constitutes a baby-boomerøs addendum to the works of Ellison and Murray. But it seems as if he did have them in mind, and thus, his artistic engagement with them ó resulting in his extended signification on them ó traces the borders of riff, homage, and parody. Significant Murray/Ellison intertexts for *Suder* include *Train Whistle Guitar*, *Invisible Man*, Ellisonøs essays õHidden Name and Complex Fateö and õOn Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazzö as well as his short story õCadillac Flambé.ö In õOn Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazzö Ellison uses the folk song õThey Picked Poor Robin Cleanö (which also figures importantly in *Invisible Man*) to metaphorically account for the tragedy of Parkerøs career (*Collected Essays* 265), but in doing so he thus brings Parker into literary association with, or orbit of the Invisible Man, who recites õThey Picked Poor Robin Cleanö to himself at the end of chapter eight, after being allowed to read Bledsoeøs Bellerophontic letter by Mr. Emersonøs son. (At the end of *Suder*, Craig will fly through the sky while naked.) Through Everettøs inversion of invisibility (Craigøs appearances on television as a major league baseball render him highly visible) and association of the phonograph with an attempt to emulate Parker, an engagement with *Invisible Man* seems to have been Everettøs strategy.

Suder is a German surname. Joseph Suder (1892-1980) was a prominent German composer. There was also a white major league baseball player named Pete Suder (1916-2006),

but his life and career do not seem to have any relation to the novel. I had never heard the name Suder prior to becoming aware of the novel. It is far from a common name in United States. Yet Suder does form a double assonant rhyme with õScooter,ö the name of the protagonist of Murrayøs novels (the first of which was published in 1974). (Curiously enough, Murrayøs biological mother was named Sudie Graham.) Like Scooter, who at about age ten listens intently to the practice sessions of the barrelhouse pianist Stagolee Dupas, Craig Suder listens to the bop pianist Bud Powell, also at about age ten. If the baseball field for young Scooter is a space for heroic action, where he admires money ball mercenaries such as the flashy Gator Gus, it has become for Craig Suder just a way to make a living, and policed by umpires who may or may not be exercising a subtle and difficult-to-prove racial prejudice. (As far as I can tell, Everett had no personal contact with Murray or Ellison.)

*Suder* is a novel that begins as a neo-segregation narrative (as defined by Brian Norman) and then transforms into another sort of narrative which seeks to recover a micro-community or covert public (to borrow a term from the historian of sound Richard Cullen Rath) that existed under de jure segregation in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This covert public specifically consists of the 1958-1959 friendship between young Craig (ten years old at the time) the great jazz pianist Powell (thirty-two at the time). Craig, at thirty-two, begins to remember (and psychologically resemble) Powell at thirty-two, as he tries to recover the lessons he learned from Powell while Powell lived in the Suder home. *Suder* was published in 1983, the same year that Martin Luther King Jr.øs birthday became a holiday (and thus the Civil Rights Movement began to be memorialized and incorporated into the Federally sanctioned national narrative of the history of the United States). *Suder* takes place in the Pacific Northwest (first Seattle, then out at sea on the

Pacific, then in Portland, and finally in rural Oregon) in 1981 and segregated Fayetteville in 1958 -59.

At the outset of the novel Craig is playing for the Seattle Mariners when he enters a batting slump in mid-season. His fielding begins to suffer as well. He then encounters racially motivated violence in a bar in Baltimore one night after a game. This jars his memory (possibly hitherto repressed memories) and begins his search through time (and sound) for Bud Powell, and the possibilities of an alternative life informed by jazz, improvisation, and chance, far from the once-sure thing of baseball. In what could be a subtle nod to Kafka, the Mariners put Craig on the disabled list because of his leg. Heød been insisting that his leg was fine, but the team doctor then wraps it so tight that that the unnecessary and unnecessarily tight wrap creates problems. More likely than an allusion to *The Trial*, Everett may be alluding to the African god Legba. Nathaniel Mackey has noticed, in commenting on William Carlos Williamsøs *Paterson*, there is a possible allusion to Legba that Williams may have õstumbled uponö (613).

Mackey notes that õLegba walks with a limp because his legs are of unequal lengths, one anchored in the world of humans and the other in that of the gods[200]ö (613). The team doctorøs wrap makes Craigøs legs become unequal lengths. Craig says õTuck pulls up my pant leg and wraps my right leg. He wraps it pretty tight and I canøt bend my leg or straighten it out completelyö (12). Mackey goes on to note that references to Legba occur in the work of Ishmael Reed and Paule Marshall. He then offers Brother Tarp in *Invisible Man* as another allusion to Legba in African American modernist fiction (614-15). Mackey writes that what Williams heard in Bunk Johnsonøs music was õa rhythmic digestion of dislocation, the African genius for

[200] Also, in *Kingsblood Royal*, Neil Kingsblood has sustained an injury in World War II that has left one leg shorter than the other (7).

enigmatic melding or mending, a mystery of resilient survival no image puts more succinctly than that of Legbaøs limping danceö (614). Thomas F. Marvin, in his 1996 article õChildren of Legba: Musicians at the Crossroads in Ralph Ellisonøs *Invisible Man*ö does not mention Brother Tarp, but does convincingly present the ways in which the character who calls himself Peter Wheatstraw in chapter nine describes himself as sharing the attributes of Legba (592). The heroic musicians of Murrayøs *Train Whistle Guitar*, Luzana Cholly and Stagolee Dupas (as well as the õwhite folksö-defying Ed Riggins discussed in *The Spyglass Tree*) all walk with a õsporty-limp walk,ö the õchoreographedö walk that Murray also celebrates elsewhere, undoubtedly alluding to Legba through a diasporic echo, even if Murray would probably have denied that such a diasporic reference was his intent. (For Murray, the sporty-limp walk was about stylization; the dancing of an attitude, not necessarily mythic allusion, though he may have meant it as such, and it functions as both in the text.)

After Craigøs leg has been wrapped, he says õweøre taking the field again and Iøm limping. I was not limping beforeö (12). Without being aware of it, Craig has metaphorically entered a dimension of African and African American diasporic myth. After he gets knocked out by a pitch in the eighth inning, Craig is asked by the teamøs trainer how is leg feels. He replies õThe ball hit me in the headö (12). The narration would seem to suggest that mythic, cosmic, world-historical forces are at play in the doltish bureaucracy of a major league baseball team that insists upon a leg injury where none existed, and thus creates one with the leg wrap, thrusting Craig deep into associations African and African American lore that foreshadow his forthcoming journey into African American music and memory. While he cannot consciously perceive all of the associations with which he has just become a part, nevertheless establish an Afro-musical tone for the journey he is about to take.

Before being put on the disabled list (25) because of his õbum leg that donøt hurtö (19), Craig is harshly (and astonishingly) reminded by his manager, Lou Tyler, that baseball was not always desegregated and could, and may be re-segregated again. Tyler also proceeds to insult the talents of all black players in general.

> ÷Now about that slump of yours. You know, it wasnøt but a few years ago that you blacks was allowed in this league. The way you been playing lately, they might kick you all out.ø
>
> I donøt take offense because I know he doesnøt mean any harm and I donøt say anything.
>
> ÷You got three more years left on your contract and both of us know youøre good. So, Iøve been talking to the bigwigs and we all agree that you should take some time off.ø (25)

Craig is nonchalant about Tylerøs ranting, at least publicly. It does not sever or even alter his cordial relationship with the eccentric Tyler. Their cordial relationship has already been established for the reader. (Who could take Tylerøs statement seriously in the era of Reggie Jackson, Ricky Henderson, and Rod Carew?)

Yet Tylerøs first statement cannot be brushed off as simply eccentric; it is more strange than that. It is really quite odd ó it was more than õbut a few years agoö that African American players were allowed in the major leagues: it was thirty-four years before, in 1947. Indeed, this allusion to one of the first major institutional milestones of desegregation (another being the desegregation of the U.S. military, begun by President Trumanøs Executive Order 9981 fourteen months after Jackie Robinson began playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers) signals that Craigøs concerns and problems at least partially spring from the lingering effects of that segregation ó still apparently warping the mind of a salty old manager like Tyler.

Tyler has another important quirk. He is an amateur taxidermist, he fetishizes dead animals (he and Craig drive around searching for road kill together), and even fantasizes about stuffing the singer and actor Roy Rogers. After this meeting with Tyler, and after leaving the locker room, Craigøs next Fayetteville flashback involves collecting dead birds that his brother has shot with a B.B. gun (26).

An aside about Tylerøs amateur taxidermy and its relation to the whole of the novel might be relevant at this moment. Ellisonøs essay on Charlie Parker, for Walton Muyumba, brings to mind taxidermical associations. Muyumba writes that õEllison argues [in õOn Birdí ö] that Negroes who mimic Parkerøs model rather than revising it improvisationally are only mounting taxidermal Birdsö (32). Ellison does not actually say this in his essay ó the taxidermal metaphor is an interpretation of Muyumbaøs. Muyumba continues õif Birdøs doings and undoings, his symbolic performances, are misinterpreted, his actions and his audiences, black and white, will essentialize himö (32). This connection could have been made by Everett as well. Thus, as Craig helps Tyler collect dead animals in chapter five (34-6), he becomes involved in one taxidermal project prior to metaphorically exchanging it for another with his (horrible) imitation of Parker, prior to realizing that he is heading in the wrong direction. Later in the novel Tyler allows Craig the use of his vacation cabin near Mount Hood, Oregon. When Tyler appears with fantasies of stuffing Craigøs new pet elephant, Craig resists Tylerøs taxidermal project, which is framed in a language of uncontrollable impulse (much as Craigøs imitation of Parker at inappropriate times is), as Tyler tells Craig õI just canøt be trusted around that elephantö (134). At the outset of chapter twenty-one, Tyler is killed while searching for road kill, removing taxidermyøs symbolic representative from the novel, but also suggesting that the chase for such stuffed simulacra that result in death.

Craig, in opposition to Tyler, cares for living animals. He feels sorry for the dead birds his brother kills thoughtlessly. This is an important consideration in what will become his becoming-bird. Craig says õI stretched out across the bed and imagined the lives of those birds passing up through the box spring and the mattress and into meö (26). Empathy for the birds sets the stage for his becoming-bird. Also, the traumatic killing of his dog in 1959, the climax of his relationship with Bud Powell, is the terminal point of his musically-guided journey through memory.

*Suder*, in a sense, is about Craigøs becoming-animal, in the precise sense described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. After being put on the disabled list (by Tyler) is when Craig rediscovers his love for jazz, particularly for Charlie Parkerøs õOrnithology.ö Listening to the record ó not the eight-track tape or cassette or compact disc ó further opens up the pathways of Craigøs memory, as he recalls Bud Powelløs first visit to his familyøs home. His recollections begin with his father disclosing their motherøs mental illness to Craig and his brother. Powell ó who battled mental illness in real life ó provides a serene adult role model for Craig outside of the domestic drama. Perhaps more importantly, he initiates Craig into black music, and black rhetorical traditions of naming and signifying. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari pose the rhetorical question õwhat is the relation of the writing machine and the musical machine to becomings-animal?ö (243). By reading *Suder* through the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and trying to understand Craigøs own becoming-animal in relation to the õmusical machineö and õwriting machineö (for he is narrating the tale) I will attempt to suggest an answer to that question that combines it with how this relates to one African American manøs personal experience of the de-striation of the public space of the United States, or integration.

After having described the possible influences of Baldwin, Ellison, and Murray on the text, I would now like to begin to develop a critical strategy for one way of understanding *Suder*. Through the connections to Murray and Ellison that I have tried to establish and will continue to try to establish, I will thus begin to survey the ideas of related theorists whom I intend to bring to bear upon a richer and more complete understanding of the novel. The lesson Craig takes away from his dog being shot ó the lesson of the importance of chance ó is what enables him finally to attain a kind of freedom at the end, as he undergoes what Deleuze and Guattari would call a becoming-bird. (In the novelø final scene, Craig takes quite a chance by stepping off a high cliff wearing a pair of untested do-it-yourself õwingsö made from plastic bags.)

At the end of chapter twenty-two, Powell releases the dog Django, which he adopted and named (after jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt) in chapter sixteen. David Rife perceptively notes that õPowellí engenders the novelø controlling metaphor when he adopts a stray dog (Django) and then sets him freeö (Rife 131). This may be so, but Rife declines to note that setting Django free was almost certain to result in Djangoø being shot ó which he is shortly thereafter. (Perhaps this, and the debacle with the elephant, which occurs in the 1981 section interleaved with the 1958-59 section on the dog, can be understood as a Deleuzian critique of pet-keeping.) Two decades and an existential crisis later, Craig realizes, through memories jogged by an intense immersion in õOrnithology,ö the dual message in Powellø actions; the importance of the chance element. Craig is furious, because the neighbor, Mr. Simpson, had threatened to kill Django, which it is implies he does subsequently. (õThen a rifle shot rang out.ö) Powell coldly tells Craig, õthatø called a chanceö (161).

The concept of chance (discovered through remembering Bud Powellø somewhat cruel lesson) suggests affinities with the climactic moment in Murrayø *The Spyglass Tree* when

Scooter says õIøll take my chancesö when offered the option to not partake in a gun battle with a white mob (discussed at length in the chapter on Murray, published 1991 but part of Murrayøs substantially finished but unpublished novel of 1953). This also suggests affinities with Native American theorist and novelist Gerald Vizenor, who shares significant opinions on literary aesthetics with Murray. Connecting Vizenor and Murray, as discussed previously, works through their parallel explicit articulations of distrust in/distaste for the abilities of the social sciences to explain or understand the communities they come from. Chance, for Murray, is as important as it is for Vizenor, but Murray does not extensively theorize chance or use the term õtrickster.ö In Vizenorøs essay õA Postmodern Introductionö (to a book he edited, *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*), he claims that õthe trickster is a comic trope, chance in a narrative wispö (9). In both *Suder* and *The Spyglass Tree*, chances are indeed taken õin a narrative wisp.ö Vizenor is claiming this specifically for what he terms õtribal narrativesö but since the trickster tradition is prominent in African American literature as well, perhaps it would not be too out of place to bring Vizenorøs analysis into the discussion, especially since the overlap between Native American and African American cultures is an important theme in *Suder* (and the overlap is historical as well). The point of bringing Vizenor into the discussion is to cement a link to Murray and to the trickster tradition in general and also to better understand the concept of chance as advocated by Powell, and that Craig undoubtedly takes at the end, in which he does play quite a trick on those who thought he was crazy for attempting to undergo the process of becoming-bird.

Vizenor and Murray converge on two issues also of central concern to Everett: the celebration of chance and the distrust of social science (and narratives with such an inflection, as seen in *Erasure*). More so than Murray, Vizenor theorizes and celebrates the concept of the

trickster, a term that Murray does not use but which could be used to describe actions of Thomas Mannøs Joseph in *Joseph and His Brothers*, whom, as seen previously, Murray views as an improviser in *The Hero and the Blues*. Murray admiringly writes that õJosephøs conduct is oriented to both choice and chanceö (60). Murray and Vizenor are part of a group of thinkers, interrelated in a variety of important ways, who will assist my critical investigation of *Suder*. As different as they may be from one another, perhaps looking at them from a certain angle of vision might reveal a hidden tradition. If tradition is too strong a word, then they at least form a constellation when viewed through their similarities, which include a distrust of social science and a protective impulse toward threatened, misrepresented, and misunderstood communities and their cultural formations.

This group includes, for the purposes of my reading of *Suder*: Vizenor, Murray, Ellison, Weheliye, Deluze and Guattari (a major influence on Weheliye), and Édouard Glissant (also influenced by Deleuze and Guattari). Glissantøs *Poetics of Relation* begins, in his essay õThe Open Boat,ö roughly where Murrayøs *The Omni-Americans* begins, in his essay õA Natural History: E Pluribus Unumö: with the middle passage (Murray 17; Glissant 6). The õcreolizationö via the õdeterritorializationö of African languages noted by Glissant (5) is parallel with the process undergone by the captive Africans in Murrayøs framework (informed by Constance Rourkeøs pluralism). Glissant writes in *Poetics of Relation* that õeach and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Otherö (11). Part of Murrayøs epigraph to *The Omni-Americans*, taken from André Malrauxøs preface to his *Days of Wrath*, says õevery psychological life is an exchange[201]ö (unnumbered epigraph page). Murrayøs Scooter and Everettøs Craig Suder

[201] Murray paraphrased this and yet extended it by applying it to literature and the reception of literature at the 1996 MLA panel for the publication of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*: õthe whole business of art is to process the idiomatic particulars of your everyday experience into aesthetic statement of universal implications

establish their heroism by taking a chance. Ellison too is connected to chance, through Thomas Hardy (from whom he appropriated the trope of social invisibility), a well-known literary proponent of chanceøs importance. The Invisible Man takes chances as well ó but they go wrong tragi-comically. Murrayøs tetralogy, in contrast, is a farce in which everything mostly goes right. Glissant writes õFor us, and without exception, and no matter how much distance we may keep, the abyss is also a projection of and perspective into the unknown. Beyond its chasm we gamble on the unknown. We take sides in this game of the worldö (Glissant 8). These connections help expand context for appreciating Everett and his trajectory and help to situate *Suder* within established currents of thought; the relationship between which (between the work of Glissant and Murray) has been hitherto uncommented upon and unexplored.

Deleuze and Guattari, a major influence on Glissant, offer an excellent active vocabulary for paraphrasing the action in *Suder*. Craig embarks on a line of flight, a deterritorialization, en route to his becoming-bird. There are parallels between Craigøs and his motherøs paranoia and Deleuze and Guattariøs understanding of the Oedipus story in its original or at least pre-Freudian context as a parable of paranoia rather than incest (*Anti-Oedipus* 278). Like Murray, Dr. Ben Suder dismisses psychiatry as a white construction with no applicability to African American life. Ben Suderøs calling psychoanalysis õWhite peopleøs foolishnessö that õCauses more problems than it curesö (87) is a close analogue to Murrayøs statement õWe invented the blues. Europeans invented psychoanalysisö (Maguire, *Conversations* 127). Craigøs becoming-bird is narrated in such a way that it forms a perfect illustration of Deleuze and Guattariøs definition for a becoming-animal. I do not necessarily wish to suggest that Everett was reading Deleuze and

ó if itøs true enough for you it should be true for somebody else, if it rings true for them, then you can live on it againö (Murray, MLA 01:22:00). This was given another dimension for me by a quote that I have in a notebook from one of Milind Wakankarøs courses: õsubjectivity is an ebb and flow that pivots on the other.ö

Guattari, though he very well could have. Everettøs 1999 novel *Glyph* reveals a thorough grounding in (if not obsession with) various aspects of post-structuralism. In a similar manner to the way aspects of Kenneth Burkeøs work can be thought of as a kind of critical skeleton for *Invisible Man* and perhaps aspects of Lord Raglanøs work can be thought of as a faded blueprint for *Train Whistle Guitar*, Deleuze and Guattariøs work may offer a scaffolding for *Suder*.

*Suder* contains three quasi-political aesthetic elements: desegregation (the ennui of a wealthy, bored, somewhat disturbed athlete in 1981), neo-segregation (Jim Crowøs unexpected appearance creating temporal dysphoria for the protagonist and reader) and a community of sonic Afro-modernity ó the micro-community, the covert public, the assemblage ó whatever it was created by Bud Powell and Craig. Craig strives to find, within his memory, guided by notes he hears in the present of 1981, for a lost black musical counterculture of modernity ó a world of private black coherence in 1958 ó even if that coherence only seemed properly reflected in Powelløs music and wisdom. Craigøs recollections are not nostalgia for 1958 North Carolina ó far from it. It is in many respects a nightmare-world, dominated by his motherøs mental illness (his fear of her, for her, and the chaos she creates all around her), the threatening adolescence of those slightly older than him, the distance of his father and the antagonisms of his brother (amplified by his brotherøs treatment by their mother). The Fayetteville of Craigøs youth is not portrayed as having existed in any sort of golden age. There is no pride to be had or shown in conventional black achievement either ó the townøs black funeral home, a prosperous business granted a de facto monopoly by de jure segregation, is a thriving hive of morbid corruption which re-uses caskets. Jonathan Sterne claims that modern embalming techniques arose parallel with techniques for recording sound (192-93). For Sterne (as quoted and discussed in my chapter on Ellison as well), õboth [recording and embalming] transform the interiority of the thing (body,

sound performance) in order that it might continue to perform a social function after the factö (197). As if in recognition of this connection between death, recording, and segregation, soon after Craig remembers the funeral home scene, he stops putting on the record for anyone and everyone to hear.

The only redeeming element of his life in Fayetteville is his friendship with Bud Powell. Though Powell himself had insurmountable personal problems involving mental illness and various substance addictions, he seems to have been a good and kind person, and that is what shines through in his mentoring (or light-mentoring) of Craig.

## III. Reading Sound and Becoming-Bird in *Suder*

*Suder* was published when Everett was twenty-seven. His protagonist is thirty at the outset and turns thirty-three in the course of the story. Suder was published by Viking in 1983 to mixed reviews and republished in 1999 by Louisiana State University Press as part of its Voices of the South series, through which it has remained in print. It must have remained in deep obscurity during the sixteen years it was out of print, for reasons I will explain. The novel ends with what could be thought of as a contemporary reimagining of or at least a strong allusion the õflying Africanö legend or folk story, and was undoubtedly influenced to one degree or another by that feature in Toni Morrisonøs *Song of Solomon* (1977). (I will explore this in more detail at the end of the chapter.) I do not believe that the action, upon very close inspection, suggests the flying African story. In fact, under careful scrutiny (as will be discussed below) it appears that Everett is doing his best to distance Craigøs flying from any comparison with the flying African story. But on the surface, it surely does suggest the flying African story. Two articles in *MELUS*,

in 1989 and 1997, explore the flying African tale and its many late-Jim Crow or post-Jim Crow iterations in contemporary fiction, but neither article mentions *Suder*. I believe the omission of it from these articles attests to *Suder*øs obscurity early in Everettøs career, until novels such as *Zulus* (1990) and *God's Country* (1994) brought more critical interest to his work and led to the republication of *Suder* in 1999. Like Murrayøs õThe Luzana Cholly Kickö after its publication thirty years earlier, *Suder* was forgotten almost instantly. Post-publication obscurity is of course hardly a reason alone for the study of a text, but the causes of that obscurity in between 1983-1999 might parallel the causes of the obscurity of Murrayøs story between 1953-1966. The most significant similarity perhaps is the blues represented as portal to memory.

It is necessary to establish that the 1981 action really does take place then ó and not in the imaginative projections of a child in 1959 ó as the text sometimes suggests in the course of reading and re-reading. In moments it seems like Craigøs life in 1981 is what a ten year old might imagine a baseball playerøs life is like. For instance, Craig does not have an agent, or at least one is never mentioned. What establishes that the story really does take place in 1981 is that the Seattle Mariners did not exist until 1977. (Seattleøs first major league team, the Pilots, played one season, in 1969.) Most importantly, all the action in the ostensibly 1981 section is narrated in the present tense, while all the action in the 1958-59 sections is narrated in the past tense.

I would like to briefly explain the setting and basic outlines of the Fayetteville sections here. The Suder family in 1958 is financially comfortable but in a precarious emotional state due to Mrs. Suderøs deteriorating mental state. Mr. Suder is a physician of wry temperament. Craigøs older brother is reaching puberty, creating a conflict between him and their mother, who is not only losing her sanity, but becomes a tyrannical Victorian-style anti-masturbation fanatic in the process (certainly reflecting a pre-Freudian orientation). Following the work of Thomas Laqueur,

anti-masturbation ideology is tightly tethered to the rise of capitalism and dates precisely from 1712 (Greenblatt). Furthermore, Mrs. Suder has come under the influence of a racist white physician/preacher. A character based on jazz pianist Bud Powell, named õBud Powellö appears in the Fayetteville sections and moves in to the Suder household. He is a friend of Dr. Suder. Powell eventually tells young Craig to Craigøs dismay that he is leaving for Paris because of the racial situation in the United States. The historical Bud Powell went to Paris in 1959 and Craig is ten years old when he both learns of Powelløs intentions to leave (and wishes he could join Powell). He receives a post-card from Powell in Paris. Craig was born circa 1948-1949. The action in the adult-Craig sections takes place, as best as I can discern in 1981, as Craig turns thirty-three in chapter eight. (This makes him seven years older than Everett was the time of publication, reducing somewhat the possibility of distinct autobiographical overtones, though he shares his Southern background: Everett grew up in Columbia, South Carolina.)

*Suder* is full of unresolved mysteries. Craig is the first-person narrator of his story. He may not be reliable. He could be a trickster. What happened to Craig Suder between 1959 and 1981? He does not say. All that is certain is that he got married, had a child, and reached the pinnacle of major league baseball. He has three years left on his contract with the Mariners, implying he has played well enough to garner a four-year contract. It is implied that he went to college. If Craig went to college, and his father and brother speak so perfectly, why does he so consistently speak with poor grammar? Why does he employ constructions such as õI ainøt got no bucks to speak ofö if he went to college and his father and brother are well-spoken physicians? (Perhaps he is code-switching to feel more at home among uneducated baseball players, but that does not explain why he uses this language with the reader.) How did he feel about Bud Powelløs death in 1966? When did he learn of it? How did he feel about the March on

Washington, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and assassinations of various black leaders? How did he feel about and/or get out of the Vietnam draft? To what prior relationship/encounter with the elephant Sabu/Renoir does Craig cryptically allude when he asks the elephant õRemember meö (109)?

These unexplained curiosities might explain what has caused Uzzie Cannon to somewhat uncritically refer to the *Suder* as õpostmodernö (repeatedly) in her article õA Bird of a Different Feather: Blues, Jazz, and the Difficult Journey to the Self in Percival Everettøs *Suder*,ö the argument and conclusions of which I reject in their entirety. Cannon argues that Craig adopts a õjazz-inflectedö lifestyle that õaids him in his quest for self-actualizationö (103). I believe Cannon has it exactly backwards. Craig adopts the opposite of the discipline needed for a life in jazz, and that his strange behavior suggests something like an õanti-jazz-inflectedö lifestyle when he disrespects and insults the character Dizzy Gillespie by interrupting Gillespieøs performance (99-100). Craig realizes that he is not living a jazz life ó that this life may have been open to him under Powelløs tutelage in another world and another time, but now it is too late ó and if he is to fulfill prophecy of Powelløs naming (which he intends to do, something) he must become-bird in another way than imitating Charlie Parker (a õtaxidermicö imitation of Parker, following Muyumbaøs reading of Ellison on Parker, thus making him, in such a case, no different from Lou Tyler).

*Suderøs* unconventionality may suggest the easy label of õpost-modern,ö as Uzzie Canon uncritically labels is it numerous times in her essay, but Iøm more inclined to agree with the assessment of William M. Ramsay, who considers *Suder* õSurreal but not postmodernö (133). Like many modernist works *Suder* contains elements that could be possibly considered postmodern, but the ubiquitous (and possibly overwrought) phallic symbolism and chain of

phallic signification (baseball bats, masturbation, impotence, saxophone, elephant trunk, erection) arrayed in a this-stands-for-that manner suggest a work comfortable within modernist economies of symbolism and strategies of reading and interpretation. (õBirdö was also mid-1960s slang for õpenis,ö as noted by Gay Talese in his famous article õFrank Sinatra Has a Cold.ö)

What is at stake in the label surreal/modernist or postmodernist is an understanding of where and how the text is addressing itself and to whom. Addressing itself to Ellisonøs surreal portrayals and to Murrayøs blues idiom-modernist sound-and-memoryscape, as well as to Baldwinøs inter-generational drama in õSonnyøs Blues,ö *Suder* positions itself to reply Everettøs earlier influences in both its form and content. Charlie Parker played the blues in Jay McShannøs big band, while Everettøs most adventurous and experimental work is an extension and elaboration of the blues, just as Everett is extending and elaborating upon Ellisonøs comic surrealism and Murrayøs explorations of sound and subjectivity.[202]

*Suder* can be read, by ignoring its spelunking into sonic Afro-modernity, as a story about a recovery of male potency told by an omniscient heterosexual/cissexual male narrator comfortably deploying sequential phallic imagery. Perhaps there is a touch of ÷magical realismø or ÷straight-faced surrealismø but what rescues the text from being a somewhat annoying privileged reflection of wealthy athlete is the humanizing element of the Fayetteville sections, and Charlie Parker as something like a musical ÷Virgil,ø who guides him there. What this reflects, at the outset of Everettøs career, is a topic that permeates his fiction to this day: a critique of assumption, the assumption that one person knows what anotherøs life is or has been

[202] To be sure, Suder is very surreal and feels strikingly contemporary in its awkward comedy, suggesting comedic patterns highlighting awkward moments, later appealing to late capitalist audiences popularized by Larry David through television programs such as *Seinfeld* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

like because of surface identifications.[203] Like Craig, Everettøs father was a physician (as was his grandfather) and like Craig, he has a sibling who is also a physician (Shavers and Everett 49). In a 2004 interview Everett said, oddly, õI really donøt think about classö (Shavers and Everett 49). Ironically enough, his work is all about class, as in fact, what pervades much of his work is an admonition not to assume someoneøs life is going fine because they have had money and privileges.  And thus, part of the õmoralö of Suder is that even though a baseball player may be overpaid and spoiled, he may also be haunted things nobody would imagine: his motherøs mental illness and the lost friendship of one of the centuryøs greatest jazz pianists.

From what can be surmised or discerned, Craig travelled a smooth path to the major leagues, and at age ten he knew he was good enough to make it. He is a ÷natural.ø The foul balls he effortlessly catches behind home plate at the minor league game in Portland in chapter thirteen are tipped foul balls moving at high speeds in close range ó emphasizing that not only are Craigøs skills highly advanced if not preternatural, but they have also returned ó though their return does not seem to register with him. He is, at this point in his line of flight, deterritorialized past the point of no return. It does not even occur to him that his baseball ability seems to have reasserted itself. His deterritorialization must continue before he can reterritorialize in a new way. In a 1988 interview Deleuze said that the exact sense of what he means by deterritorializationö can be translated into English as õoutlandishö *(Deleuze From A to Z*, 15:12). õOutlandish,ö for what itøs worth, is probably the best word to describe Craigøs behavior and adventures after the Baltimore bar fight at the outset of the novel.

[203]*Assumption* is also the title of Everettøs 2011 novel about a black detective in New Mexico. When I reviewed *Assumption* for the *San Francisco Chronicle* I suggested it was about an audience making assumptions about Everett as a comic writer, as it is a grim, non-comedic story.

Craigøs crisis of personal identity underlines a crisis in national identity: the (ever so slightly) underground existence of pervasive racism around the moment of the official national/Federal memorialization of the Civil Rights Movement (that is to say, just prior to the establishment of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday). Craigøs identity has hitherto been tethered to his physical prowess and skill at baseball. At the outset of the novel, now that his skill has started to slip; that is, now that he might no longer be a star athlete but just an average one ó inching from valuable athletic commodity to ordinary person who happens to be black ó he experiences both physical and verbal racist assault.

*Suder* begins in medias res at a baseball game in which Craig is up at bat. He is called out on three strikes. The ambiguity of the umpireøs strike zone could allude to ambiguities of desegregation; the subtle ways in which bigotry can still be deployed and racism can still be enacted. A home plate umpire is a judge (of lines) and must exercise a personal discernment within established boundaries.[204] Of course, the object is to hit the baseball and while Craig does not even try to, he thinks he is abiding by accepted parameters of the strike zone in taking those pitches for balls. At this time many dozens of black players were excelling in baseball and had been for decades, so this is not and could not be plausible a general commentary on racism in baseball, but rather on Craigøs own bad luck (which may contain inflections and hints of racism) and precarious situation in the sport. The defense aspect of his game is suffering as well. In the next half-inning his amateur-level mistakes cause the tying run to reach first base, followed by a game-winning home run.

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[204] Curiously enough, as discussed previously, in *The Spyglass Tree* Murray uses a black umpire as a stand-in spokesman for his own literary aesthetics and low opinions of the segregation aesthetic.

Craigøs flashbacks to and parallel narrative of Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1958-9 (his bourgeois familyøs life, his motherøs mental illness, and his friendship with Bud Powell) begin immediately after becoming the victim of racist violence in 1981, precipitated by the decline of his playing (that is, the racists in the bar antagonize him over his playing prior to the beating). Toward the end of chapter one Craigøs visibility as a major league baseball player makes him a target of harassment, which leads to an altercation in a bar in Baltimore.

> I go out and get drunk enough to embarrass a few dead relatives.[205] Iøm still drinking and Iøm feeling pretty bad seeing as we just dropped three straight to Boston and this fella recognizes me. ÷Ainøt you Craig Suder?ø
>
> I nod. I donøt even look at him. I just keep my eyes on the bar and nod.
>
> He starts to laugh and take about how we got our butts whipped and I just keep looking at the bad, nodding. Then he says ÷if you was out of the line up, Seattle might win a few.ø
>
> He still ainøt got to me and Iøm still nodding.
>
> He sorta calls one of his buddies over and theyøre standing on either side of me and the first fella says ÷Black boys ainøt got no business in baseball no way.ø
>
> Well, at this I turn and look at him and the next thing I know Iøm coming to in an alley with my face in some garbage. I get up and make my way to the hotel. (6)

Until this point it has not been revealed that Craig is African American. Here, in a Baltimore bar, on a sort of symbolic edge of the South, Craig is thus encounters the traces of Jim Crow. The element of fear and threat of racially based violence signal while Jim Crow is over in 1980s baseball, its racist agenda may still be found in pockets of society ó such as a Baltimore bar late at night. Following this incident, the novel becomes two intertwined narratives, as the altercation seems to prompt the initial moments of the 1958-9 narrative on the next page, in which Dr. Suder

[205] Perhaps this is an allusion to Murrayøs oft-mentioned õancestral imperatives.ö

first tells his boys that their mother is õcrazyö (7). It is as if the memory of this period has been repressed by Craig Suder and the Baltimore altercation, and the õtemporal dysphoriaö it has generated, has brought it back to the forefront of his consciousness.

If desegregation worked to create a õsmoothö space within the polity of the United States by officially removing the striations inserted in 1896, the (tactile) phantoms of those striations still exist in unilluminated corners of society and in the minds of those who experienced segregation ó hence Craigøs jarring and discomforting recollections of his motherøs mental illness. The narrator has thus õstriatedö the smooth, officially desegregated space of the novel with the 1950s narrative, although it is in the 1981 (neo-segregation) narrative that features scenes that are like echoes of the Jim Crow regime: racist insults (25), police harassment (138), false rape accusation by a white woman (168). Three years after the introduction of the Walkman to the United States, and long after the advent of the eight-track tape in the 1960s, Suder continues to carry around a turntable and play Parkerøs record on it. The listening conditions for Suder are exceptionally awkward and cringe-worthy, as, for instance, he attempts to put the record on in a crowded bar while live musicians are playing. These conditions are quite different from the ideal conditions under which the Invisible Man listens to Louis Armstrong (Parkerøs closest rival, incidentally, in terms of solo instrument innovation) or under which Scooter enjoys the sounds of Louis Armstrong beaming over the rooftops of his neighborhood: õno wonder all of old Louisø highest trumpet runs always seemed to come from beneath the roof tops of Gins Alley and to be aimed at me in the chinaberry tree.ö (64) Everett emphasizes the generational disconnect between himself and that of his parentsø (and thus Murrayøs and Ellisonøs) generation. The Invisible Man listens on technology appropriate to 1952, while Craig employs 1952 technology in 1981. Craig writes a check for $400 to pay for a new saxophone (60), and thus he

certainly can afford a Walkman. Craigøs decision to carry around a portable phonograph in 1981 is exceedingly odd, as the boom box and Walkman were both available by this time. The Walkman was fairly new (and, significantly, offered an entirely interiorized listening experience), but the boom box had been around for a number of years and would have served Craigøs social purpose, which was to expose others to the sound of Charlie Parker. The portable phonograph (which Craig swipes from his sonøs room) helps create and intensify the scenes of social awkwardness that alienate his friends and push him along his line of flight.

But as discussed above, he turns to the phonograph because he is turning to a particular moment in sonic Afro-modernity. The image of the needle tracing along the grooves of õOrnithologyö parallels Craigøs writing this episode in his life for the reader. As the needle traces the groove of õOrnithology,ö Craigøs memory gets traced as well and then scripted for the reader in what is not a writerly voice. Everett seems to have arrived at something like this insight of Friedrich Kittlerøs: õThe trace preceding all writing, the trace of pure difference still open between reading and writing, is simply a gramophone needle. Paving a way and retracing a path coincideö (33). Even at the very end, when Craig is paving a way by becoming-bird and soaring through the sky, he is in a sense retracing a path as well, as õOrnithologyö is based on the chords of õHow High the Moon.ö

This phonograph also emphasizes the intertextual relationship with *Invisible Man*. Music cannot function for Craig as it can for the Invisible Man. Craig cannot slip into the grooves and look around because his listening is always being interrupted. The Invisible Man listens to Louis Armstrong in a secret, echo-less, acoustically dead/non-resonant space. Craig listens to Charlie Parker in unusual semi-public spaces, in a baseball stadium locker room bathroom in which he is õsorta hypnotizedö by the musicøs echo (48). This is the opposite from the lack of echo

experienced by the Invisible Man, who is not õhypnotizedö (that is to say, paralyzed) by the sound, but rather falls into and inhabits it. Music fails Craig as a bridge to understanding his predicament because of the personal weight that it bears: the memory of Bud Powell and the over determined nickname Powell applies to Craig: õBirdö (the same as Charlie Parker).

Craigøs mother calls him õCraigyö: not much of a nickname or secret name. õBirdö is his secret name, bestowed by Powell. It remains his secret name because it does not seem to have caught on as a public name, as there are no associations of õBirdö as a name associated with his baseball career. In a sense, from the outset of his attempt at re-connecting with his past, he dishonors the name granted to him by one of Parkerøs closest collaborators by, at first, attempting to play the saxophone so terribly in public without having first learned the instrument. The audacity it takes to play it in front of Dizzy Gillespie is breathtaking. Perhaps this arrogance stems from his baseball skill, which seemed to have always been there and did not need honing. But how would Craig have reacted to a jazz musician taking a position on the baseball field mid-game? Craig is trying to re-construct the possibility of a future long foreclosed upon; an alternate life for himself in which he possibly learned about music from Powell and trained to be the next Bird.

Craig is not a jazz buff and prior to 1981 was not a deep or frequent listener. If he was a daily or frequent music listener it would stand to reason that since, as a major league baseball player, he was on the road for much of the year and could afford it, that he would own the most recent portable devices (yet he does not). His vocabulary also reveals a casual appreciation. He repeatedly refers to õOrnithologyö as a õsongö or õthe song.ö (28, 38, 48, 49). It is not properly a õsong,ö as it has no lyrics, but rather it is a composition, a piece, a number. Granted, Powell also refers to õOrnithologyö as a õsongö but this may be in order to quickly describe what it is for a

child. Also, Ellison does refer to Parker as õa true songsterö (*Collected Essays* 257). Craig has not listened to the piece very often since 1959. After he tells Thelma that heøll be put on the Marinersø disabled list so that he can rest his leg and perhaps make the most of the remaining years on his contract, he starts searching for music for no reason that is clearly apparent. However, his re-embrace of jazz could have to do with his being mocked through the sarcastic singing of a spiritual by Thelma. The (class-based) conflict between spirituals (when not intended as songs of worship but as propaganda for black humanity and achievement) and the blues and other secular syncopated music (e.g. early jazz and ragtime) early in the twentieth century becomes replicated domestically in *Suder*, in which a spiritual is used by Thelma to mock his Craigøs sexual impotence and, through a circuitous path, the blues and jazz lead to a regained potency in the noveløs final scene. Earlier, in chapter three, to lament Craigøs inability to perform sexually, Thelma sarcastically sings õNobody Knows The Trouble Iøve Seen.ö Craig says õI wrap my head up in the pillows, trying to block out the sound [of Thelmaøs exercise bicycle], but it ainøt no use. And now sheøs singing, ÷Nobody knows the trouble Iøve seen, nobody knows butí øI get out of bed and go to the kitchen to look for something to eatö (18)[206]. The industrial whirr of the exercise bike, combined with being mocked and teased through the profane employment of a spiritual leads Craig out of bed and to the kitchen.

In chapter four, the first time he listens to õOrnithologyö he gets an erection that does not last. Prior to looking for the record, the idea of actually flying is suggested to him by a news broadcast. õOne the television the fella runs off some scores and mentions cliff-diving in Mexicoö just before the broadcaster mentions him (Craig) and his addition to the Disabled List

[206] Murray also employs this spiritual somewhat sarcastically in *The Omni-Americans*. In his essay on Baldwin, Murray writes õBut it should be clear that what U.S. Negro musicians express represents far more than the fact that American black folks been ÷buked and been scorned and nobody know de trouble dey seenö (146-47).

(28). The shock of hearing this on television, along with his sonøs reaction (õhe gets up and goes to his roomö), and Craigøs subsequent embarrassment pushes Craig immediately to his record collection. õI take to looking through the records and I find a Charlie Parker album and itøs got a song on it called ÷Ornithologyø that I remember likingö (28). Craig was not on a mission to find the õOrnithologyö ó clearly he had not thought about it in some time. After listening õmaybe a dozen timesö he says, õI get excited and decide to tackle Thelmaö (29). But his erection was a false alarm and thus, an angry Thelma õclimbs aboard her exerciser and rides offö (29). Within these pages, 28-29, are tightly packed clues that foreshadow Craigøs destiny: in the noveløs final scene, the idea of jumping off a cliff, flying like a bird, and having an erection are all recapitulated, almost in the sense of a jazz performance.

Craigøs re-discovery of õOrnithologyö was in all likelihood somehow guided or driven by his memories of Fayetteville; prompted by the temporal dysphoria of the bar fight and Tylerøs insults, his heightened feelings of unease, and by his search to re-capture the feeling he knew listening to Bud Powell play the piano. He re-discovers õOrnithologyö at the end of chapter four. Powell is introduced at the outset of chapter five. (Recording following solo composition/performance reproduces, in a sense, Jacques Attaliøs third and fourth stages of music in *Noise*, recording and composition, in the same order that Murray reproduces them in *Train Whistle Guitar* just prior to the Stagolee Dupas chapter.)

While segregation is implied through and across Powelløs presence, it is not properly õAfrican American Literature,ö in the sense meant by Warren, as it does not feature õcontesting Jim Crowö as a õpointö of its õefforts,ö to quote one of Warrenøs key definitions (107). Nor does it have the features of the segregation aesthetic described by Norman and Williams. Yet the reality of Jim Crow does orbit the narrative and lurk just beyond the text. For example, Bud

Powell wishes to escape Jim Crow in Paris, but Powell never explains just why the United States has become so unappealing. Powell was born and raised in Harlem, in the ostensibly desegregated north, but the prejudice against jazz musicians and racist over-enforcement of drug laws led to numerous run-ins with the law. A kind and mellow gentleman, Powell was treated horribly by the authorities and spent time in and out of New York Stateøs mental institutions such as Creedmore in Queens and Pilgrim on Long Island. Curiously enough, in relation to Powelløs appearance in *Suder* and the flying/bird motifs that saturate *Suder*, a psychiatrist in 1945 committed Powell to Creedmore, according to Guthrie P. Ramsey because õhis thoughts were flying away from himö (Ramsey 62). This happened after Powell received a beating by police in Philadelphia. It is not clear how Everett could have known this, but perhaps he did.

Racism, represented by Dr. McCoy, occurs on the outskirts of the Suder familyøs life, until his hideous racism springs forth while he is a dinner guest in the Suder home. The corrupt black funeral home ó as well as Dr. Suderøs practice ó are both enabled, or at least assured of a customer base, by the trade restrictions and quasi-monopolies created by laws and mores regarding the medical handling of racialized bodies (discussed in the Murray chapter with reference to the Tuskegee Veterans Hospital). But Craig does not shown actually encountering the reality of the apartheid system. McCoyøs rhetorical racism is exhibited but race and fear are not spatialized. The direct effect of Jim Crow policies on Craigøs experience is not demonstrated; rather the lifetime-impact of Jim Crow on Kathy Suder and Bud Powell, two poles of Craigøs serenity or lack thereof seems to be the issue.

Just before the Baltimore bar scene, which creates the temporal dysphoria that tips the dominoes of Craigøs memory, an African American musical reference enters the text. Lou Tyler gives Craig a stern pep talk, which ends with a quotation from õStraighten Up and Fly Right,ö a

1943 hit record for Nat õKingö Cole, the lyrics of which draw upon African American folklore. Tyler does not seem to know anything about jazz or African American culture. In fact, he is more or less hostile toward African Americans, as demonstrated above, yet the quote from the song that was popular in his youth has become a cliché in his pep talk repertoire (whether he is using it on a black player thinking the black player will get the reference is not discernible). Tyler says:

> ÷Truth of the matter is, Craig, that you have to straighten up and fly right.ø And he slaps me on the back and tells me to get dressed.
>
> I watch him walk away and then I slam the locker. ÷Yeah, straighten up and fly right,ø I says to myself, ÷fly right.ø (5)

This moment could be the origin of Craigøs search (in his memory) for Bud Powell. This also reflects the extent to which black folk culture has worked its way into the wider American culture: the Roy Rogers-admiring Lou Tyler quotes it perhaps unthinkingly. This is also the kind of somewhat obvious foreshadowing that makes a õpostmodernö label for the novel somewhat erroneous. Craig will complete his narration in mid-air after extensive and complex bird imagery and associations are deployed as a he becomes-bird (ending the story without resolution ó or ending it on the assumption that he is headed for a mental hospital, and suggesting, since he has an erection, that his marriage may be saved). But here in the locker room with Tyler is the first iteration of õthe bluesö (in the broad sense used by Ronald Judy) (õStraighten Up and Fly Rightö is a jazz standard after all) with birds/flight, followed by the bar fight shortly thereafter.

For Kenneth Warren, literature by African Americans after Jim Crow becomes largely a search for identity as opposed to literature on a mission to contest Jim Crow. Warren writes õinasmuch as the literature of identity encompasses a range of writers of different races and backgrounds, one could also say, paradoxically, that literature of identity, rather than African

American literature, names the writing of the present momentö (107). That is a good encapsulation of much literary production of the current moment and though *Suder* is partially a neo-segregation narrative it is also a search for identity it is so only to the extent that it involves an expedition through memory to recover a moment in the segregated past.

After visiting his well-adjusted brotherøs dental practice (he is surprisingly well adjusted, given his youthful traumas), also in Seattle, Craig ruminates to himself:

> As Iøm walking down I start to think that maybe Iøm asking too much for anyone to listen to my problems. I mean, maybe people canøt listen and understand if theyøre busy expecting things of me. This matter of expectations is really getting to me and I begin to have an identity crisis of sorts. I donøt know if Iøm Craig Suder the ballplayer, or Craig Suder the husband, or Craig Suder the fellow talking to the fat Germans in the elevator. (43)

Craigøs õidentity crisisö is sparked by his slump, which directly resulted in his assault at the Baltimore bar and Tylerøs insensitive racial insult. Yet what elements constituted his identity prior to the start of the narrative? Craig would have been about twenty in 1969. What would were his opinions and/or experiences surrounding the great issues for young people in the late 1960s: Vietnam, Black Power, the counter-culture?

The strong implication is that the easy-going ball player had little to no experiences with or opinions on major issues or events outside of baseball. And yet his identity is reified through baseball, the broadcast of which renders him highly visible. The clerk at the musical instrument store recognizes Craig when he comes in to purchase a saxophone. Craig feels that he is multiple, but the mass media reproduction of his image (and his lack of attempt to differentiate his life until now) cements his identity. Craig narrates the purchase as follows:

> I write him a check for four hundred dollars.

He looks at the check. ÷Craig Suder, the ball player?ø

÷No.ø

÷Iøve seen you on television.ø

I leave. (61)

Craigøs attempt to embrace a new (old) identity becomes hampered by the identity he has had until this point. The defining characteristic of his life, õthe ball player,ö becomes appended to his name by the store clerk like a ball and chain. When Craig answers õNo,ö his own agency to determine his own identity is subsequently undercut by the clerkøs reply: õIøve seen you on television.ö A highly visible man, Craig will shortly attempt to begin the process of deterritorializing his identity after he returns home to find out that while he was at the music store, Thelma may have been having a liaison with a white neighbor (but was probably not).

After having been forced outside of baseball and having created the situation where he must leave his wife and son, at least temporarily, the possibility of such a life outside baseball (and attendant middle class domesticity), a possible path suggested to him by Bud Powell in his youth, is what he grasps toward and tries to recall. Powell had already been on his mind prior to buying the saxophone. The following scene, in which Powell is introduced to Craig and his brother Martin, is significant and worth quoting at length. In this crucial scene Craig is granted a new name by pianist Bud Powell, due to his resemblance to Powelløs friend, musical comrade, and fellow be-bop pioneer, Charlie Parker. Parker died in 1955. The memory in the novel takes place circa 1958-9. Slightly more than a week prior to Parkerøs death, he and Powell performed together. They had an argument on stage and Powell left the performance (Ramsey 187). It is unclear if there had been any reconciliation. One way or the other, õPowellö the character would have still been mourning his friend. Yet since Powell disappears from the novel ó his final contact with Craig is a postcard sent from London, en route to Paris ó I do not wish to speculate

on what naming Craig õBirdö might mean for Powell psychologically. I would like to explore what it means to Craig, since the novel ends with Craig in mid-air, flying, improbably, like a bird, thus signifying on the flying African legend and possibly reflecting becoming-bird, in the sense described by Deleuze and Guattari. Powelløs nicknaming of Craig is thus momentous. He is renamed, almost sort of ritually (by having his head held back in a certain position) by a mysterious, almost other-worldly figure whom he admires and trusts. The bourgeois Suder household does not appear to have taken part in African American linguistic rituals or games, thus Powelløs re-naming of Craig becomes an initiation into a tradition of signifying, of what Debra Walker King calls õdeep talk.ö If naming, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. claims, can function as a õmetaphor for black intertextualityö (55) then Powell has just initiated Craig into traditional African American discourse. What Powell knows about the trials and tribulations of the Suder household are not disclosed, but at that moment of introduction Powell perceived Craig as somehow special and bestowed a name upon him. As Kimberly Benston has claimed õ(N)aming is inevitably genealogical revisionismö (3). A form of õgenealogical revisionismö does seem to be Powelløs goal; he dubs Craig a symbolic descendent of Charlie Parker (while of course, also implying that they might share the same gene pool).

Two of Ellisonøs essays, õHidden Name and Complex Fateö (1964) and õOn Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazzö (1962) are important intertexts for *Suder* at this juncture, in the sense that it seems possible that Everett is proceeding with these essays in mind. If he is not, then they still may aid in the interpretation of the novel. (Murrayøs riff on naming in the introduction to *The Omni-Americans* could be relevant here as well.) õBirdö functions something like a secret name; as secret names did under slavery. Craig, his re-accessing of his õsecretö name through a particular music-guided path through õOrnithology,ö participates in what Debra Walker King

calls õBlack Americaøs historical struggle against spiritual wounding through namingö (King 48). Here is the scene at length, quoted for effect and because of *Suderøs* obscurity as a book which is not in many collections.

> ÷Boys,ø Daddy said, ÷this is Bud Powell.ø
>
> I didnøt know who he was. I just looked up at his smiling face. I liked his face.
>
> ÷Bud Powell, the piano player,ø Daddy said. ÷The famous piano player.ø
>
> í .Bud Powell laughed really loud and grabbed my hair and pulled my head back. He looked at my face and said ÷You remind me of Bird.ø
>
> I moved my eyes to Daddy. Mr. Powell was still holding me by the hair.
>
> ÷Charlie Parker,ø Daddy said to me.
>
> I didnøt know this name either, but I liked that heød said I looked like Bird.
>
> ÷Mr. Powell is playing over at Fort Bragg,ø Daddy said.
>
> í .The next morning the bell rang and Ma jogged to the door and opened it. It was Mr. Powell and he was confused to see my mother wearing a heavy coat, running in place.
>
> ÷Who are you?ø Ma asked.
>
> ÷Mr. Powell,ø I said, running to the door.
>
> ÷Come in, Ma said. ÷Ben!ø she called Daddy.
>
> ÷Hey there Bird,ø Mr. Powell said to me.
>
> ÷Bud,ø said Daddy, walking into the room.
>
> ÷Hey there, Doc. I decided to take you up on the fishing.ø (30-31)

õBirdö thus becomes Craigøs õhidden nameö which transforms into his õcomplex fateö (if Ellison can be said to suggest a formula). Like Murrayøs Scooter (whose real name is never revealed; his real name is withheld as his secret name) Craigøs nickname dictates his fate, as he

becomes-bird but reaffirms his name, Craig Suder (and thus his familial and ethnic history), in mid-flight. Ellison writes in õOn Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazzö: õnicknames are indicative of a change from a given to an achieved identity, whether by rise or fallö (257). Everett inverts this somewhat standard take on nicknaming by having Craigøs nickname, granted under historical conditions created by Jim Crow (Powelløs staying at the Suder home), extend beyond the time and place of its creation (where it remained a two-person secret, of sorts) and push him to a new achieved identity ó in which he tries to live up to the name as an actual bird.

Either Powelløs gig in New Jersey had fallen through or this moment elides what was a recurring feature of Powelløs actual career: not showing up for gigs. Yet at the same time, perhaps it was not professional irresponsibility (which, when it happened, was occasioned by drug use) that causes Powell to not travel to New Jersey, but rather something he sees in young Craig. Powell (assuming the intended veracity of the portrait) is not spending time with his own (real) children, Celia and Johnny, but rather with Craig and Martin and for whatever prolonged reason, with Dr. Suder. Curiously enough, Mrs. Suder does not know at first that Powell had been staying in her house, or even who he was. This casts Thelmaøs curious statement about Mrs. Suder: õThis music, this paranoia. Youøre like your motherö (57) into question. Powell had been in and out of mental institutions in the state of New York for some time, so it is conceivable that Dr. Suder is somehow helping him (even if he is not a psychiatrist, he can write prescriptions), or on the other hand, since segregation was in effect, Powell may have been staying with the Suders because there was no suitable hotel. During segregation prominent musicians would often stay at the home of a prominent African American family in a given town. For instance, Nat õKingö Cole stayed with Albert Murray when visiting Tuskegee in the 1950s even though Tuskegee presumably had spaces to house visiting dignitaries. Jo Jones told Albert Murray that a

bandleader would occasionally find better lodging than the rest of a band by staying with a local black doctor or lawyer.

Later in the novel a parallel develops between the time Powell spends with Craig instead of his own son and the time Craig spends with the nine-year old runaway white girl Jincy instead of his own son. One imagines that prudence, etiquette, and good sense (plus fear of prison over a misunderstanding) should have prompted Craig to alert the authorities to Jincyøs whereabouts, rather than try to hide her with him. There is never the faintest suggestion of any sexual impropriety regarding any of these relationships. Both sets of relationships might be thought of assemblages or micro-communities, mutually psychologically beneficial if highly unusual and eye-brow raising under conventional circumstances. Jincy too has a õhidden nameö and õcomplex fateö tied to her full name: õJincy Jessy Jackson.ö When she tells Craig her name its political significance does not register with him (underscoring the image of him as someone who does not pay attention to politics or current events). He notes to himself that õ[her name] sounds real musicalö (121), by which he might mean rhythmic, because of its alliteration. Since Jincy was apparently taught to say õniggerö at home (128), it may be safe to surmise that her middle name was not selected in tribute to Jesse Jackson, although it functions as such, and when she grows older she will have to come to terms with it. Craig, perhaps, wishes to help her come to terms with it just as he is still trying to come to terms with õBirdö and understand what its import means for him. From the context of those who recognize him, it is clear that õBirdö is not a nickname that Craig carried with him to his baseball career. He withheld it as a secret name, intuiting its potential power along the lines of African American vernacular naming practices. As he co-habitates in Lou Tylerøs cabin with Jincy and Renoir the elephant, Craig figures out what the meaning of his name might be ó his destiny might not be to play the saxophone like Charlie

Parker but to fly like an actual bird, to undergo a becoming-bird in the specific Deleuzo-Guattari sense.

Athletic actions are easy for Craig. Baseball was easy, effortless. Flying later seems effortless as well. The saxophone does not come so easy. Rather than invest the time in learning it, Craig realizes it is not for him. Bud Powelløs naming, he intuits, meant something else. Perhaps it was a form of prophecy for a different kind of becoming.

And yet playing the saxophone was a path suggested to him and encouraged by Powell, not only for his superficial resemblance to Parker but specifically because of his embouchure. This remembrance of an alternate road not taken is what leads Craig through his disastrous attempt to play the saxophone, along his line of flight that culminates in his becoming-bird. On the fishing boat, after bantering with Dr. Suder, Powell looks at Craig and says õ÷I canøt get over how much you look like Bird. Round the eyes. Round the eyes.ø He grabbed my face and titled it from side to side, looking. ÷The mouth, too. Doc, your boy got lips like birdøö (32). Stanley Crouch has noted that Charlie Parker had a perfect embouchure, like the kind found in educational texts for saxophone instruction (*Kansas City Lightning* 253). Powelløs advice is thus not necessarily mystical or prophetic, at least not entirely, but helpful and practical. Powell has taken a serious interest in Craig, partially due to his resemblance to Charlie Parker, and partially because of a dream of a future Parker that Craigøs embouchure would give him a chance at becoming. Meanwhile, Powell cannot recall the name of Martin Suder.

> I put my finger to my mouth and traced the outline of my lips. He let go of my face.
>
> ÷What do you want to be when you grow up?ø asked Mr. Powell.
>
> í .÷A baseball player, I guess. Baseball.ø

> ÷No, you should go into music. You should pick up the saxophone.
> Youøve got the lips for it. Lips just like Bird.ø(32)

Any chance of this happening was foreclosed by the way Powell left the Suder home, after creating the circumstances in which the familyøs dog gets killed.

Just before Powelløs trip to Europe and search for freedom from Jim Crow he alienated Craig by untying Craigøs dog and thus dooming him to certain death. The bang of the gun that either kills Craigøs dog or stands in metonymic relation to the dogøs death thus perhaps also kills any likelihood of young Craig taking up the saxophone. Yet what Powell cryptically told him about chance at that moment is just what Craig needed to find in 1981 in order to literally take flight through the air. The winding path through his memory of segregated Fayetteville that õOrnithologyö opened up revealed the secret that would enable Craig to take his best shot at his own freedom in 1981 Oregon. The neo-segregation narrative plunges back through segregation to emerge as something else as Craig becomes-bird.

The fishing trip with Powell plus the Suder men, without the õcrazyö Kathy Suder, is not a positive memory outside of Powelløs admonitions and encouragement. Through a childish impulsiveness, Martin Suder opens a bag fished out of the water and opens to reveal a horrible collection of dead kittens. This seems to suggest that Kathy Suder is not the bringer of horror and chaos, rather, it is or can be everywhere.

Powelløs pronouncement that Kathy Suder is not crazy, just different, would seem to reflect an awareness of Deleuze and Guattari on Everettøs part: an understanding unconventional mental states, perhaps paranoid-schizophrenic ones are understood in the wrong frame of reference by society and medical professionals. In a 2004 interview, perhaps not remembering at the moment the subtlety of Powelløs assessment regarding Kathy Suder, Everett said: õWell,

sheøs nuts. But sheøs the only one who has the sense enough to be nuts in the world in which she livesö (49). For Ellison, Murray, and Everett, African-American mental illness (and/or the white presumption thereof) is a major theme. Ellisonøs LeeWillie Minnifees in õCadillac Flambéö and chapter four of *Three Days Before the Shooting…* may have been guilty of arson, but the joke is that if a black man burns a Cadillac, the authorities believe belongs in St. Elizabethøs with Ezra Pound, despite the coolness and rationality of the speech he gave while dousing his car with gasoline. Indeed, Ellison has a character based on Pound in St. Elizabethøs named õCylde Sterlingö (134, 213). St. Elizabethøs is also the destination of the doctor the Invisible Man and Mr. Norton meet at the Golden Day. For Murray, the joke is on white people who believe that blacks who are not sufficiently servile must be either crazy, as in the case of Luzana Cholly, or õevil,ö in the case of Old Evil Ed Riggins. Everett updates and extends these reflections, suggesting, perhaps that Kathyøs behavior simply reflects another mode of being under capitalism/segregation, while simultaneously showing how her difference ó whatever its label ó torments her sons and husband. Everett takes mental illness more seriously than Ellison or Murray ó he does not leverage it into a joke about white paranoia, squareness or misperception, which Murray and Ellison to do comic effect. But at the same time, for Everett, Ellison, and Murray, it is African American music and the paths it takes through memory that offers, if not redemption or cure, then at least some sort of aide to the various drifts out of sanity occasioned by Jim Crow.

Craig never mentions which version of õOrnithologyö he is listening to in the 1981 sections. The original 1946 recording did not feature Bud Powell on piano, but subsequent live recordings with Charlie Parker did. (Powell also recorded the piece on his own.) More importantly, Powell plays õOrnithologyö for Craig, in this poignant scene in which he also

explains his definition of jazz, and simultaneously, offers Craig a different way of understanding his motherøs mental illness. The very concept of jazz thus becomes associated for Craig with the concept of cognitive difference, as he learns about both in the same discussion.

> ÷Hey there, Bird,ø he said, turning his face to me.
>
> ÷Hey, Mr. Powell,ø I said. ÷What are you doing?ø
>
> ÷Looking at the keys.ø
>
> ÷How come?ø
>
> ÷Listen to this.ø He started playing. ÷This is a song called ÷Ornithology.ø Charlie Parker wrote it.
>
> ÷Thatøs pretty.ø
>
> ÷Iøm playing it slow, but it donøt matter. Long as I play it.ø
>
> ÷Thatøs real pretty.ø
>
> ÷Thatøs jazz,ø he said, and tossed his eyes to the ceiling, ÷and jazz is life. Jazz is life.ø
>
> ÷What is it?ø
>
> Mr. Powell looked at me and stopped playing. ÷What is what?ø
>
> ÷What is jazz?ø
>
> He hit a chord and held it. ÷Jazz is one step beyond, one giant step.ø He hit another chord. ÷Charlie Parker is dead now, but not really.ø
>
> We were silent for a time while he struck a series of chords that filled the room. Then Ma came trotting through in her coat and she went out the front door. Mr. Powell stopped playing.
>
> ÷My Motherøs crazy,ø I said. My eyes fell to my lap.
>
> ÷Maybe not crazy,ø said Mr. Powell, ÷Maybe just different.ø (76-77)

Powell initiates Craig into jazz both musically and theoretically, into signifying, and cognitive difference, and eventually somewhat coldly, to the concept of chance (161). Powellø metaphor for jazz, õone step beyond, one giant stepö combined with his advocacy of chance is eventually what will combine to inspire Craig to take one giant step off the cliff (õWillet Rockö) and take flight. Craig Suder, like Murrayø Scooter, is like Vizenorø trickster, õfigured in chanceö and, like Scooter, establishes his antipathy to white hegemony through a chance-taking.

Dr. Ben Suderø stated medical opinion of his wifeø condition is, at first, that she is õcrazy.ö But perhaps Powell has had some influence on him as well, as he comes to adjust his opinion of his wifeø desire to jog around the city limits of Fayetteville. Uzzie Cannon has claimed that this is õfor no apparent reasonö (99). But the encircling of a locale has many historical suggestions and precedents of control. It could suggest the medieval Catholic practice of Rogation Days, in which local church figures walked the border of the diocese (the only day on which private property was nullified ó church officials could pass through any land). It also might allude to Leo Tolstoyø short story õHow Much Land Does a Man Need.ö It also brings to mind the legend of the Smithtown bull on Long Island, in which the Native Americans in 1665 supposedly agreed to grant Richard Smith as much land as he could ride around on a bull in one day. In short, at various times, the human mind has associated a ritual encircling of land with coming into possession of it.

Meanwhile, prior to Benø softening his stance on her running, Kathy seems to have fallen under the spell of the racist dentist and evangelical figure Dr. McCoy, who helps her to run while treating it as a joke. She is pleased that he had recently treated Craig. Ben Suder is furious about the invitation and unimpressed that McCoy treated Craig, suggesting that he probably overcharged anyway. Perhaps Kathy is trying to õintegrateö Fayetteville, beginning with an

overture to McCoy to have him over for dinner. This scene allows Craig to see his father and Bud Powell both, together, laugh at McCoyøs racist comments when they appear ridiculous and then stand up to them when they turn more hostile. McCoy pulls up to the Suder home in a white Cadillac, wearing all white with bright red socks. He almost suggests a walking Confederate flag. He takes it upon himself to say grace:

> ÷Heavenly Father, we thank you for this mealí ø
>
> ÷Just fine,ø said Mr. Powell, glancing at McCoy. ÷It was real hot there. People donøt come out when itøs hot.ø
>
> ÷Atlantaøs going to be even hotter,ø Daddy said.
>
> ÷Lord, help us through these tryingí ö
>
> ÷Yeah, well, at least people down this way are used to the heat.ø
>
> ÷And Lord God, bless these good colored folks who Iøm eating with.ø
>
> Daddy shook his head and smiled and Mr. Powell laughed out loud.
>
> ÷Amen.ø McCoy opened his eyes and looked sternly at Daddy and Mr. Powell. ÷If you folks believed more strongly in God, maybe you wouldnøt be colored.ø
>
> Daddy sat up very straight and his eyes narrowed. He leaned forward on his forearms. ÷What are you doing in my house?ø
>
> ÷What?ø McCoy asked.
>
> ÷I want to know why a peckerwood like you comes to a Negro house for dinner.ø
>
> Mr. Powell raised his napkin to his mouth to hide a smile.
>
> ÷Ben?ø Ma tried to call Daddy off.
>
> ÷Well, Dr. Suder, I just wanted to see what colored folks was like. So, I could pray for you, like real people.ø
>
> ÷McCoy, you half-baked, Bible-headed redneck, just get out of my house.ø Daddy stood up. ÷Get up and get out.ø
>
> Mr. Powell stood up, too. (53-54)

McCoy then leaves the house. The implication here seems to be that Powelløs presence may have bolstered Dr. Suderøs confidence. But the two of them together provide Craig with a positive scene of the unequivocal rejection of McCoyøs racist theories. This is another moment in Craigøs cobwebbed memory rescued from oblivion by his immersion in õOrnithology.ö Like Murray does throughout *Train Whistle Guitar* and *The Spyglass Tree*, Everett recovers the memory of assertive resistance to racism under segregation. McCoy will reappear a few chapters later, attempting to õtrainö Kathy, that is, sit in the back of a pickup truck that she jogs behind. This aspect of their relationship was not revealed before or at dinner and how it came to be remains one of the oddities of the novel. But Dr. Suderøs subsequent supplanting of McCoy, after McCoy calls Kathy a õcrazy nigger-woman,ö (128) seems to be what ultimately saves and heals their marriage.

The setting of Fayetteville, adjacent to Fort Bragg, is suggestive. Everett is a native of Columbia, South Carolina, so the North Carolina setting may be within the boundaries of his general Southern experience but not especially autobiographical. The setting in Fayetteville seems to function best in relation to the issues raised by Fort Bragg, which was home to both the Armyøs 82nd Airborne Division beginning in 1951 and the U.S. Armyøs Psychological Warfare Center beginning in 1952 (Paddock 1). It would be going too far outside the text to speculate that Kathy Suderøs mental illness has something to do with this, but still, with the proximity of Fort Bragg taken into consideration, Fayetteville becomes a curious choice for a setting in relation to mental illness. Craig Suder inhabits two places that may appear at first glance to be rather random ó Fayetteville and Seattle ó but they both are locations of the utmost importance to the air power of the United States. Young Craig grows up in the town adjacent to one of the seats of power of the state and its war machine and later plays baseball in the city associated with

Boeing, one of the major contractors of the war machine. Craigøs line of flight is a deterritorializing physical journey that is simultaneously a painstaking journey through memory. But as he proceeds through his memory he is also proceeding in space and time in 1981, journeying far from Seattle, out onto the open ocean, and back, thoroughly deterritorialized, for by this time he has crossed over to the other side of the law. First, his wandering takes him into contact with Sid Willis, the former Narragansett Indian baseball star mistakenly identified (according to him) during his career as African American.

> ÷You know, I wasnøt ever happy playing baseball.ø
>
> ÷No?ø
>
> ÷No, and I resented the reason they let me into the majors. ÷
>
> ÷Why?,ø I ask.
>
> ÷Well, when I started there wasnøt but four or five blacks playing in the big leagues and they was all excellent ó Jackie Robinson, Satchel Paige, and like that. And they brought me in because they was looking for a darky that wasnøt so good.ø
>
> ÷I donøt follow you.ø
>
> ÷I guess they figured they had to show that dark folks could be bad, too. I mean, every black playing was great and then came Sid Willis, Mr. Below Average. And I ainøt even black.ø
>
> ÷You ainøt?ø
>
> ÷Hell, no. Iøm a Narragansett Indian. I was born in Rhode Island.ø
>
> ÷You sure look black.ø
>
> ÷Well, I canøt help that. Those damn white boys on the team would call me nigger and Iød tell them I was an Indian and theyød just laugh.ø He stops and looks up at the sky. ÷Then one season things just fell into place and I was hitting like three-fifty and they let me go.ø
>
> ÷Whyød they do that?ø
>
> ÷Because all of a sudden I was another excellent dark-skinned ballplayer, thatøs why.ø

÷That doesnøt make any sense,ø I says.

÷Thatøs white folks.ø (83)

This farcical re-telling of the story of mediocre African Americans entering the major leagues is a reversal of the heroic stories of Jackie Robinson and Satchel Paige, et al. It also reflects a more insidious aspect suspected in desegregation. Also, once again, Everett is thinking along the lines of Ellison (and Murray) in exploring African American-Native American connections. But Ellisonøs Native American shaman who was to appear in his second novel has a more positive view of the black experience: õThere are many ways of being black. There are the ways of the skin, and the ways of custom, and the way a man feels inside himö (775). But most of all the ancestry that Sid Willis claims reflects the American stateøs confusion about itself and how it related to at least one Native American tribe, the Narragansetts, who decided not to reject its members of African ancestry in the 1870s. Legal scholar Ariela Gross writes:

> the Narragansett attempted to establish a multiracial but still Indian society in which citizenship rather than race was the operating principleí .The only group [among the Melungeons, Lumbee, and Narragansett] that refused white imperatives to reject blackness, the Narragansett, suffered de-tribalization and near extinction as an Indian nation, until they finally won a land claim settlement from the state of Rhode Island in 1978 and Federal recognition as a tribe in 1983. (474)

According to Gross, the strong African American ó Native American affinities among the Narragansett may have changed by the twentieth century. She writes that õthe Indian Office investigated the Narragansett in 1935, finding that despite their history of ÷intermixture,ø many were now ÷strongly anti-negro.øö (511) Of course, this is a second hand account and the reality must have been complicated, yet that this is the milieu in which Sid Willis grew up in is reflected in his attitude.

Having lived in the shadow of the war machine in Fayetteville and Seattle, Craig travels, with Willis, far out on the open smooth space of the Pacific, where Willis is headed to complete a drug deal. When Craig interrupts the drug deal in chapter twelve, he creates enemies of Willis, who will stalk him, and potentially, the state (as he disobeys the commands of the U.S. Coast Guard). His line of flight has finally taken him outside the shadow of the real war machine (Boeing and Fort Bragg) and a de-fanged metaphorical war machine (professional sports). Willis becomes essential to the plot, because he enables Craig to have enough cash to purchase the elephant, whose pet-mastery of he must (so Deleuze and Guattari would argue) and does reject in order to finally become-bird.

Before Craig is aware that Willis is still alive, and after him at that, he takes the boat formerly belonging to Willis into Portland. In Portland he finds a room in a house where Chinese men live (it is strongly suggested that they are homosexual) and several belong to a Mao Zedong study group. (He guesses, correctly, that he will not be recognized as the baseball player Craig Suder. His visibility is strong but recognition of him outside of Seattle is not ubiquitous; it is limited in some degree to the Marinersø baseball market. Later, in rural Oregon, white residents fail to recognize him as well.) It would appear that at this point, Craig has completed a deterritorialization. He has gone from the õcenterö of the mainstream, state-sanctioned culture of the United States (that is to say, baseball: allegedly being Americaøs past time, after all) to one of its undeniable margins: a collective of homosexual Maoists. Encountering new Chinese immigrants in Portland could allude to Frederick Douglassøs 1869 essay õOur Composite Nationality,ö in which he celebrates and defends the wave of Chinese immigration then occurring. Craig asks Thomas, the first man he meets, about the others:

÷Thereøs a beer in the fridge. Feel free.ø

> I nod. ÷Why are Mike and Larry dressed like that?ø [in ÷all greyø]
>
> ÷Theyøre in a Mao study group.ø
>
> ÷Oh.ø
>
> ÷More social than anythingø (96).

It is curious that Craig, who was in his late teens and twenties during the period of radical African American engagement with Mao Zedongøs thought, would not know what a Mao suit looked like. In their article õBlack Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,ö Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch claim:

> In Harlem in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it seemed as though everyone had a copy of Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, better known as the ÷little red book.ø From time to time supporters of the Black Panther Party would be seen selling the little red book on street corners as a fund-raiser for the party. And it was not unheard of to see some young black radicals strolling down the street dressed like a Chinese peasant ó except for the Afro and sunglasses, of course (7).

Perhaps Craig was in the minor leagues at that time, in the south, or some part of the country where he would not encounter any sort of black radical politics in person or on the news. Craigøs entire life, after all, seems to revolved strictly around baseball and his family up until his current crisis. His query highlights his disconnect from a certain aspect of the culture of his youth but it also looks forward to another iteration of Maoism. Kelley and Esch write:

> Anyone who knows anything about politics knows that Jesse Jacksonøs 1984 presidential campaign was overrun by a rainbow coalition of Maoists and that a variety of Maoist organizations were reprsented in the National Black Independent Political Party. Like Africa, China was on the move and there was a general sensibility that the Chinese supported the black struggle. (37)

Craig does not know, but Everett might have known, how relevant Maoism was then to become in a short time and it is thus of interest that Craig encounters both a Maoist study group and

õJincy Jessy Jacksonö on his run from his conventional, highly scripted and circumscribed life in major league baseball.

Thomas is a crucial figure because he not only brings Craig to a minor league baseball game of the Portland Beaversø, where Craig rediscovers but does not recognize his own (returned) baseball skills, and then to see Dizzy Gillespie perform, which is the last time Craig attempts to play the saxophone. Somewhat cruelly, Craig claims that minor league baseball players are õembarrassing their loved ones,ö apparently, by simply being on the field playing minor league baseball. Later that evening, Craig heinously embarrasses himself by attempting to play the saxophone during a performance by Dizzy Gillespie. When a bouncer tells him to stop playing, he exclaims õDizzy, I went fishing with Bud Powellö (97)! Stunned, Dizzy stares at him. Before Dizzy can react, Sid Willis reappears looking for the money Craig has absconded with. As Craig and Thomas run from Willis, a fire alarm is set off, creating further dissonance and adding aural insult to injury after interrupting Gillespieøs performance. This literal and metaphorical dissonance, plus the failure to communicate with Gillespie (another friend of and collaborator with Bud Powell) perhaps clears the way for the next 1959 memory, in which Powell informs Craig returns home from his grandmotherøs funeral and finds Powell playing the piano and he tearfully implores Powell to take him to France with him.

The day after the jazz club incident, Willis tracks Craig down and enters the Chinese mensø house looking for him. Thomas apprehends Willis and allows Craig to escape in his (Thomasøs) car. Thomas tells Craig to take his car. (His sexual desire for Craig was noted at the baseball game.) This is a great sacrifice by Thomas ó the car was filled the inventory of toys for his business of filling vending machines. Craig does not seem to notice or be aware of this. Craig narrates numerous interior developments, but not those in which he may feel guilt.

In chapter fifteen Craig acquires the African elephant Sabu, whose name he changes to Renoir. Craig does not know the names of Pierre-August Renoir or Jean Renoir, he simply knows that Renoir is a French name and the õpainter or somethingö was õprobably a sissyö (115), though he had not speculated along such lines regarding Thomas and the Maoists. The outlandishness of the novel increases dramatically at this point, as Craig buys a beret to wear when he buys feed for Renoir. (Perhaps his name could be thought of as re-noir? Re: noir?) Renoir finally puts an end to Craigøs saxophone playing, but blowing through his trunk every time Craig blows on the saxophone. The elephant could represent memory, or the Republican party (and thus the betrayal of Reconstruction), but it may be that the similarity between the elephantøs trunk and the saxophone is elephantøs most important association. The elephant is specified as an African species (*Loxodonta africana*), not Indian (144). He is making a sound that, perhaps, Craigøs ancestors might have heard. Could this be the origin of Craigøs cryptic õremember meö (109)? Perhaps Renoirøs blowing sounds better than Craigøs playing. It is at this point that Craig gives up playing the saxophone. In sentence prior to this at the outset of chapter twenty, Craig decides õthat flying is a distinct possibility and that *being a bird* is well worth my whileö (142, emphasis added).

Clearly Everett intends a becoming-bird and not say, a flying African motif.[207] This appears utterly ludicrous at first (and certainly it falls outside the common capitalistic use of the

[207] I would now like to briefly turn aside to the flying African legend and consider whether or not Craig partakes in this narrative tradition, which became an important trope in post-segregation African American literature through its appearance in Toni Morrisonøs *Song of Solomon*. The legend of the flying Africans who flew back to Africa rather than submit through the yoke of slavery is diffused through the African diaspora in the Western hemisphere, including in Everettøs native South Carolina. Wendy W. Walters writes õBeside folklore and story collections in the United States, examples of the legend can also be found throughout the geographic region where the Atlantic slave trade flourishedí .In some Caribbean versions of the legend the avoidance of salt is a prerequisite to flyingö (11). Walters argues that in American version of the legend a magic African word is necessary for flight back to Africa, whereas not partaking in salt (or salted foods) signaled a resistance to the diet imposed by the plantation owners. Craig Suder does not fit into the paradigm of flying African folktale because he evades its key features: he flies via mad-made technology (not magic or supernatural power), he does not fly to Africa (but rather, around and around in

time-for-value swap-describing phrase õworth my whileö), until it is understood as an attempt at becoming-bird in the precise sense meant by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*: a becoming is not an impersonation of an animal but an adoption of its characteristics. From the start of his desire to become-bird, Craig tells Jincy how he plans to õraise my body temperature and loosen up my neck and eat wormsö (142). He consumes his first worm shortly thereafter. The final straw that pushes Craig into his mode of becoming-bird could be his encounter with a sheriff in chapter nineteen, who is obviously not a baseball fan:

> ÷Iøm Sheriff Prager.ø
>
> I nod. ÷Iøm Craig Suder.ø
>
> ÷Youøre black.ø
>
> I donøt know what to say to him.
>
> He smiles. ÷We donøt get many blacks around these parts.ø (136)

After this encounter with Sheriff Prager, who inquires about both Jincy and the hay that Craig has been stealing to feed Renoir, Craig embarks on a discussion of the bald eagle with his new friend, the zoologist Richard Beckwith, whom he first meets in the woods in chapter eighteen. After pondering what it takes to become-bird, chapter twenty opens with Craigøs statement õI decide that flying is a distinct possibility and that being a bird is well worth my while. Iøve pretty much given up on the saxophone ó it hurts Jincyøs ears and starts Renoir in a screaming fitö (142). Craig surmises that becoming the next Charlie Parker was perhaps not what Powell intended by naming him Bird. Trying to reconstruct his logic is not easy, but perhaps he is thinking that what Powell really saw in him, besides a superficial resemblance to Charlie Parker,

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circles above Oregon), he does not use any African words, and he partakes in salted foods, eating large quantities of bacon in the days leading up to his flight. In chapter thirteen he develops a õtaste for baconö (96) and proceeds to eat it with many if not all his meals until the end of the novel (115, 134, 151). Everett seems to have been intent on distancing Craig Suder from the flying African tradition in every possible way.

were the spirits of the dead birds that he imagined entering and inhabiting his body in chapter six. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

> Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasiesí .We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is notí .Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. It concerns alliance. (238)

The õallianceö here could be with the eagles Craig observes with Beckwith or with the dead birds from chapter six, whose bodies Craig brought into the house and placed under his bed. Deleuze and Guattari continue: õA becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicityí .Animal characteristics can be mythic or scientific. But we are not interested in characteristics; what interests us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peoplingö (239). Craig is working, it would seem, within the framework of Deleuze and Guattari, working those who are missing (Powell, Kathy Suder) and working on behalf of a people to come.

Craig does not imitate birds. He does not flap his arms like wings or vocally reproduce bird calls. It is not a theatrical performance. He really attempts to become one; he swallows worms. His training program is one of bodily adjustment; an attempt to alter his own physical characteristics, not the mimetic representation of a birdøs behavior:

> Birds have got really flexible necks. A bird can touch any part of his body with his beak, and so Iøm doing neck exercises. Iøm touching my nose to my knees and Iøm pulling my feet to my face and Iøm rubbing my nose on my shoulder, but itøs clear that there are spots I will never touch. Perhaps with a lot of exercise I will be able to touch my nose to my pecker.
>
> Birds have got really high body temperatures. The only way I can figure to raise my body temperature is by running a fever. So, Iøm

> trying to catch a cold. The nights are chilly, so I try sleeping naked without a fire and with the wall down. Jincyøs all bundled up in blankets. It doesnøt work. All I get is a sore back (152).

It may be illustrative to look at the example of Alexis the Trotter, provided by Deleuze and Guttari, along with their preface to the example:

> One does not imitate; one constitutes a block of becoming. Imitation enters in only as an adjustment of the block, like a finishing touch, a wink, a signature. But everything of importance happens elsewhere: in the becoming-spider of the dance, which occurs on the condition that the spider itself becomes sound and color, orchestra and painting. Take the case of the local folk hero, Alexis the Trotter, who ran ÷likeø a horse at extraordinary speed, whipped himself with a short switch, whinnied, reared, kicked, knelt, lay down on the ground in the manner of a horse, competed against them in races, and against bicycles and trains. He imitated a horse to make people laugh. But he had a deeper zone of proximity or indiscernibility. Sources tell us that he was never as much of a horse as when he played the harmonica: precisely because he no longer needed a regulating or secondary imitationí .Alexis became all the more horse when the horseøs bit became a harmonica, and the horseøs trot went into double time. (305)

Craigøs õfinishing touch,ö õwinkö or õsignatureö (in form of a semi-sarcastic, but playful utterance: õchirp, chirpö) comes at the end of chapter twenty-three, when Beckwith tries to dissuade him from the project:

> He rubs his face with his palm. ÷You know, thereøs some talk down in town about you flying off the mountain.ø
>
> I just look at him and Iøm touching my shoulder with my nose.
>
> ÷Youøre going to try it, arenøt you?ø
>
> And I says, ÷Chirp, chirp.ø
>
> Beckwith tilts his head and looks at me with questioning eyes. ÷I canøt tell if youøre pulling my leg or not.ø
>
> ÷Chirp.ø
>
> ÷Youøre joking.ø He laughs nervously.

> ÷Off Willet Rock.ø
>
> í .÷You know,ø says Beckwith, youøre talking about suicide.ø
>
> ÷Whatever.ø I wave my fingers at him at turn and enter the cabin. I stare up at the ceiling and then my eyes fall over to my saxophone, which is in the corner. I hear Charlie Parkerøs solo. I fall asleep humming it softly to myself. (165-66)

His project is still tied to Parkerøs õOrnithologyö and the memory of Powell, but he no longer needs the phonograph or saxophone to access it.

The next day, under less than ideal conditions and after several slapstick encounters in the woods involving Prager, Beckwith, Thomas, and Sid Willis, Craig decides to follow Powelløs advice to the extreme and take the ultimate chance: õThe sky is clear and the wind is firm and what I do is step off Willet Rockö (171). His flight is initially rocky, but he gets the hang of it, despite realizing õthereøs a lot I donøt know about air currentsö (171). As a neo-segregation narrative taking place in 1981 and an evasion of segregation narrative taking place in 1958-59, *Suder* appropriately ends with allusions to a key text in the segregation aesthetic, chapter thirteen of *The Souls of Black Folk* (õOf the Coming of Johnö) and to the work which evades segregation to the utmost, *Train Whistle Guitar*.

1. õOf The Coming of John,ö just before John Jones is about to be lynched: õAnd the world whistled in his earsö (Du Bois 179).

2. *Train Whistle Guitar*, Scooter narrating when he and Little Buddy run from Sodawaterøs after the confrontation between Stagolee Dupas and Sheriff Timberlake: õall there was was the wind in my ears getting louder and louderö (136).

3. *Suder*, as Craig Suder is flying at the end: õIøm feeling the wind on my face and listening to it roaring past my ears and Iøve got an erectionö (171).

Everett thus brings together the two discordant traditions that he draws upon throughout the novel, signaling that ultimately, in an extreme situation, the only sound to be heard is wind, while other sounds, such as music or even oneøs own name, exist only in memory. *Suder* ends on a poignant note, perhaps a moment of reterritorialization, as Craig affirms his name, Craig Suder (as opposed to õBird Suder,ö or something). õThen I see Beckwith on a ridge with the hunters and heøs pointing up at me. I imagine him to say, ÷Homo sapiens.ø And I says, ÷Craig Suderøö (171). Craig has taken to heart Bud Powelløs lesson about chance, but ultimately his nickname, Bird, will remain secret and buried in the past of his own memory, as he has now, guided by Parker and Powell, actually become-bird; something completely new under the sun and under the gaze of the state, which will have to be reconciled with what has come before it, under the name Craig Suder.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This study has had several purposes and goals regarding an underexplored corner of twentieth century African American literature. It has been an intervention in periodization debates and has attempted to argue that while much of the literature by African Americans written during segregation was largely shaped by the pressures of segregation, some of it cannot be said to be in all fairness. Some writers thought of their projects as unrelated to the pressures of segregation and instead related to questions of the preservation and/or recovery of ante-bellum African American culture(s) prior to segregation and the preservation of working-class cultures, perhaps blues-collar cultures (and attendant structures of feeling) during segregation, which were obfuscated or poorly rendered in much of the fiction in the segregation aesthetic. This necessitated an approach that sought a melding of African American aural traditions and modernist technique. I have hoped to shed light deep into an elusive tradition that hopefully will bring a more clear understanding of claims such as Steven C. Tracyøs insightful claim about Ellisonøs second novel: õClearly the notion of listening to oneøs musical heartbeat to help establish identity and strategies for living inform the textö (102).

This study has also attempted to establish a genealogy from Hurston to Ellison and Murray that hitherto has not been so explicitly argued for or demonstrated. I have been suggesting and attempting to argue that if it is accepted and understood that African American literature began to change after the official end of segregation, that that change was already beginning with Zora Neale Hurston in the 1920s and picked up momentum with the work of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray in the 1950s. Because *Invisible Man* quickly achieved canonical status while Murrayøs first novel remained drafted but unpublished aside from one

excerpt, Ellison became Hurstonøs successor in the decade that Hurston went silent. The globally relevant political themes of Ellisonøs novel ó its anti-fascist and anti-Communist message ó perhaps initially obscured its reflections of African American culture and its tropes; its enormous cultural recovery project, inseparable from an aural and oral culture. Saul Bellow said in a 1991 interview that after his positive review of *Invisible Man* in *Commentary* Ellison õgently complained that I had failed to find the mythic substructure of his peopleö (280). This aspect of *Invisible Man* began to be appreciated around the time of Hurstonøs rediscovery and the rediscovery of Murrayøs early work.

Ellison and Murray experienced the very end of the rhetorical, vocal, and musical sounds with actual roots in slavery, through their grandparentsø generation, and were young enough not to experience modernism as a shock but as an idiom that seemed natural ó partially because of its partial rootedness in African American culture and admiration, even if was often an obscured and sometimes confused admiration (at least in the cases of Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Stein, Hemingway, and Faulkner). Hurston, twenty-two years older than Ellison and twenty-five years older than Murray is more enigmatic and mysterious.

If segregation caused African American literature to initially be seen as something apart from the main current of American literature ó a somewhat dubious idea to begin with, but I can follow it, though it requires turning a blind eye to the following relationships: Du Bois and William James, Alain Locke and William James, Jean Toomer and Hart Crane, H.L. Mencken and James Weldon Johnson, and Ellison and Bellow, plus Hurstonøs immersion in the work of Gilbert and Sullivan and various English classics ó then another factor later emerged, by the 1920s, that would build another layer of difference: that is, renewed consciousness of slavery heightened by the fact of the dying off of the last of the erstwhile slaves. Yet paradoxically,

writers working within and conscious of this subsequent layer of supposed difference would demand nothing less than being on the same terms of American literature, as the main current of American history can only be fully understood through African American history and culture. The gradual but definite disappearance of tangible, personal links to the antebellum word ó elided by the mandarins promoting a õNew Negroö and sanitizing and decontextualizing the sounds of slavery ó prompted another direction of literary effort, which would be grounded in slavery yet look toward the future. This is perhaps nowhere more perfectly exemplified than in the final two plays of August Wilson, *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf*.

Hurston, Ellison, and Murray sought to make their work as globally relevant as possible while making it, to their ears, as idiomatically authentic as possible. They recoiled from works that brightly reflected the pressures of institutionalized racism. And so to confine their works, periodically and thus, eventually, institutionally along with works for which they had distaste, risks deliberately misunderstanding or miscategorizing their texts. That their intentions would thus be misunderstood is sad enough, but this discussion can be had without resort to intention by noting that the ways tropes of sound are deployed in the texts separates their work from texts more grounded in the visual cues of segregation. I believe that to properly study their work historically, a historical knowledge of the pernicious realities of Jim Crow is indispensable, but is not the total story. These works can be studied in relation to their idiomatic contexts and depths and in their relation to global literature. What did it mean for Hurston to turn to the story of Moses around the same time Thomas Mann did, during the rise of Hitler? What did it mean for Murray to read both Hurston and Mann and consciously structure his fiction on music in a manner directly inspired by Mann, but forget the novels of Hurston, whom he knew when he was twelve years old? Why should there not be a year-long course on *Invisible Man* that spends the

first semester on African American folk sources (folklore, folk rhetoric, music, and so on), African American literary allusions, and literary intertexts (*The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man*, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, *Up From Slavery*, *The Souls of Black Folk*) and a second semester on its debts to Dostoevsky, Emerson, Poe, Melville, Joyce, Hemingway, Faulkner, Mumford, and Kenneth Burke? Or, reverse the semesters; or combine them, it wouldnøt matter.

As Teju Cole recently wrote on Twitter (commenting on a story in the *New York Times*[208]) there is a sense that the American publishing and literary world promotes African writers at the expense of African American writers ó as if African writers are composing a globally relevant literature and perhaps African American writers are not, as if African American writing is still seen as something apart, to a large degree. African writing, Cole laments (as an African writer), is used as an õalternativeö to African American writing. I believe this is the case, and that if is often not viewed as a worthy idiomatic variant on American Literature (whatever that is, but itøs a useful shorthand term), but a little bit sociology, a little bit op-ed, and, if anything, an easy portal to political discussion.

Hurston, Ellison, and Murray did not want to be seen apart at all. They wanted to be seen as writers in a cosmopolitan literary world. I should point out that Ellison certainly and even Murray would recoil from my insistent comparison with Hurston. Murray never dismissed or critiqued Hurston the way Ellison did but I do not think either of them could doubt or deny the similarity ó and in all likelihood the influence ó if presented with the textual evidence I have arranged (and more, that I have not mentioned). Ellison and Murray looked to James Joyce as a model of a writer who unapologetically delved into the depths of the Irish experience and

[208] õNew Wave of African Writers with an Internationalist Bent,ö June 29, 2014.

through his technique, invited the world to have a window on that experience. This would inform the integrated visions of Ellison and Murray, and Hurstonøs writings on literary aesthetics from the 1930s suggest that she was not far from them.

In *Wrestling with the Left*, Barbara Foley has attempted to rehabilitate the Cambridge School of anthropology; not just in relation to the most comprehensive understanding of the goals of Ellisonøs work, for which it is indispensable, but in general. The work of Lord Raglan, along with Cambridge school scholars such as Jane Harrison may seem old fashioned, but as Foley has pointed out, elements of Cambridge school thought, along with numerous persons associated with it, were politically progressive. Raglan may have held what would today be considered quaint ideas about universality, but he did not believe in a Jungian universality ó on the contrary, he was an unromantic, inflexible, sober-minded cultural materialist. (He was an enormously interesting figure for a variety of reasons, but his diction, unfortunately, is a tad politically incorrect.) For Raglan there was nothing mystical about narrative universality; for him it can all be traced back to ancient Mesopotamia, from whence it all diffused. I am not saying that Raglan should be taken at face value in 2014, though he is a skilled and rigorously logical writer. I am suggesting that Murray and Ellison cannot be fully understood without understanding what Raglan meant to them; how Raglan globalized their worldviews and thrust them into deep time. Ellisonøs father died when he was three. Murrayøs first met his biological father when he was nineteen. Raglanøs study of the unusual family situation of fatherless heroes across numerous myths and cultures meant much more to them than say, Freudøs speculations about fathers ever would. And it undoubtedly bolstered Murrayøs nuclear response to õThe Moynihan Reportö in *The Omni-Americans*. õThe Moynihan Reportö was the sort of narrative of

black pathology believed in by white liberals that gave Murray an impetus to resuscitate his fiction once it had been stalled.

All of this is to say that a fully contextualized and historicized understanding of the African American dimensions of American literary modernism cannot be fully understood without looking beyond segregation, as Hurston, Ellison, and Murray consciously did when they sat down to write. If it can be understood and accepted that Romanticism was bubbling under the surface of a neo-classical world, that Realism was bubbling under the surface of a Romantic world, and that Modernism (perhaps a new Romanticism) was bubbling beneath the surface of a Realist and Naturalist world, then it should be considered that literature by African Americans follows the same trajectory: the successor of one form can begin to take shape during the apex of its predecessor. That an aspect of õAfrican American Literatureö bounded by segregation is a real, relevant, and useful periodization paradigm is undoubtedly true, as long as this narrative is not understood as being totalizing; and leaves room for understanding and micro-periodization of works from another angle of vision. If this study has not succeeded in persuading on this score then I hope it has performed the work of breaking new ground in numerous areas of literary history and the interpretation of both canonical and underexplored texts, juxtaposed with critics and theorists who have never been brought to bear on these texts before.

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