

## Introduction: The Hearing Eye

*Hear with your eyes and see with your ears.*

—Charlie Parker

This collection aims to address a gap in the literature on art and music, a gap that appears to be the result of a racial blind spot and/or listening bias. Valerie Wilmer has described how the idea for her book *As Serious as Your Life*, a study of post-Coltrane jazz, first came to her in a Manhattan bookshop when she picked up a volume called *The New Music* and “instead of reading about Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra, found myself into a treatise on Cage and Stockhausen.”<sup>1</sup> A similar experience provided our *raison d’être* for compiling *The Hearing Eye*: it seemed that every book on art and music we consulted had plenty to say about Klee, Kandinsky, and Schoenberg, but hardly anything at all on jazz, blues, and African American visual artists. Nor was this myopia (and selective hearing) restricted to older publications: in 2000, for example, we came across a new book entitled *The Sound of Painting: Music in Modern Art* and, turning to the index, were nonplussed to find that—*still*—not a single African American painter or musician had been listed.<sup>2</sup>

These omissions appear to confirm painter Vincent Smith’s contention that the art world has become “the last bastion” of white exclusivity;<sup>3</sup> they are made even more glaring by the fact that close links between African American painting and music have been evident since the early years of the twentieth century. Aaron Douglas, a pioneering figure of black modernist art, recalled that when he set out in the mid-1920s to create a new, distinctive African American aesthetic in his painting, his Harlem contemporaries looked to black music and dance to provide the model: “At that time, pleas could be heard on all sides for a visual pattern comparable to, or rather expressive of, the uniqueness found in the gestures and body movements of the Negro dance, and the sounds and vocal patterns as found in the Negro song.”<sup>4</sup>

And, indeed, although Douglas began his project by studying African masks for inspiration, he found himself responding instead to memories of black folk musics, and placing on the canvas

the visual emanations or expressions that came into view with the sounds produced by the old black song makers of antebellum days when they first began to put together snatches and bits from Protestant hymns, along with half remembered tribal chants, lullabies and work songs.<sup>5</sup>

While the extent to which music affected Douglas's conception of form is unclear,<sup>6</sup> it is present as subject matter in many of his works, from his 1920s illustrations for texts by Langston Hughes (in *Opportunity*), James Weldon Johnson (*God's Trombones*), and Paul Morand (*Black Magic*) to his 1934 mural series *Aspects of Negro Life*, in which musicians figure prominently.<sup>7</sup> Musical subject matter is similarly present in canvases by his Chicago-based contemporary Archibald Motley Jr. (for instance, *Stomp and Blues*) and on through the spindly jitterbugs and street musicians of William H. Johnson and the statuesque blues singers of Charles Alston, to more recent examples such as the vibrant, phantasmagoric jazz monoprints of Vincent Smith, collagist Benny Andrews's highly stylized *Music* and *Musical Interlude* series, and Frederick J. Brown's epic project to paint portraits of 400 jazz and blues performers.<sup>8</sup> Music's formal influences on painting have proved harder to identify, yet several painters testify in these pages to its powers of suggestion, whether in determining, for example, the ways they use space (Sam Middleton, Wadsworth Jarrell) or in their choice of texture (Joe Overstreet, Ellen Banks). Certainly the frequency with which African American painters have addressed musical subjects suggests that many of them will have considered how best to adapt the materials and disciplines of their art to represent music's particular auditory and kinetic qualities.

There is even more criss-crossing to consider. A number of African American painters have also been musicians: Ellen Banks studied piano; Jean-Michel Basquiat fronted his own noise band; Romare Bearden wrote song lyrics; Richard Mayhew was a jazz singer; Mildred Thompson played blues guitar and composed electronic music.<sup>9</sup> Then there are several musicians who are or were painters too—Muhai Richard Abrams, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, Bill Dixon, and Duke Ellington are well-known examples—and many more have dedicated compositions to painters: for instance, Anthony Braxton's "Compo-

sition #8H” (for Murray DePillars), Julius Hemphill’s “The Painter” (for Oliver Jackson), and Archie Shepp’s “A Portrait of Robert Thompson (as a Young Man).”<sup>10</sup> If we expand the focus to include other kinds of black visual arts, then jazz and blues references multiply accordingly: significant examples can be found in the work of conceptual and installation artists (David Hammons’s *Yardbird Suite* and *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, René Stout’s “*Dear Robert, I’ll Meet You at the Crossroads*”), photographers (Roy DeCarava’s *the sound i saw*), quilters (Michael Cummings’s *African Jazz* series, Faith Ringgold’s *Jazz* series), and sculptors (Kevin Cole’s *The Jitterbug Band*, Ed Love’s *The Arkestra*).<sup>11</sup> Jazz may even be infiltrating the world of black architecture, too.<sup>12</sup>

There is clearly a rich field of cultural interaction to explore here, but we should first place it very briefly in a larger context. The central role that black music has played in twentieth-century culture (African American, American, and global) has been noted by writers and critics from W. E. B. Du Bois to Amiri Baraka. Du Bois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* that Africans had brought to America “a gift of story and song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land,”<sup>13</sup> and he believed the spirituals were the finest flowering of that gift. However, it was later black secular musics such as ragtime, blues, and jazz, notable more for their vibrant rhythmic qualities than their “soft, stirring” melodies, that became hugely popular and influential,<sup>14</sup> so transforming American sensibilities that long before the last century ended Ralph Ellison could declare that the entire culture had become “jazz-shaped.”<sup>15</sup>

It is no surprise then that the music has played a crucial part in African American visual art. What is surprising is the continuing neglect of this association, and of African American art in general, by both the academy and the commercial art world;<sup>16</sup> our emphasis on the African American in this collection, as signaled in our subtitle, is an attempt to begin redressing the balance. This is not to deny, of course, that there are black painters who have been influenced by European classical music, white painters who have been influenced by jazz, and both black and white jazz musicians who have been inspired by both black and white painters.<sup>17</sup> To have excluded all mention of these associations would have been to devalue the complexities and richness of cross-cultural and cross-racial exchange, and to ignore the catholic tastes of the painters we spoke to, many of whom enjoy a wide range of different musics and a few of whom explicitly criticized the kind of stereotyping that assumes black artists would—or could—represent only black music on their canvases. Nevertheless, for the reasons outlined above, our primary (though not sole) focus is on African Ameri-

can culture, so perhaps we should also say that in referring to jazz and blues as black musics, we do not mean to fence them off as racially specific forms, only to acknowledge the historical circumstances from which they emerged and the predominant meanings they accrued as they developed. Finally, our focus on jazz and blues in particular reflects our belief that they were the prevailing musical influences through much of the twentieth century, which is not to deny the importance of, say, funk or gospel, or the current global popularity of rap and hip-hop (or the fact that such genre differentiations are sometimes arbitrary and rarely clear-cut).

While these choices of emphasis are our own, we would like to acknowledge the groundbreaking role of earlier anthologies edited by Krin Gabbard and by Robert G. O'Meally and his colleagues, as well as the work of the Integrative Studies Program at Chicago's Center for Black Music Research, published in their journal *Lenox Avenue*.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, although painting has, as we noted, remained relatively unexplored, literary scholars have in recent years produced a range of material on the music's criss-crossings of their field.<sup>19</sup> It is literary scholars, too, who have provided the initial theoretical writing on the music's role in African American culture. Houston A. Baker Jr., Henry Louis Gates Jr., and James A. Snead, for example, have enhanced our understanding of African American cultural dynamics and all have referred to black music to exemplify and validate their theories.<sup>20</sup>

One notable theorist from a non-literary discipline is art historian Richard Powell, who has invoked black music as a core repository of what Zora Neale Hurston termed "characteristics of Negro expression."<sup>21</sup> He posits the existence of a "blues aesthetic," which he claims is discernible in much African American painting. Powell cites good reasons for trying to trace such an aesthetic: he questions "the applicability of so-called white European aesthetic standards" to African American art, and he notes the reductive tendency to identify a black aesthetic (when it is acknowledged at all) as "synonymous with a social realist style," which is then often dismissed as "nationalistic and didactic."<sup>22</sup> Powell argues instead for a more formalist aesthetic based on primary elements of black music—such as syncopated rhythms and call-and-response structures—which, he says, have become so culturally ingrained that they operate as organizing principles across all areas of black creativity.

One problem with this approach is that such music-specific criteria may not be so readily applicable in other contexts—for example, how do we define syncopation in relation to painting?—and, consequently, when Powell tries to make

formal analogies and connections between the art forms, he often has to resort to impressionistic assertions and metaphoric leaps. That said, he does raise some thought-provoking possibilities. Drawing on Hurston's notion of a "will to adorn," he proposes what he calls a "collage sensibility" running through much African American art. He cites such examples as Aaron Douglas's use of overlapping colors, Romare Bearden's collages, and the mixed-media assemblages found in black folk art, but he links these with music only in the most general terms.<sup>23</sup> (Olly Wilson's essay "The Heterogenous Sound Ideal in African-American Music," with its description of black musics as "mosaics of tone color and pitch" that exemplify a principle of "timbral contrasts," offers a more persuasive argument for the presence of a collage sensibility in jazz and blues.)<sup>24</sup>

Powell also makes reference to a particular African American conception of the relationship between the material and the spiritual. He quotes from Aaron Douglas's famous letter to Langston Hughes concerning the need for African American artists to develop an aesthetic that is not merely "white art painted black": to achieve this, Douglas declared, they should

plunge . . . into the very depths of the soul of our people, and drag forth material, crude, rough, neglected. Then let's sing it, dance it, write it, paint it. Let's do the impossible. Let's create something transcendently material, mystically objective. Earthy. Spiritually earthy. Dynamic.

Powell comments:

What Douglas sought to tap was a reality that was often raw, unpolished, and marginalized. A reality that was variegated and multifaceted in character. A reality that could be both spiritual and material. A reality that, if we had to come up with a metaphor for all of the above, would be embodied in [a] cultural expression like "the blues."<sup>25</sup>

It is true that much black music, from the nineteenth-century ring shout to George Clinton's mothership connection, could be, and has been, characterized as exemplifying this synthesis of the spiritual and the earthy—indeed, the soul genre, with its embrace of both "black sublimity" (to use Paul Gilroy's term) and the dance floor, epitomizes that synthesis perhaps even more appositely than the blues<sup>26</sup>—but Powell does not pursue the point, nor does he address the question

of how such a synthesis might manifest itself in painting.<sup>27</sup> As he says himself, “the blues” here is invoked as a metaphor, and “the blues aesthetic” likewise appears to function more usefully as a metaphor than as an aesthetic template.

Our reservations notwithstanding, it is undeniable that the music is now playing as important a role in the new academic theorizing of African American culture as it has long played in the culture itself. *The Hearing Eye* does not advance any specific theoretical line, although a few of our contributors do propose some innovative approaches (see, for example, Johannes Völz’s application of “reception aesthetics,” derived from literary theory, to the music/painting dialogue of Romare Bearden’s collages). The majority of the essays are concerned with exploring particular instances of what could be called audio-visual antiphony, and what emerges is a broad spectrum of influence and interaction—one that will, we hope, help to move discussion beyond the vague, rhetorical allusions to “spontaneity” and “improvisation” that have tended to pass for scholarship when comparisons are made to jazz.<sup>28</sup> (We have, however, eschewed musicological analysis, which we believe is too specialist an approach to adopt in a cross-genre book that deals predominantly with visual art.)

Six of the essays focus on painters and are presented in a broadly chronological order. Graham Lock traces the extraordinary career of Rose Piper, who was fêted for her semi-abstract, blues-inflected canvases in the 1940s but then had to give up painting for thirty years. Whereas Piper’s art looked back to the classic women’s blues of the 1920s, her contemporary Norman Lewis listened to the new sounds of bebop, which, as Sara Wood shows, inspired a crucial phase in his development of an African American abstract expressionism that is still largely unrecognized by art historians. Bob Thompson’s strange, (re)visionary painting is the subject of Richard King’s questioning corrective to easy assumptions about musical influence. Although Thompson’s best-known work is *Garden of Music* (1960), which features several prominent jazz players, King argues the painting is in many ways unrepresentative of Thompson, who, despite his close friendships with musicians, rarely depicted musical subjects and appears to have been little affected by music in his formal concerns.

The opposite may be true of Romare Bearden, who acknowledged jazz as a formal influence and produced numerous collages on jazz- and blues-related topics throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Robert O’Meally’s discussion of Bearden’s art as reflective of a jazz culture (even when his subject matter makes no reference to jazz) draws on the insights of the painter’s two most sympathetic interpreters, Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, and includes a reminiscence of Bearden-

AFRICOBRA group of revolutionary artists, embarked on several series of jazz- and blues-themed paintings in the 1980s because he wanted “to keep alive” the music he feared was being forgotten; veteran abstract expressionist Joe Overstreet says the music has helped to keep him alive and its influence has, at times, drawn him back toward a more figurative art, notably with outstanding canvases such as *Strange Fruit* and his *Storyville Series*; Ellen Banks paints nothing but music—not as heard but taken directly from the score and transformed, via a system of personal symbolism, into colors and shapes. While each of these painters hears, sees, and uses music differently in his or her art, they are united in acknowledging both music’s importance in their lives and its presence in many of their finest canvases.

As with the essays, so with the interviews: we present the painters in chronological order (by year of birth), and we bracket them with two different takes on the art/music relationship. The book’s opening interview is with the quilter Michael Cummings, who is taking a traditional African American art form into new territories with works such as his *African Jazz* series and his tributes to Josephine Baker. Finally, to close the book in a spirit of reciprocity, we spoke to two musicians who have worked on projects directly related to painting. The music on reedsman Marty Ehrlich’s *The Long View* CD was initially heard in conjunction with an exhibition of paintings by artist Oliver Jackson (and was composed and performed specifically for that purpose); *Chasing Paint* is soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom’s tribute to painter Jackson Pollock, whose art long ago sparked her enthusiasm for “throwing sound around”: reproductions of his paintings were included with the scores that Bloom asked her group to improvise on.

It should come as no surprise by now to learn that Pollock listened to jazz as he painted, as does Oliver Jackson today—a case of what goes around, comes around (though more as endless spiral than unbroken circle). So, if any reader is wondering why we have included two white musicians (and a white painter) in a book that is chiefly concerned with African American culture, it is because black music is at the root of their art, too. Influence and inspiration can criss-cross genres and ethnicities without regard for the rigid separations that academic classifiers and cultural nationalists like to impose. It is clear that if you try to trace all of the links and associations, there is no limit to how far you can go: you can begin with the blues and end with the universe (as Jane Ira Bloom reveals). We have tried to follow that course in *The Hearing Eye* but we make no claim to be comprehensive: these essays and interviews are simply a small

step toward a fuller understanding of African American art and its relationship with the dynamic music that has fueled so much of twentieth-century Western culture. We believe the artists included here have made, and are making, a significant contribution to American culture. Their work encompasses an array of styles, and—coincidentally—their views represent a fascinating spectrum of attitudes toward art, music, and race. Still, there are many other visual artists (and musicians) we might have included, and whose work certainly warrants attention. So this collection is offered as a first glimpse into a rich and little-explored field, and we urge readers to pursue their interest beyond our necessarily selective focus.

Charlie Parker is reported to have said, “Hear with your eyes and see with your ears.”<sup>29</sup> Who can be sure of what he meant? But perhaps it was a way of saying that African American creativity is so grounded in its music that listening will allow you to better see its paintings, to better read its poetry and fiction. Our hope is that *The Hearing Eye* will help to deepen appreciation of the visual art discussed herein and send our readers back to the music with renewed enthusiasm and fresh insight. That listening may lead to new ways of seeing, and looking to new ways of hearing.

#### A POSTSCRIPT ON THE *HEARING EYE* WEB SITE

One relatively new way of both looking and listening is online, and Oxford University Press has set up a *Hearing Eye* Web site ([www.oup.com/us/thehearingeye](http://www.oup.com/us/thehearingeye)), which we hope will enhance the reader’s use and enjoyment of this book. We are able to show many additional artworks that we could not fit into the book, and we can also offer a small selection of recordings that are referenced in the text. These two extras will help to amplify some of the points made by our contributors and, of course, will also make for richly pleasurable viewing and listening in their own right.

Details of these bonus materials can be found at the end of the relevant chapters, where they are signaled by the Oxford University Press Web site logo.  The Web site is password protected, and a password, together with a username, is printed on the copyright page.

The Web site may serve another purpose, too. Much to our regret, financial constraints mean that, should the book reprint, it will not be feasible to include

any color reproductions in the reprint edition. However, all of the color artworks will still be available for readers to view online.

We would like to express our gratitude to Oxford University Press for providing the Web site, and to all the artists, musicians, and rights holders who have so generously allowed us to place their work there. The color line may have been a defining experience of the twentieth century, but perhaps the online experience will help to finally defeat all such prejudice and segregation in the twenty-first.

---

#### NOTES

1. Valerie Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and Beyond* (1977; reprint, London: Serpent's Tail, 1992), 287.
2. Karin v. Maur, *The Sound of Painting: Music in Modern Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1999). She does note Mondrian's "enthusiasm for jazz," and even quotes his statement that "I view boogie woogie as homogenous with my intention in painting"; but, curiously, she then proceeds to compare Mondrian's "rigorously systematic compositions" with Schoenberg's serialist techniques and makes no attempt to reconcile this linkage with the quote from Mondrian himself. Maur, 100–101.
3. Vincent Smith's exact words were: "See, the art business is all about middle-class values and white archaeology. It's the last bastion of white America. The only thing they have left is their museums. They're doing everything they can to keep our art out, but we'll eventually get into their museums." Graham Lock, unpublished interview with Vincent DaCosta Smith, New York City, 23 October 2003. Sadly, two months later, on 26 December 2003, Vincent Smith died of lymphoma and pneumonia. See Ronald Smothers, "Vincent Smith, 74, Painter Who Portrayed Black Life," Obituary, *New York Times*, 3 January 2004: A13. Our thanks to Kevin Norton for sending a copy of the obituary.
4. Aaron Douglas, untitled MS, n.d., n.p., Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4522, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter abbreviated AAA). Similar pleas, part of a concomitant valorization of music as the aesthetic model for all forms of black creativity, would be heard again from the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s.
5. Douglas, untitled MS on the Harlem Renaissance, n.d., 11, Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4520, AAA.
6. Although he would later conclude that "there is really no precise correspondence between the arts," Douglas did believe that most art forms shared certain basic principles, including rhythm, repetition, and variation, and that painting and music in particular shared common elements such as "lines,

patterns, tones, color and textures.” See Douglas, untitled MS on music and painting, n.d., 13, 9, Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4520, AAA. Douglas refers almost entirely to European painting and Western classical music in this paper, though his one mention of jazz is intriguing. After describing Mondrian’s attempts to “reveal and interpret in modern pictorial language something of the very essence of contemporary music—especially the jazz forms,” Douglas remarks: “With a richer variety of shapes and a much more varied palette of colors, the Italian artist Casotti has given us a somewhat more convincing interpretation of jazz music” (*ibid.*, 9). He makes no other reference to this artist. There are at least three twentieth-century Italian painters of that name, although the only one contemporaneous with Mondrian is Piero Casotti (1891–1942). For more on Douglas and music, see Donna M. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City: Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art, 1910–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), chapter 4; and Richard J. Powell, “Art History and Black Memory: Toward a ‘Blues Aesthetic,’” *History and Memory in African American Culture*, ed. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O’Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 228–43.

7. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City*, 126.
8. See Jontyle Theresa Robinson and Wendy Greenhouse, *The Art of Archibald J. Motley, Jr.* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1992); Richard J. Powell, *Homecoming: The Art and Life of William H. Johnson* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, 1991); *Charles Alston: Artist and Teacher* (New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1990); Nancy E. Green, *Dreams, Myths and Realities: A Vincent Smith Retrospective* (Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 2001); *Vincent D. Smith: Riding on a Blue Note: Monoprints and Works on Paper on Jazz Themes* (New York: Henry Street Settlement, 1989); J. Richard Gruber, *American Icons: From Madison to Manhattan, the Art of Benny Andrews, 1948–1997* (Augusta: Morris Museum of Art, 1997); Anne Timpano, ed., *A Different Drummer: Benny Andrews—the Music Series, 1991–98* (Cincinnati: DAAP Galleries, 1999); *The Blues by Frederick Brown* (New York: Marlborough Gallery, 1989) and *Frederick J. Brown: Portraits in Jazz, Blues, and Other Icons* (Kansas City: Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002). All of these publications are exhibition catalogues. Both Charles Alston and Benny Andrews also designed record sleeves: Alston’s original design for Duke Ellington’s *Black, Brown and Beige* is reproduced (in black and white) in Lemoine D. Pierce, “Charles Alston—An Appreciation,” *International Review of African American Art* 19.4 (2004): 28–41. (In the end, Alston’s design was not used.) Paintings by Frederick Brown were reproduced on the sleeves of Anthony Braxton’s *Creative Music Orchestra 1976* and *Duets 1976* Arista LPs. According to Brown, Braxton selected the paintings from several that Brown had made while listening to earlier recordings of Braxton’s music. Graham Lock, unpublished interview with Frederick J. Brown, New York City, 27 October 2003.
9. Richard Mayhew made some recordings in the 1950s. See Judith Maloney, “Improvising Nature,” *Research/Penn State* 13.1 (1992): 27–33. See also Mary Schmidt Campbell, ed., *Richard Mayhew: An American Abstractionist*, ex-

- hibition catalogue (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1978). For more on the extraordinary life and art of Mildred Thompson, see Eric Hanks, "A Child of the Universe . . . Speak Like a Child: Mildred Thompson and Walter Williams," *International Review of African American Art* 21.2 (2007): 12–31, and Corrine Jennings, ed., *A/Cross Currents: Synthesis in African American Abstract Painting*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Kenkeleba House, 1992).
10. The compositions mentioned can be found on, respectively, Anthony Braxton, *For Alto* (1969; reissue, Delmark DE-420, 2000), Julius Hemphill, *Dogon A.D.* (1972; LP reissue, Arista AL 1028, 1977), Archie Shepp, *Mama Too Tight* (1966; reissue, Impulse! IMP 12482, 1998). Braxton, of course, could also be considered a visual artist, given his practice of titling his compositions not with words but with diagrams, drawings, and, recently, photomontages. For more on the visual elements in Braxton's music, see Graham Lock, "What I Call a Sound": Anthony Braxton's Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisers," *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4.1 (2008), available at <http://www.CriticalImprov.com/public/CSI/index.html>. See also the essays by Hugo DeCraen, Mark Sinker, and John F. Szwed in *Mixtery: A Festschrift for Anthony Braxton*, ed. Graham Lock (Exeter: Stride Publications, 1995).
  11. See David Hammons, *Blues and the Abstract Truth*, exhibition catalogue (Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1997); Deborah Menaker Rothschild, *Yardbird Suite: Hammons 93*, exhibition catalogue (Williamstown, MA: Williams College Museum of Art, 1994); Marla C. Berns, "Dear Robert, I'll See You at the Crossroads": A Project by Renée Stout, exhibition catalogue (Santa Barbara: University of California Art Museum, 1995); Roy DeCarava, *the sound i saw: improvisation on a jazz theme* (London: Phaidon Press, 2001); Curlee Raven Holton, with Faith Ringgold, *Faith Ringgold: A View from the Studio* (Charlestown, MA: Bunker Hill Publishing/Allentown Art Museum, 2004); Carolyn L. Mazloomi, *Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition* (Cincinnati: Paper Moon Publishing, 2007). This may also be the place to mention Milt Hinton, celebrated both as a musician and as a photographer—see, for example, Milt Hinton and David G. Berger, *Bass Lines: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); and James "Son Ford" Thomas, noted Delta bluesman and sculptor—see William Ferris, *Local Color: A Sense of Place in Folk Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 133–56.
  12. See Richard K. Dozier, "Riffin' on Urban Spaces," *International Review of African American Art* 13.4 (1997): 41–45.
  13. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Sorrow Songs," *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; reprint, New York: Bantam, 1989), 186.
  14. For a persuasive account of how and why the rhythms of jazz and blues became so popular and influential, see Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture between the World Wars* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).
  15. Ralph Ellison, *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. John F. Callahan (New York: Random House, 1995), 797–98. He originally made the statement in 1970.

*Blues Influences in African American Literature and Film*, ed. Graham Lock and David Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

20. See Houston A. Baker Jr., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Houston A. Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); James A. Snead, "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture," in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 59–79. However, a number of critics have expressed reservations about the usefulness of applying literary theory to music and the concomitant tendency to treat jazz as text: see, for example, Peter Townsend, *Jazz in American Culture* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2000), esp. 141–50; and Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz, and Song* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. chapter 3.
21. Hurston's 1933 essay of that title is the urtext behind many of these later attempts to identify the defining elements of an African American aesthetic. Hurston's essay is reprinted in *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*, ed. Gena Dagal Caponi (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 293–308.
22. Powell, "Art History and Black Memory," 228–29. See also his earlier essay, "The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism," in his exhibition catalogue of the same name (Washington, DC: Washington Project for the Arts, 1989), 19–35.
23. Powell, "Art History and Black Memory," 239. See, for example, his claim (in reference to Aaron Douglas's "Song of the Towers") that the "layering of a pure abstraction over a representational scene is not unlike a similar phenomenon in black music, where an improvised solo rides over a fixed melodic composition."
24. Olly Wilson, "The Heterogenous Sound Ideal in African-American Music" (1992), reprinted in Caponi, *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking*, 157–71. Anthony Braxton's use of the terms "collage forms" and "collage improvisations" in reference to elements of his music also invites further investigation in this context. See Graham Lock, *Forces in Motion: Anthony Braxton and the Meta-reality of Creative Music* (London: Quartet, 1988), 202–6.
25. Powell, "Art History and Black Memory," 240–41.
26. See Richard C. Green and Monique Guillory, "Question of a 'Soulful Style': Interview with Paul Gilroy," in *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*, ed. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 250–65.
27. A possible example might be the work of painter Fred Brown. His modus operandi for his jazz and blues portraits is to play the music of his subject while he paints, in the belief that this will enable the person's "spirit . . . to inhabit the painting": "All I am is a conduit or a vehicle and the information comes through me, not from me . . . I'm just responding to whatever is in the air." Brown grounds this "spirit" by working directly from photographs or

- drawings of his subject (often taken from record sleeves), which he projects onto the canvas and traces to provide the basis for his painting. However, Brown's methodology may be unique to him: none of the other painters we interviewed claimed to use music in this way. Graham Lock, unpublished interview with Frederick J. Brown, New York City, 27 October 2003. See also Lowery Stokes Sims, "Frederick J. Brown: Portraits in Jazz, Blues, and Other Icons," in *Frederick J. Brown*, exhibition catalogue, 1–43.
28. Such allusions often fail to acknowledge what these terms actually mean in the context of the traditions and disciplines of jazz performance practice. See Townsend, *Jazz in American Culture*, especially his comments on discussions of Kerouac and Pollock (146–48, 154–56). Of particular interest in this context is Jon Panish's account of how African American and European American writers often have different understandings of key terms such as improvisation. See Jon Panish, *The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), esp. chapter 5.
29. Quoted by Art Blakey in Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (1977; reprint, London: Quartet Books, 1983), 248.

## WORKS CITED

### Exhibition Catalogues

- Berns, Marla C. "Dear Robert, I'll See You at the Crossroads": A Project by Renée Stout. Santa Barbara: University of California Art Museum, 1995.
- The Blues by Frederick Brown*. New York: Marlborough Gallery, 1989.
- Campbell, Mary Schmidt, ed. *Richard Mayhew: An American Abstractionist*. New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1978.
- Charles Alston: Artist and Teacher*. New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1990.
- Frederick J. Brown: Portraits in Jazz, Blues, and Other Icons*. Kansas City: Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002.
- Green, Nancy E. *Dreams, Myths and Realities: A Vincent Smith Retrospective*. Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 2001.
- Gruber, J. Richard. *American Icons: From Madison to Manhattan, the Art of Benny Andrews, 1948–1997*. Augusta: Morris Museum of Art, 1997.
- Hammons, David. *Blues and the Abstract Truth*. Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1997.
- Jennings, Corrine, ed. *A/Cross Currents: Synthesis in African American Abstract Painting*. New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1992.
- Powell, Richard J., ed. *The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism*. Washington, DC: Washington Project for the Arts, 1989.
- . *Homecoming: The Art and Life of William H. Johnson*. Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, 1991.
- Robinson, Jontyle Theresa, and Wendy Greenhouse. *The Art of Archibald J. Motley, Jr.* Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1992.
- Rothschild, Deborah Menaker. *Yardbird Suite: Hammons 93*. Williamstown, MA: Williams College Museum of Art, 1994.

- Timpano, Anne, ed. *A Different Drummer: Benny Andrews—the Music Series, 1991–98*. Cincinnati: DAAP Galleries, 1999.
- Vincent D. Smith: *Riding on a Blue Note: Monoprints and Works on Paper on Jazz Themes*. New York: Henry Street Settlement, 1989.

## Recordings

- Braxton, Anthony. *For Alto*. 1969. Reissue, Delmark DE-420, 2000.
- Hawkins, Coleman. *Dali*. 1959, 1962. Stash Records ST-CD 538, 1991.
- . *Ultimate Coleman Hawkins*. 1944–57. Verve 557 538–2, 1998.
- Hemphill, Julius. *Dogon A.D.* 1972. LP reissue, Arista AL 1028, 1977.
- Murray, David. *Picasso*. DIW 879, 1993.
- Shepp, Archie. *Mama Too Tight*. 1966. Reissue, Impulse! IMP 12482, 1998.

## Texts

- Anderson, T. J., III. *Notes to Make the Sounds Come Right: Four Innovators of Jazz Poetry*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2004.
- Baker, Houston A., Jr. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- . *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Bolden, Tony. *Afro Blue: Improvisations in African American Poetry and Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- Borshuk, Michael. *Swinging the Vernacular: Jazz and African American Modernist Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Caponi, Gena Dagel, ed. *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking: A Reader in African American Expressive Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Cassidy, Donna M. *Painting the Musical City: Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art, 1910–1940*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.
- DeCarava, Roy. *the sound i saw: improvisation on a jazz theme*. London: Phaidon Press, 2001.
- DeCraen, Hugo. “Braxton and Kandinsky: Symbolists of the Spiritual.” In Lock, *Mixtery*, 212–24.
- Dinerstein, Joel. *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology and African American Culture between the World Wars*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.
- Douglas, Aaron. Untitled MS. N.d. Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4522, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- . Untitled MS on the Harlem Renaissance. N.d. Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4520, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- . Untitled MS on music and painting. N.d. Aaron Douglas Papers, reel 4520. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
- Dozier, Richard K. “Riffin’ on Urban Spaces.” *International Review of African American Art* 13, no. 4 (1997): 41–45.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Reprint, New York: Bantam, 1989.

- Ellison, Ralph. *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*. Ed. John F. Callahan. New York: Random House, 1995.
- Ferris, William. *Local Color: A Sense of Place in Folk Art*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.
- Gabbard, Krin, ed. *Jazz among the Discourses*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.
- , ed. *Representing Jazz*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Green, Richard C., and Monique Guillory. "Question of a 'Soulful Style': Interview with Paul Gilroy." In *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*. Ed. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 250–65.
- Hanks, Eric. "A Child of the Universe . . . Speak Like a Child: Mildred Thompson and Walter Williams." *International Review of African American Art* 21.2 (2007): 12–31.
- Hartman, Charles O. *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz, and Song*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Hinton, Milt, and David G. Berger. *Bass Lines: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988.
- Holton, Curlee Raven, with Faith Ringgold. *Faith Ringgold: A View from the Studio*. Charlestown, MA: Bunker Hill Publishing/Allentown Art Museum, 2004.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. "Characteristics of Negro Expression." 1933. In Caponi, *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking*, 293–308.
- Lenox Avenue. 1–5. 1995–99.
- Lock, Graham. *Forces in Motion: Anthony Braxton and the Meta-reality of Creative Music*. London: Quartet, 1988.
- , ed. *Mixtery: A Festschrift for Anthony Braxton*. Exeter: Stride Publications, 1995.
- . "'What I Call a Sound': Anthony Braxton's Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisers." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4.1 (2008). Available <http://www.CriticalImprov.com/public/CSI/index.html>.
- Lock, Graham, and David Murray, eds. *Thriving on a Riff: Jazz & Blues Influences in African American Literature and Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Maloney, Judith. "Improvising Nature." *Research / Penn State* 13.1 (1992): 27–33.
- Maur, Karin v. *The Sound of Painting: Music in Modern Art*. Munich: Prestel, 1999.
- Mazloomi, Carolyn L. *Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition*. Cincinnati: Paper Moon Publishing, 2007.
- O'Meally, Robert G., ed. *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- O'Meally, Robert G., Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, eds. *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

- Panish, Jon. *The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.
- Pierce, Lemoine D. "Charles Alston—An Appreciation." *International Review of African American Art* 19.4 (2004): 28–41.
- Powell, Richard J. "Art History and Black Memory: Toward a 'Blues Aesthetic.'" In *History and Memory in African American Culture*. Ed. Geneviève Fabre and Robert G. O'Meally. New York: Oxford University, 1994. 228–43.
- . "The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism." In Powell, ed. Exhibition catalogue. 19–35.
- Sims, Lowery Stokes. "Frederick J. Brown: Portraits in Jazz, Blues, and Other Icons." In *Frederick J. Brown*, exhibition catalogue. 1–43.
- Sinker, Mark. Untitled essay. In Lock, *Mixtery*, 226–37.
- Smothers, Ronald. "Vincent Smith, 74, Painter Who Portrayed Black Life." Obituary. *New York Times*, 3 January 2004: A13.
- Snead, James A. "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture." In *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. New York: Routledge, 1990. 59–79.
- Szwed, John F. "The Local and the Express: Anthony Braxton's Title-Drawings." In Lock, *Mixtery*, 207–12.
- Taylor, Arthur. *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews*. 1977. Reprint, London: Quartet Books, 1983.
- Townsend, Peter. *Jazz in American Culture*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2000.
- Tracy, Steven C., ed. *Write Me a Few of Your Lines: A Blues Reader*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Wilmer, Valerie. *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and Beyond*. 1977. Reprint, London: Serpent's Tail, 1992.
- Wilson, Olly. "The Heterogenous Sound Ideal in African-American Music." 1992. In Caponi, *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin' and Slam Dunking*, 157–71.
- Yaffe, David. *Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.