Journal of the Society for American Music (2008) Volume 2, Number 2, pp. 235–253.
© 2008 The Society for American Music doi: 10.1017/S1752196308080085

The Avenging Angel of Creation/Destruction: Black Music and the Afro-technological in the Science Fiction of Henry Dumas and Samuel R. Delany

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Abstract

This essay explores the thematic use of music in the science-fiction writings of two African American authors, Henry Dumas and Samuel R. Delany. Each author visited this theme in more than one work, and in at least one work centered the Afro-technological focus upon a special musical instrument: the "afro horn" in Dumas's story "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" and a machete/flute in Samuel R. Delany's novel The Einstein Intersection. *Both writers treat music itself, without regard to a material instrument, as a technology. Dumas depicted black music as a tool that enabled black people to kill their enemies, and Delany represented music as a technology capable of avenging the wrongs committed against the politically and socially marginalized. Whereas Dumas's protagonists were more likely to be social pariahs because of their class or their sexual orientation than because of race, his descriptions specifically reference black music and its attendant rituals. Both writers portray music as a technology capable of creating and healing as well as avenging and destroying.*

> *We want "poems that kill."*
> *Assassin poems. Poems that shoot*
> *guns.*
>
> —Amiri Baraka[1]

The notion that black artistry relies more heavily upon intuition and emotion than intellect is a corollary to racist ideas about the intellectual capacities of Africans dating as far back as the European Enlightenment. In his essay "Of National Characters," David Hume writes, "I . . . suspect the negroes . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites. . . . In Jamaica indeed they talk of one negroe [*sic*] as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly."[2] Immanuel Kant likewise equated blackness with stupidity in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime:* "And it might be that there was something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he

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I am indebted to William Lowe, who discussed many of these ideas with me, and who pulled my coat to a lot of information about Samuel Delany.

[1] Imamu Amiri Baraka, "Black Art," in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader,* 2nd edn., ed. William J. Harris (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000), 219.

[2] David Hume, "Of National Characters," in *The Philosophical Works,* ed. Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964), 3:252 n. 1, quoted in Henry Louis Gates Jr., ed., *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 10–11.

said was stupid."[3] The modern association of technology with science and intellect, and with "whiteness," can elide the distinguished history of African Americans with technology, musical and otherwise.[4]

One way in which the Afro-technological impulse has manifested in music is in the invention of instruments themselves. In a centuries-old tradition of creation and innovation fueled by necessity, Africans in the West invented the hambone and the shuffle stomp of the ring shout when drumming was outlawed in the American South; transformed the pan, or steel drum, a product of the West's waste and pollution in Trinidad, into an instrument that can evoke beauty; and created the drum kit, central to most pop musics across the globe. Even in cases in which the technology of music making is not an African American invention, the pioneer artists who tested and created the boundaries of its practice have often been black musicians—for example, George E. Lewis's compositions that include computers as part of an ensemble of musicians.[5] Of course, as a longtime veteran of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Lewis was trained in a tradition of radical experimentalism.[6] The twentieth-century tradition of technological experimentalism within black music also includes less iconoclastic musicians and extends even to popular genres. Examples include Charlie Christian and the amplified guitar, Jimi Hendrix's use of electronic feedback, the synthesizers of Stevie Wonder and Herbie Hancock, and Grandmaster Flash's pioneering turntablism.

In addition to these technological interventions, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the proliferation of black techniques applied to conventional European instruments. For example, African Americans have frequently added percussive approaches to instrumental playing as a staple in their repertoire of instrumental skills. It is also quite common for African American musicians, and those influenced by them, to use growls, shouts, shrieks, and moans. This practice occurs not just in vocal music, in which Bessie Smith, James Brown, and Linda Sharrock have established distinctive singing styles, but in much music for wind instruments as well. The musical instruments whose modern playing styles have been informed by black techniques include the trumpet (as exemplified by almost any member of Duke Ellington's brass sections, especially with mutes), the piano (Memphis Slim and Little Richard are pioneers in this regard), and the saxophone (the vast majority of the saxophone masterpieces are rendered in one or another style of Afrological music).[7]

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[3] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 111, quoted in Cornel West, "Race and Modernity," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 84.

[4] For a comprehensive study of the American version of these views, see Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

[5] For discussions of music and technology, see George E. Lewis, "Singing Omar's Song: A (Re)Construction of Great Black Music," *Lenox Avenue* 4 (1998): 69–92; Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1 (Spring 1996): 91–122; and Lewis, "Interacting with Latter-Day Musical Automata," *Contemporary Music Review* 18/3 (1995): 99–112.

[6] See George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[7] See Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950."

My interest in the intersection between the Afro-technological and music is not primarily centered around the technologies of machines but rather with the technological properties of black music and music making per se. Throughout history, African Americans have used music and its attendant rituals, and not simply the machines through which it is made, as a technology. As a human activity, music has an effect upon the psyche of its producers and listeners, but it can be understood as a *technology* in the instances when it also has effects on the *physical* world; the corporeal reality of music can include spirit possession. The main purpose of music in virtually all Pentecostal and many Baptist congregations, for example, is to bring about this occurrence. My own experiences playing in the Church of God in Christ reveals how differently music can be regarded. Having previously worked in the jazz world, I was used to people evaluating music in terms of performance skills. These were quantifiable skills such as the intonation and harmonic sophistication of the musicians and the adroitness with which they plied their craft. In the church world, however, I discovered that music was evaluated not for the technical details of the music but rather for its "anointing," the degree to which the saints "shouted" or "got happy." That is, if the music brought the Holy Ghost down, then it was good music. If it did not, it missed the mark, no matter how flawlessly executed according to conservatory-style criteria.

Writers, musicians, religious supplicants, singers, and dancers have all routinely relied upon Afrological music to effect demonstrable change in the environment and circumstances of the lives of real people. From the beginning of African American existence, that is, starting with the Middle Passage, music has been a technology for transporting the minds, bodies, and souls—the very being of black folk—away from oppression and viciously circumscribed living conditions. Sometimes it was used to bring persons back "home," whether to Mother Africa or to a familial mother in heaven. At other times the transporting was away from the smallness of being what Dorothy I. Height calls "a problem people" (rather than "a people with problems") and into the expansiveness of full humanity.[8] And as we shall see, in the artistic imagination of artists and writers, the technology was sometimes used for more prosaic ends—to avenge the people against their oppressors. These notions are not invented whole cloth by the writers: they are implied in the ideas of some musicians. For instance, beboppers would sometimes say they wanted to "slay" their hearers, modern-day jazz musicians have been known to delight in being able to "fuck them up." These rhetorical flourishes are metaphorical at best, meant to represent playing on a high level. But in the imaginations of two African American authors, Henry Dumas and Samuel R. Delany, black music is very real: an Afro technology for destroying the enemy.

African American Music and Science Fiction

This essay examines the science-fiction writings of Dumas and Delany. These writers have used Afro-technological music either to structure their stories or to function as agents within their stories. These strategies are most evident in Dumas's short story, “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” and Delany’s novel, *The Einstein Intersection*; other Dumas stories and Delany novels use music in a similar, though more indirect manner.[9]

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[8] Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1993] 2001), 2.

Dumas was an activist, poet, and fiction writer during the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s. In 1968, he was tragically and mysteriously gunned down at the age of thirty-three by a New York City transit policeman. His short stories combined mythology, folklore, and a sense of the surreal with the political concerns of the day. The stories under consideration here, “Ark of Bones,” “Fon,” and “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” all use music as a technology, and all relate happenings that are outside of our quotidian existence.[10] Samuel Delany is a celebrated author of science fiction.[11] He is regarded as the genre’s most sophisticated critic and has also written books of autobiography and literary theory. His works are typically grandiose and sprawling in thematic material, and more often than not employ multiple narrative strategies, simultaneously exploring sexuality, gender, difference, mythology, history, the erotic, and so on. This is certainly the case with the works considered in this essay, especially *The Einstein Intersection.*[12] In each of these stories, music is invoked as a technology ranging from a way of communicating to a way of thinking. Delany also uses music and musical *thinking* in these works of science fiction as a means of building (and destroying) culture and civilization.

Ideas that reside in much of African American music can be seen as populist gestures reflected in the literary efforts of Dumas and Delany. Delany’s literary treatment of music is various and complex, and the strange settings of his stories can mute the direct parallels between the two writers’ concerns. Delany does, however, choose difference as a constitutive ingredient of his protagonists’ character. Often they are persons of color, homosexual or (more often) bisexual, and pariahs in their communities. The salience of race is certainly complicated in Delany’s work, and often it is de-emphasized while other markers of difference take on structural importance. His thematic treatment of music can still be regarded as sympathetic to both Sun Ra’s notion of music as the special language of the Creator and his imagery of the orchestra as an Ark of safety/exile.[13]

In the works of these authors black music is seen as a *technology,* and not, as is often the case with Euro American authors, simply as a signifier for qualities associated with blackness. By technology, I mean that music is not just used artistically but is put to practical or industrial use. Among the many technological developments of recent decades that impinge on black music making are computers, robots, Web streaming, videos, and many other electronic media. With respect to music in the writings of Dumas and Delany, however, there is no focus on machines such as these. Rather, it is the music itself that functions as an instrument capable of transforming reality and facilitating the tasks of those who wield it. Music in African American culture frequently functions as a vehicle for either personal or corporate transformation. The most vivid examples may be found in the black church, particularly the storefront congregations of the Pentecostal and Baptist denominations, where music/dance is used to bring down the Holy Ghost to transform the time and space occupied by the worshipers/music makers/dancers.[14] Music in the Holiness churches can be used simply as a transformation of the mood and/or mind-set of the participants, but in the case of the "shout," music is used as a technology, through which a direct cause and effect takes place. In this process, music is more than the psychological, catalytic agent but rather the necessary instrument to implement the change. Music, or rather music with "the anointing," brings God *physically* into the bodies of the saints.

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[9] Samuel R. Delany, *The Einstein Connection* (Hanover, N.H.: The University Press of New England, 1998); and Henry Dumas, “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” in *Goodbye Sweetwater: New and Collected Stories,* ed. and introd. Eugene Redmond, 85–91 (New York: Thunder Mouth’s Press, 1988).

[10] All of these stories were collected in Dumas’s first collection of short stories, *Ark of Bones.* They are collected with other stories in Dumas,*Goodbye Sweetwater.*

[11] For a discussion of the blurred lines between fantasy and science fiction, see Ursula K. Le Guin, “Introduction,” in *The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960–1990,* ed. Le Guin and Brian Attebery, 15–44 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

[12] See Samuel R. Delany, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, N.Y.: Dragon Press, 1977); *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984); *The Einstein Intersection*; and *Babel-17; Empire Star* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).

[13] See John Corbett, “Brothers from Another Planet: The Space Madness of Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, Sun Ra, and George Clinton,” “Anthony Braxton: From Planet to Planet,” and “Sun Ra: Gravity and Levity,” in *Extended Play: Sounding Off from John Cage to Dr. Funkenstein,* 7–24, 209–17, and 308–18 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

Music is not normally a thematic focus of science fiction. Even rarer are the stories in which black music plays more than an incidental role, perhaps in part because the science-fiction community (comprising professional writers and organized fan groups) remains a lily-white field.[15] This is especially true for both pulp fiction and the more literary genres. Music plays a greater role in films, however, as music is an intrinsic part of the art form, especially in the perennially popular space operas.[16] As space opera remains the most popular type of science-fiction film, usually replete with imperialistic plots and military characters, the incidental music usually serves to emphasize the military might and the march-time excitement associated with being a starfaring soldier. For example, well-known themes for movies like *Star Wars* or television series like *Star Trek* are appropriate anthems for the "patriotism" one expects for these thinly disguised plays about a fictive Pax Americana.

When it comes to source music, white film directors have tended to use black music in ways that are consistent with the stereotypes historically associated with the art form and in concert with the uses of constructed blackness in the fiction and essays of white authors. One example is the scene introducing Jabba the Hut in George Lucas's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). The hedonistic, self-indulgent glutton Jabba runs a joint where socializing and imbibing is accompanied by blues music, played on synthesizers and "futuristic" (non-acoustic) instruments but with the familiar funky rhythms and twelve-bar blues form of the twentieth century. Given the vitality of a continuous tradition of minstrel stereotyping of African American characters in film, a viewer does not have to be a Maileresque "white negro" to make the requisite association between black music and sensuality, sex, and licentiousness.[17]

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[14] A similar sense of ritual and use of music to induce a transformed state of an individual or of a communal space are routinely found in party culture, especially teenage house parties. Travis Jackson argues that jazz musicians use music to "go there" in much the same way as church musicians do. See Travis A. Jackson, "Jazz Performance as Ritual: The Blues Aesthetic and the African Diaspora," in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective,* ed. Ingrid Monson, 23–82 (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[15] See, for example, Le Guin, "Introduction," in *The Norton Book of Science Fiction.* For nearly two decades, Gardner Dozois has edited an annual anthology, *The Year's Best Science Fiction,* which gives an excellent review of the significant players in science-fiction magazines, book publications, criticism, and films.

[16] "Space opera" was originally a term of derision coined by Wilson (Bob) Tucker who writes: "Westerns are called 'horse operas,' the morning housewife tear-jerkers are called 'soap operas.' For the hacky, grinding, stinking, outworn space-ship yarn, or world-saving for that matter, we offer 'space-opera.'" Quoted in introduction to *The Space Opera Renaissance*, ed. David G. Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer (New York: Orb Books, 2007), 10.

At the same time that Dumas and Delany were writing the fiction discussed in this article, several black musicians were using the iconic metaphors of science fiction to create a visual spectacle integral to their stage presence. When making a mock reference to external perspectives on our world, some artists made only oblique statements or gestures such as the legendary late-1970s Earth Wind & Fire performances in which band members would emerge from a model spaceship or float down from the ceiling while playing the bass, or saxophonist Johnny Griffin would maintain in various interviews that he must be from outer space since he did not fit in here on Earth.[18] What could be dismissed as an escapist fantasy on the part of these musicians can also be seen as an ironic statement about the treatment of black folk and the need for independence. Some musicians rendered the science-fiction fantasy of extraterrestrial life and space travel more explicitly and even used it as thematic material for their lyrics. The most consistent and notorious examples include pioneering jazz pianist/composer/bandleader Sun Ra with his variously named Intergalactic Arkestra and George Clinton's doo wop-cum-rock-cum-funk band, Parliament/Funkadelic. The secular, nationalistic expression of Parliament/Funkadelic, the deist devotion and pan-African expression of EWF, and the otherworldly musings of Sun Ra all employ the metaphor of the Mothership implicitly or explicitly. The Mothership, whether leading "one nation under the groove just for the funk of it" or shuttling Sonny back and forth to Saturn while on his mission as the Creator's private composer, is a metaphor that resonates with the exilic condition so fundamental to the history of African American existence. It is also a colorful offspring of the belief held by some blacks since the days of slavery that they are God's chosen people, burnished by the fire of racism and oppression to be made ready for the eventual rapturous return to God's bosom. It is a trope throughout the history of black American culture, spanning from the chariot ride of the slave spirituals to the Nation of Islam's minister Louis Farrakhan's invocation of the Mothership as the place of his anointing from God as the savior of black people. As these examples reveal, one fundamental purpose of African American music (along with the dance, ethical, theatrical, and other processes that can accompany it) is to function as a technology capable of transporting its participants to places that other technologies could not or would not visit. In a world in which verbal communication was to some extent coerced and/or placed under surveillance, music could not only provide means for elegant, personal, culturally relevant communication but could, under the right circumstances, transport the people to freedom, to heaven, to someplace safe from oppression and subjugation. Like the musical artists who provided them inspiration, Dumas and Delany presented music as a means to uplift and transform. In the two stories under consideration by Dumas, music either saves black people from the extralegal violence of whites, or it banishes parasitical white onlookers to an erstwhile "black" ritual. In Delany's novels, music is portrayed as a means of both communication and destruction.[19]

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[17] Another example is the use of jazz themes for detective television shows.

[18] Arthur Taylor, interview with Johnny Griffin, in *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews*, 66–75 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993).

Music has long enjoyed a privileged position in the African American literary tradition, returning to two of its canon's foundational texts. Following the lead of Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* and W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, black authors, including science-fiction writers, make frequent use of black music as *thematic* material, rather than simply as markers of difference, and also usually avoid a straightforward reliance upon minstrel stereotypes.[20] When music is used as thematic material, the music becomes one of the characters of the story—if not quite sentient, then certainly capable of action. In other words, in these narratives music accomplishes something that only it can accomplish. By contrast, when music is used as a marker of difference, it is not essential to the plot. In these cases, music is used as an aural clue to the race or some other trait of the character that it accompanies. It is analogous to a writer's use of dialect to provide a visual clue for the reader as to the ethnic or class background of the speaker.

Henry Dumas

In his short story "Ark of Bones," Dumas tells a story of resurrection and redemption.[21] The protagonist, Headeye, is a strange loner in a country town near the Mississippi River. As his name implies, he is a seer into the spirit world and into the future. One day the narrator of the tale, Headeye's friend, Fish-hound, is fishing in the river when they both hear a sound.

> Just about that time I hear a funny noise. Headeye, he hear it too, cause he motioned to me to be still. He waded back to the bank and ran down to the bank and ran down to the

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[19] These ideas are also treated in *Mr. Mystery, The Return of Sun Ra to Save Planet Earth,* an opera written by composer Fred Ho and poet Quincy Troupe (New York: Big Red Media, 2007). In *Mr. Mystery,* Sun Ra's music (and its praxis based upon the ideological content of the music) saves planet Earth from capitalist greed, nationalist and sexist oppression, and ecological destruction. It may indeed be true that science fiction written by people of color tends more towards discussion of social issues than imagining technology in a pedantic way and for the most part is not part of the "New Wave" movement of "hard science" science-fiction writers of the 1980s and 1990s. Fred Ho, a Chinese American whose primary cultural/political influence is the Black Arts Movement, has found a way to combine these two trajectories by utilizing the African American trope of music as a transporting technology and as a catalyst for personal transformation and empowerment. For further discussion about Ho, see Salim Washington, "Red Dragon, Blue Warrior: Fred Ho's Ethical Aesthetic," in *Yellow Power, Yellow Soul: The Revolutionary Music, Artistry, and Political Struggles of Fred Ho*, ed. Roger Buckley (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

[20] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* introduction and notes by Robert O'Meally (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, [1845] 2005); and W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Pocket Books, [1903] 2005).

[21] Dumas, *Goodbye, Sweetwater.*

> broken down planks at Deadman's Landin. I followed him. A couple drops of rain smacked me in the face, and the wind, she was whippin up a sermon.
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> I heard a kind of moanin, like a lot of people. I figured it must be in the wind. Headeye, he is jumpin around like a perch with a hook in the gill. Then he find himself. . . . He is in the water about knee deep. The sound is steady not getting any louder now and not getting any lower. The wind, she steady whippin up a sermon.[22]

Dumas uses personification in this story, implying that the purposeful action of the wind and the music have an effect upon one of the human characters, Headeye. The wind's sermon and the music's moaning has him "jumpin around like a perch with a hook in the gill." The boys live in a world where spirits reside in natural forces, where the Mississippi has a will and the rain and the wind have purpose. It is also a world in which God can call forth the dead and the living to do His will. Finally, it is a place where black music is the conduit between the spirit and the physical world. That the music would come in the form of a moan marks the nature of music as understood in the African American music tradition.[23] Moaning is a descriptive term for a certain bluesy sound of speech/song favored by blues singers, gospel preachers, and congregants in a spirit-filled church service. In part because of its West African aesthetic inheritance, African American music frequently makes use of sounds that are considered extramusical in the Western art music tradition. Even with musical instruments this difference is so significant it is expressed even in the orchestration of musical ensembles. In West African music, non-pitched percussion instruments are quite often fundamental parts of the music ensemble and are constitutive of the music rather than merely ornamental. In the European symphony, percussion instruments are much less fundamental to orchestration and music making. This high tolerance, and at times preference, for non-pitched instruments may be related to the tolerance for a more extensive range of sounds from pitched instruments, including the voice. Within African American singing traditions, especially gospel and rhythm and blues, the singing voice is expected to use a variety of textures and techniques within one performance, and even within one phrase. The concept of a "pure" sound does not pertain to these genres, and the techniques of moaning, groaning, and shouting are all expected to be part of the virtuoso's repertoire. African American music from jazz to hip-hop has often been denigrated as noise by unsympathetic listeners, especially those outside of the culture that produced the genres. Cultural critic Fred Moten suggests that this "noise"—especially the shrieks and moans of the tradition—helps to fill in an ellipsis, a break, a place where words do not go, and that a response to the violence of oppression is a fundamental element in African American music production.[24]

Here the moans are the voice of departed souls drifting upon the Mississippi, awaiting resurrection and redemption (perhaps revenge?). They are also the means that brings the boys out of an ordinary fishing expedition to a life-changing encounter with the spirit world. With references to the sermon of "Ezekiel and the Dry Bones" (a canonical favorite among African American preachers), and Noah's Ark, Headeye is called to the river by spirits. These spirits, who suddenly appear on the river, are on a gigantic Ark, where the priest/spirit/man who called Headeye is overlooking a heap of dry bones. When the two boys finally come face to face with the bones one of the men "starts to holler. They all stop and let him moan on and on."

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[22] Ibid., 9.

[23] For a discussion of how moans, shouts, hollers, and shrieks have marked the literary presentation of African American music, starting with Douglass's description of his aunt Hester being beaten by her slave master, see Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

[24] Ibid.

> Aba aba, al ham dilaba
> aba aba, mtu brotha
> aba aba, al ham dilaba
> aba aba, bretha brotha
> aba aba, djuka brotha
> aba, aba, al ham dilaba[25]

The narrator does not understand "foreign words" and hence cannot translate the meaning of the man's moaning. But the other spirit men pick up his chanting, which leads to another incantation made by the man who originally called Headeye. He incants a blessing upon Headeye and calls him into service telling him to "take my soul up and plant it again," and that "when I strike you strike."

In "Ark of Bones" Dumas's protagonist is consecrated into a pledge of service that involved an Ark of safety and a pledge to strike when the time is right. The method by which he is drawn into service is music. It is the music that sets the stage and makes the transition to the spirit world possible.[26] And then it is the seemingly nonsensical chanting, itself a form of musical speech, that solidifies Headeye's acceptance of his place in life. From that moment on, he has a sacred mission to exact revenge upon the enemies of his people. The story concludes in an ellipsis of sorts, without the reader knowing the ending. What we do know is that Headeye goes through a transformation from a social misfit with a talent for fishing into a secret warrior called into service to exact revenge on murderous oppressors. We do not know when or where, but the moment of revenge will be relayed through the musical magical world of the spirits.

With "Fon," from the same collection of short stories, the revenge motif goes beyond a promise and is made literal. Fon, a spirit man with the power to set the earth on fire by staring into the eyes of his white tormentors, turns the tables on a posse of white men bent on lynching him for having an insubordinate attitude. An interesting detail that links the two stories is that, as in "Ark of Bones," there is music, sounds that signal, and perhaps makes manifest, the spiritual realm and the pledge of retribution. As in the first story, the scene in which large numbers of black spiritual actors appear from "nowhere" is announced by a confluence of music and anthropomorphized nature. When the white men hear the cheer raised by the blacks, they also hear a "sound of distance and presence, a shaking in the air which comes from that invisible song, that body of memory, ancient. A long sustained roar from the bottom of the land, rising, rising. . . . "[27]

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[25] Dumas, *Goodbye, Sweetwater*, 15.

[26] I am sure that the choice of the Mississippi River is as significant a factor as music in making the transition from the everyday world into the sacred universe. In addition to Old World associations of river deities for some of the early Africans who were enslaved and eventually accepted into Christian worship, there is the biblical imagery of the Ark and also the echoes of the dreaded Middle Passage.

"Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" is Dumas's story that most explicitly deals with black music and the Afro-technological. The protagonist is Probe Adams and his special musical instrument, and the Afro-technological is referenced both in the sense of the music's instrumentality as a technology and the physical instrument of Probe's "afro-horn." Probe is a soprano sax player who holds court musically in a Harlem club with a strict policy to exclude whites from its sessions. (Perhaps this club is modeled on the famous black nationalist music house during the Black Arts Movement, The East, which was located in Brooklyn.) Probe owns one of three afro-horns in the whole world. A second afro-horn is guarded by one European museum, and the other was rumored to be on the "West Coast of Mexico, among a tribe of Indians." Made from metal only found in Africa and South America, the afro-horn holds special powers to both create and destroy life. "The afro-horn was the newest axe to cut the deadwood of the world."[28]

Probe's axe creates as it destroys. Three ill-fated white people come to crash the Sound Barrier Club's all-black party where Probe is holding court with his soprano sax and fabled afro-horn. Jan, a tenor saxophonist and friend of Probe, has brought with him two friends. Ron, a Yale graduate and would-be blues singer, writes about black musicians including Probe Adams and in all sincerity is searching for the "depths of the black man's psyche." Tasha, the third interloper, is a Vassar graduate who suffered at the hands of her heroin-addicted musician boyfriend, about whom she published articles in *Down Beat,* articles that helped establish her as a noted critic and authority. In short, as Ron himself thinks, they are the "hippest ofays in town." For all of their hipness and their undeniable sincerity, these three whites are positioned as the authorities and erstwhile gatekeepers within the world of jazz. The internal joke, of course, is that "ofay" is pig Latin for "foe," a slang term for white people during the bebop era. When, for the sake of their own safety according to the bouncer and the manager, they are initially denied admission to the Sound Barrier Club, Ron enlists the aid of a racist Irish cop to force their way in. And with this act of psychic violence their fate is sealed within the logic of the story. Probe moves to close the "circle" with music from his afro-horn. The "circle" may refer to the beginning sentence of the story: "At the edge of the spiral of musicians Probe sat cross-legged on a blue cloth, his soprano sax resting against his inner knee, his afro-horn linking his ankles like a bridge." The title of the story alerts the reader that the circle is also the central metaphor of the story, which contains several, perhaps concentric, circles. Moving from the smallest to the greatest, there is the circle of the musicians completed by Probe's presence and the circle of the listeners in the Sound Barrier Club. The Harlem community is also inscribed in a larger circle beyond whose boundaries lies white America. Ultimately, the afro-horn creates the largest circle of the story, which is death and rebirth.

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[27] Dumas, *Goodbye, Sweetwater,* 109.

[28] Ibid., 85.

Apparently, the answer to the question contained in the title of the story, no matter which circle we choose, is "yes." And when the music ends the three whites in the audience are dead. The music itself creates the circle and is animated:

> Probe was deep into a rear-action sax monologue. The whole circle now, like a bracelet of many colored lights, gyrated under Probe's wisdom. . . . His lips swelled over the reed and each note fell into the circle like an acrobat on a tight rope stretched radially across the center of the universe.[29]

This circle is imagined as cosmic in scope, and music "under Probe's wisdom" is the personified actor that traverses the universe. As in Dumas's other stories, movement in the forces of the natural world always accompany the music:

> He heard the whistle of the wind. Three ghosts, like chaff blown from a wasteland, clung to the wall. . . he tightened the circle. Movement began from within it, shaking without breaking balance. He had to prepare the womb for the afro-horn. Its vibrations were beyond his mental frequencies unless he got deeper into motives. He sent out his call for motives. . . .[30]

The reader is bombarded with multiple images. There are the notes dancing across the universe, the wind whistling, and a womb, possibly also encased in "the circle." But soon enough Dumas draws attention outside of the story and into the political context for the work by likening Probe to Samson, and his afro-horn to Samson's God-given strength to fight his political foes:

> The blanket of the bass rippled and the fierce wind in all their minds blew the blanket back, and there sat the city of Samson. The white pillars imposing. But how easy it is to tear the building down with motives. Here they come. Probe, healed of his blindness, born anew of spirit, sealed his reed with pure air. *He moved to the edge of the circle, rested his sax, and lifted his axe. . . .*[31]

Like the ethos depicted in the spirituals of the slave societies in the United States, or the spirit-riding orishas of Santería, or the weekly rituals held in holiness churches all across America, in this instance music is a way to enter what Lawrence Levine refers to as a sacred worldview. It is a practice, a technology if you will, that enables believers to commune with their deities and ancestors. African American slave religion was centered on the Old Testament. Identifying with the Old Testament Children of Israel, early African American Christians deemed the story of Moses and the Exodus as theologically important as the story of Jesus and the Resurrection. If the New Testament God is a God of forgiveness, certainly the Old Testament God is a God who will have His vengeance. The modern resurgence of West African religion in the Americas, often hybridized with Christianity, can often include vengeance, but at its core, this tradition involves the petition of the ancestors and orishas to help people in this time and space in myriad ways.

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[29] Ibid., 89.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

If the communicants are expert with the technology like Probe, they can also reenact the paradigmatic acts of the community's heroes and ancestors.[32] As in the case of "Ark of Bones," the music and the wind are figured as agents. The blanket of the bass and the wind are the actors that cause the people to see the city of Samson. After hearing "the whistle of the wind," "three ghosts, like chaff blown by the wind" cling to the wall before Probe closes the circle to play his afro-horn. Probe reenacts the Old Testament story of Samson tearing down the temple of the oppressors. In Dumas's version, the hero "tears the building down" not with superhuman strength but with "motives," that is, with the technology of music. Probe makes a call for the motives to come, and *then* he makes his action through their agency.

At the end of the music, before we know for certain that the whites are dead, Dumas makes an astonishing nod to the creative side of death: "A child climbed upon the chords of sound, growing out of the circle of the womb, searching with fingers and then with motive. "[33] This image occurs at the end of the story just as Probe and the other musicians finish their music. The circle between the musicians and the audience is invoked, for when the musicians stand up, "the horn and Probe drew up the shadows now from the audience." Just as the line between performer and audience is blurred in traditional West African music/dance events, and in a somewhat attenuated form in their African American analogues (such cultural staples as black congregants talking back to their preachers, black audiences exhorting their musicians in clubs, or even talking back to movie screens), the life created from the womb of the circle is created between the musicians *and* their audience. Here we are introduced to the final and largest circle considered in the story with the birth of the child. Interestingly, the child climbs upon "chords of sound" and searches first with fingers, and then (presumably as it grows in competence and power) "with motive." The child survives by mastering the skills favored by its species, whether the nimble flight of the prey animal or the focus upon language of the human animal. This child, however human, has chosen music as its primary means of survival: within moments of its birth it eschews "fingers" for [musical] "motive" as it searches.

Samuel R. Delany

Both Dumas and Delany have written stories in which music is used as a tool of one sort or another, including as an instrument of retribution, exacting the very life of oppressors. Dumas's literature, where this theme is most explicit, operates under a conventional black/white binary, ubiquitous in the literature of the Black Arts Movement. By contrast, as a black, gay intellectual who fathered a daughter, lived in a bisexual triangle, and became sexually liberated in the context of post-Stonewall Greenwich Village, Delany creates protagonists whose otherness is expressed in terms of the erotic as often as the racial. He does not ignore the problematic of race, and his characters do suffer prejudice, circumscription, and even oppression. Rather, in his fiction race is just one marker of difference, and not the site of an all-encompassing binary. Musician and scholar William Lowe describes this matrix with respect to one of Delany's novels, *Stars Like Grains of Sand in My Pocket:*

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[32] The connection between Santería as a technology and music as part of the Afro-technological was suggested to me by George E. Lewis. For a discussion of the sacred worldview of the United States slave population, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3–80.

[33] Dumas, *Goodbye, Sweetwater*, 91.

> These very-very physical bodies, these desired bodies of desire, execute a mystifying Brownian motion as they cavort in a hot fluid narrative sarragossa where male-ness, female-ness, alien-ness, human-ness, homosexuality, heterosexuality, autoerotica, bestiality, S&M, all form a matrix of desire: a matrix which is negotiated by and through the exercise of tremendous personal and/or state power; the power exercised, that is to say, *performed*, by very self-conscious "agents" across vast expanses of time(s) and space.
>
> Given a future world of humans and aliens, melanin could not matter or be a matter of personal hygiene or cosmetics: yet, Delany allows/makes black/white have meaning in his constructed world.[34]

Stars is a novel with two main points of interest: the inexplicability of sexual attraction and the ramifications of the sharing and withholding of information. The protagonist is known as RAT Korga. RAT stands for Radical Anxiety Termination, a lobotomy-like enslaving procedure that the protagonist underwent as a homeless member of the underclass of his world prior to its destruction. He is the sole survivor of his exploded planet, and has been rescued to live on another world where he is fed information through a web-like network. The web ensures that he will have the information that he needs to navigate the languages and customs of his new home. The conflict that ensues between different cultures and ways of viewing history (with one or the other of the information systems) sets the planet at risk of Cultural Fugue. The most important way in which music operates in *Stars* is by this concept of "cultural fugue," which is what probably destroyed Korga's old world, and which threatens to destroy his newly adopted world. Korga also becomes the lover of a man, Marq Dyeth, with whom he shares a mutual sexual attraction. This attraction is one of the engines of the plot, as the two protagonists were measured to be each other's perfect erotic object of desire (99.99—and several more nines—percent). The calculus of desire, and the sensation caused by such an exotic visitor, precipitates an interplanetary skirmish that again invites Cultural Fugue, that is, the destruction of yet another world. Like the reasons for the destruction of RAT's home world, Cultural Fugue is never fully explained, manifesting instead in hints and whispers. In the end of the story we learn that RAT is whisked away before destruction occurs. He is led to escape while in the intrigue of an elaborate dinner party that has been ostensibly held in his honor. The protocols surrounding a baroque web of details that attend to the rituals that various cultures observe for such a formal event begin to unravel. During this process, the reader's confusion is mirrored by Marq Dyeth's astonishment at RAT's final disappearance. This interplanetary skirmish is fought not with weapons of destruction on a battlefield, but with rituals and observances (or refusals) of interplanetary etiquette.

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[34] William C. Lowe, "Translating Desire, Transforming Love: Sex(es) and Societies in Octavia Butler's *Wildseed* and Samuel Delany's *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand*," unpublished paper, 3.

Delany's choice of "cultural fugue" as the agent of destruction is quite curious. As a form in the European art music tradition, fugue has its roots in canon during the Renaissance and was revisited by Baroque composers and theorists in part because the fugue utilized polyphonic organization. In the fugue, multiple voices can be viewed as a form of thematic hegemony, as the various melodies are restatements and counterstatements of a central melody that in the end encapsulate the other voices. Hegemony signifies that one voice is dominant over others. But it also means that others are heard, if only in a subordinate role. As Gramsci theorized the concept, hegemony obtains when the power relationship between groups is asymmetrical. The superiority of the dominant group is not based upon military might alone but also by the machinations of ideology. In effect, the work in sustaining the power relation is thus carried by both the superiors *and* the subordinates. Delany never gives the reader a definition of the term "cultural fugue," except to say that it can cause the destruction of a world. In *Stars,* "cultural fugue" suggests a polyglot, and indeed a poly*ontic* reality, with the interplanetary travel and culture of its characters. Perhaps his idea is that the balance of power and the certainty of fair play is threatened by an overly ornate set of social relations, the Baroque splintering of customs and cultures, and that the rumbling and jockeying for position results in destruction for all.

One of the subplots of the novel centers around what today we would call a "World Wide Web." The novel presents two such systems, and the tension between them facilitates a subjugation of all realities into a relativistic approach to culture and truth. The stream of information is available to anyone who wears a glove that transmits a library of knowledge about anything that one encounters—the current state of art in social interaction and historical knowledge. Everyone is fed the correct way to envision and interpret reality. The information webs include technologies that allow ancestors, who are housed in special mausoleums, to be brought "to life" to comment upon the present as well as to explain the past. Thus, an attempt to fold the history and culture of the family into a tradition that has specific values, norms, and expectations is controlled through the dominant technologies of the galaxy and by those who provide the official truths of culture and history. In the final scenes of the novel before the disappearance of RAT Korga, Marq Dyeth is confused about what is real and what is not, as he glimpses what the world looks like without the web feeding him the official truth. The party's decorum is also threatened by the fact that some of the guests do not subscribe to the same web system. The reader does not see what destroyed the home world of RAT Korga, but in the world of his lover, Marq Dyeth, it is the impending threat to the hierarchy embedded in the various rituals and social conventions that threaten to destroy the world through Cultural Fugue. Without any explanation whatsoever, or even a glimpse of the mechanics of the destruction, it is difficult to ascertain how Cultural Fugue can destroy hierarchy and maintain its hegemonic structure. Is it that the voices could not ultimately be brought into alignment with the dominant theme of the fugue? That the world disintegrates as the integrity of the fugue is dissipated through runaway sub-themes, or triumphant counter-themes? Alternatively, it might be that Delany's plot is fundamentally anti-hierarchy, and that Cultural Fugue does not destroy worlds because of its inability to maintain hegemonic control. Perhaps hegemony itself, or rather hierarchy, is what destroys a world. At some point a world's social structures fall into the fugue pattern and then the die is cast.

The conjoining of creation and destruction through the use of music as a technology is a major trope within Delany's work. We can see this most subtly in *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (1984) and most explicitly in *The Einstein Intersection* (1967). Like Dumas, Delany evokes mythology and folk traditions in *TEI*, but situates these themes in a postmodern context rather than one of black nationalism. Nevertheless, music is imagined in *TEI* in ways that are consistent with Dumas's "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?"—in both tales music destroys evil and builds a new world. The protagonist of *TEI* is a musician whose relationship to music is structurally relevant both to the plot and to the ideas depicted in the novel. Lobey is a goatherd/musician who inhabits the myths of Ringo Starr, icon of Anglo-American pop culture, and Orpheus, the heroic figure of Greek mythology. He is a male member of a three-sexed race of beings who inherited Earth and the bodies of its erstwhile dominant species, inhabiting the home world of a departed race of humans, along with their bodies and myths. Making sense of their new environment, successfully reproducing, and understanding their inheritance of human history and myths all prove difficult for the race. They are helped by the actions of some special persons marked as "different" due to their unique gifts, guided by a few sages and an oracle (computer). Lobey's gift is music. He can also hear and play the music in the thoughts or memories of other beings. Lobey (Orpheus, Shango?) journeys through the land of the living and through Hades to find his twice-lost love, Friza (Eurydice, Oshun?),[35] and to avenge her death at the hands of Kid Death (Billy the Kid, Lord of Hades). Along the way, testing the validity of his new world's myths, he communicates, perceives, creates, and destroys with his machete/flute. Like Dumas in "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" Delaney puns on the word "axe" (jazz musicians' slang for musical instrument) and uses this verbal play to introduce a more sustained and nuanced examination of the connection between creativity and destruction.[36] Lobey carries a machete with a "holy cylinder running from hilt to point," and when he blows across the handle of his machete, he makes music. Thus, his flute is literally an axe, and like Dumas's Probe, Lobey uses his gift for music as both a creative civilizing force and destructive instrument of retribution.[37] It is his way of understanding others as well as the portal into his own soul.

Pathos, rage, love, and desire are all depicted through Lobey's music. For Lobey it is the door into all communication with others and necessary for any security about his understanding of the events and persons in his life. For instance, when he begins his search for Kid Death by joining a group of dragon herders, Lobey uses and recognizes (from the thoughts of other beings) music to communicate with and to control the dragons. He is able to discern people's true thoughts and the nature of their character by recognizing the music within them. He admires the music in Spider, the chief herder. One day Spider hands him a whip and directs Lobey: "Put your axe away. . . . This sings when it flies." By transforming the whip from a tool of oppression and coercion into a musical instrument capable of song, Spider activates the theme of destructive instrumentality:

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[35] The other references are explicitly referenced in the text, but the Shango/Oshun coupling strikes me as equally plausible. Oshun in the Yoruba pantheon is the orisha of love. She is the guardian of sweet waters and can entice men with her coquettish ways; a dip into the rapture creating honey in her special box hung around her waist. The symbolic equation of Oshun with sexuality is obvious, yet she is the special lover (though estranged mate) of the powerful and capricious Shango, orisha of thunder, whose special symbol is the double-headed axe.

[36] Delany, *The Einstein Intersection.* The pulp title was imposed upon Delany. His choice for the book's title was *A Fabulous, Formless Darkness,* a much more apt title given the various themes with which the story is concerned.

[37] This pun is also deliberate. Before his success as a writer, Delany made his living as a folk singer and guitarist in New York's Greenwich Village; when he was a child, his father was a jazz musician in Harlem. See Seth McEvoy, *Samuel R. Delany* (New York: F. Ungar, 1984), 7, 18, 20.

> Oiled whips snapped and glistened over the scales, and the whole world got caught up in the rhythmic rocking of the breast between my legs, trees and hills and gorse and boulders and brambles all taking in the tune and movement as a crowd will begin clapping and stomping to a beat; the jungle, my audience, applauded the beat of surging lizards.[38]

Later in the story, Lobey has encountered Kid Death, experienced the death of another close friend, and still has not regained his lover. He turns to Spider for advice on how to proceed, and Spider tries to teach Lobey to go beyond a Manichean view of good versus evil and to embrace the idea that he and the Kid needed each other. Each of them possess special gifts, gifts that will prove necessary for their people to successfully become humans. Each of the special persons, Lobey, Friza, and Kid Death, was incomplete, or at least limited, without the others. Spider explains:

> This is why he is chasing you—or making you chase him. He needs order. He needs patterning, relation, the knowledge that comes when six notes predict a seventh, when three notes beat against one another and define a mode, a melody defines a scale. Music is the pure language of temporal and co-temporal relation. He knows nothing of this, Lobey. Kid Death can control, but he cannot create. . . . He can control, but he cannot order. And that is why he needs you.[39]

At first glance it might seem that Delany's characters think of music only metaphorically, but one of the climaxes of the story dramatically reveals the instrumentality of music, how it can work with dance to lead one to a sort of corporate consciousness. This consciousness is a rapturous state attained through certain rituals that use music and dance as symbolic acts in a ceremony. In the secular world it might be the feeling sought in a "slamming" party. The party is said to be "the bomb" not necessarily because of the fashionable DJ or the gourmet refreshments, but because a moment comes when "everyone feels the vibe." That is, there is a moment on the dance floor when everyone dancing feels as if they are connected, riding some sort of wave, and those who are not dancing try to find a partner and join in. This feeling does not visit an individual but the entire party. Here we have by analogy not the communicant being ridden by an orisha, but a visitation by the Holy Ghost, Pentecostal style. The music and the dance together allow God to inhabit the corporate body of all those "shouting." This is as true in modern Pentecostal worship as it evidently was during the Great Awakening and its aftermath in the underground black congregations formed on various plantations of the antebellum South. The fire of the Holy Spirit can catch individuals, but a proper shout involves the entire group. Delany's vivid invocation of this process is worth quoting at length:

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[38] Delany, *The Einstein Intersection,* 61.

[39] Ibid., 115.

> I started to clap my hands, a hard, slow rhythm. I made the melody with feet alone. The kids thought that was pretty funny too. I rocked on the table edge, closed my eyes, and clapped and played. In the back somebody began to clap with me. I grinned into the flute (difficult) and the sound brightened. I remembered the music I'd got from Spider. So I tried something I'd never done before. I let one melody go on without my playing it and played another instead. Tones tugged each other into harmony as they swooped from clap to clap. I let those two continue and threaded a third above them. I pushed the music into a body sawyer, a food shaker, till fingers upon the tablecloth pounced on the pattern. I played, looking hard at them weighing the weight of music in them, and when there was enough, I danced. Movements repeated themselves; making dances is the opposite of taking them. I danced on the table. Hard. I whipped them with music. Sound peeled from sound. Chords fell open like sated flowers. People called out. I shrilled my rhythms at them down the hollow knife, gouged notes down their spines the way you pith a frog. They shook in their seats, I put into the music a fourth line, dissonant to lots and lots of others. Three people had started dancing with me. I made the music make them. The rhythm buoyed their jerking. . . . Then loosed through the room, like dragons in the gorse, wild, they moaned together, beat their thighs and bellies to four melodies.[40]

This scene shows the order of spirit possession through the medium of black music as it regularly occurs in church services or, say, in a nightclub where Cecil Taylor might call the spirits. There is a command from the music to the bodies of the listeners that transform them in several ways, one of which is that they, too, become musicians/dancers as they move their way onto the animated possession of the gods. This scene is in a social gathering designed to motivate the young to mate with each other, rather than the sublimated or symbolic lovemaking that can occur at a dance or through worshipful praise. But like worshipful spirit possession, the music calls the *group* into action as a single body rather than as atomized individuals.[41]

It is not the epidermis of the characters that mark this music as black. Rather, it is the way in which music is used. The many rock 'n' roll references throughout the book also provide hints. When the characters swear by "the Great Rock and the Great Roll" or by "Elvis," the reader (who is after all not only a human but perhaps even familiar with US culture) is struck not only by the deification of an erstwhile subaltern culture but by the possibility of another misreading of human culture by Earth's new dominant species. Earth's culture and planet is taken over and its myths are utilized by another "race," which cannot tell that Elvis's music is derivative. We have a race of beings trying to inhabit the world and bodies of humans represented by putatively white music forms that try to inhabit the black music form the blues. That the blues is the basis of this music technology is revealed definitively in one of the final cathartic scenes in which Lobey, all but defeated, pleads to a tree.

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[40] Ibid., 125–26.

[41] Another example of this phenomenon in a secular context in mainstream literature is Amiri Baraka's "Screamers," which addresses the tenor sax playing of Lyn Hope. See Baraka, *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader,* 171–76.

> I stood before the tree and played to him, pleading. I hung chords on a run of sevenths that begged his resolution. I began humbly, and the song emptied me, till there was only the pit. I plunged. There was rage. It was mine, so I have him that. There was love. That shrilled beneath the singing in the windows.[42]

Non-musicians will recognize the blues tropes in the pleading through music, the bittersweet, tragicomic sensibility. Musicians will recognize the blues as a music form that is built around unresolved seventh chords. The blues is one of the few, if not the only, Western music form that is neither major nor minor. Each of its three phrases is characterized by the dominant seventh chord. There is no triumphant resolution, only a rambling continuation of tension. This feature of refusing to cadence definitively on "one" (major or minor) is appropriate for a music depicting a cultural outlook that seeks to speak about feelings and happenings that are often painful, often taboo, and often flat-out denied in "polite" society. American sentimentalism makes false historical claims that the U.S. is born through immaculate conception—without genocide, slavery, serfdom, undemocratic political and economic structures, etc. Musically, it presents romance as the blissful, unproblematic union of soulmates. The blues, on the other hand, proclaims "nobody loves me but my mama, and she may be jiving too." A form that routinely displays such brutal honesty would need a music form that embraced dissonance rather than hide it. This resistance to sentimentality is shared by Delany's writing, especially in *The Einstein Intersection* and *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand.* His withholding of information, effectively enlisting the reader into the act of storytelling along with the author, is a technique no doubt honed in his years as a folksinger and guitarist. Whether or not there is an explicit connection between Delany's two professions, it is clear that these stories, like the blues, use indirection and innuendo as marks of eloquence. It is as though the process is the story as much as the plot. Or as jazz musicians are fond of saying, "It's not what you play; it's *how* you play it."

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[42] Delany, *The Einstein Intersection*, 130.

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