

IV • PERFORMANCE

**SOCIAL AESTHETICS AND
TRANSCULTURAL IMPROVISATION**Wayde Compton and the
Performance of Black Time*Winfried Siemerling*

The presence and coexistence of deconstructive and antiessentialist impulses, exemplified by postmodern artistic practices, within contestatory strategies of reconstructed identity formation is a recurrent issue in post-colonial and critical race theory. I am interested here in the improvisational crossroads where different transcultural and migrant resources meet. Transposed into new contexts and often fragmented, how can sounds and signs fitted to the original circumstances of their making yield a new, socially mediated and historically rooted aesthetics elsewhere? After a brief introductory consideration of the contingencies that come with the displacement of diasporic sounds facilitated by recording technologies, I look at the work of Wayde Compton, a black British Columbian artist who makes context-specific use of musical improvisation and hip hop as a model for textual production and turntablism-mediated performance. In works such as *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) and *Performance Bond* (2004), Compton relies on hip hop turning into transformative textual “lit hop” to articulate historical conditions, border crossings, and possible futures of black British Columbian diasporic subjectivity and performance.¹ But how does he achieve this effect by means of compositional techniques that in many cases seem to disperse cultural specificity? The very processes of sampling and postmodern citation that drive Compton’s artistic practice, after all, have also been accused of betraying historical depth and the social relatedness of signs that

undergo substantial transformation in improvisational performance and redeployment.

Improvisation, Sound Writing Technologies, and the Displacements of Diasporic Sound

Improvisation often proves to be an effective practice in the contact zones of diasporic and transnational cultures. Transcultural improvisation can adapt and appropriate existing archives, materials, and techniques and combine them through inventive sampling to produce new effects and solutions in a present defined by local circumstance. While such “dis-location” of erstwhile differently used ingredients is arguably the hallmark of invention generally, the increasing recirculation of entire entities and sequences of artistically or otherwise produced artifacts has also been considered a defining feature of postmodern intertextual and often parodic rearticulation of earlier materials (see, e.g., Hutcheon 1988). Employing a term from audiovisual culture in this respect, the cultural theorist and curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2005) speaks of “postproduction”—the manipulation of previously recorded material—as an increasingly relevant form of artistic practice.²

But to what extent do disc jockeying and other intertextually resourced forms of performance and improvisation convey or “eradicate” the earlier contexts of their presumably “raw” materials in this process of “dis-location” and recontextualization? Do they leave the social dimension connected to these contexts entirely behind? Do they elide, re-cognize, sublimate, assimilate, or otherwise mediate them? And how does this question relate to the status of “the social” not only of the resources, but of the performance itself?³ With reference to George Lewis’s distinction between Afrological and Eurological perspectives on improvisation,⁴ for instance, the musician and theorist Jesse Stewart (2010, 339) calls for more scholarship that brings into view “the culturally specific aspects of Afrological engagements with postmodernism.” Stewart posits an “Afro-postmodernism” that “denotes the kind of fragmentation, plurality, and intertextuality normally associated with postmodernism, but locates these processes with the cultural matrix of the African diaspora wherein they often function in unique ways” (340). In particular, he suggests, they operate here “as strategies of identity formation that remember and honor the cultural past, while at the same time working to construct visions of a better future” (340–41). Stewart’s reflections are particularly interesting here since they are made specifically with reference to DJing and turntablism and thus concern intertextual or intersonic prac-

tices of mixing and transforming mechanically transcribed “written sound” that often migrates across cultures and locations.

The availability of mechanical sound transcription with Edison’s invention of the phonograph in 1877 contributed to the later dissemination and migration of blues, jazz, and, eventually, hip hop sounds. This development intensified dramatically, first with new transmission technologies from electromagnetic radiotelegraphy to television, and eventually again with digitization and its attendant possibilities of dissemination. In the words of Georgina Born (2005, 25), “If music notation and recording were the means by which musical ideas, and then sounds, became spatially mobile—released, or alienated, from both place and co-presence—then digital media have accelerated those processes.” Mechanical sound writing thus opened the way for a secondary orality that was increasingly freed not only from limits of time and space, but also from communities based on face-to-face contact, a necessary local condition of oral cultures that distinguished them from print cultures (see Anderson 1983). The media following Edison’s invention facilitated what Paul Gilroy (1993, 8) calls “translocal solidarities” that rely on mediated nodes of exchange or appropriation of past-produced resources and thus unsettle the time flows and circulation patterns of “traditional” rooted cultures. The channels of conveyance and circulation signified by the agrarian metaphors of “root” and “culture” are opened to the chance of trades in other traditions.

These openings, however, can seem a mixed blessing. George Lipsitz (1994, 4) suggests that, “like other forms of contemporary mass communication, popular music simultaneously undermines and reinforces our sense of place. Music that originally emerged from concrete historical experiences in places with clearly identifiable geographic boundaries now circulates as an interchangeable commodity marketed to consumers all over the globe.” Yet while “consumption” may connote a certain passivity and absence of agency, it can also suggest a highly strategic and active practice of everyday life. This is also the case in certain styles and practices of musical consumption. Gilroy (1993, 105) thus argues that through performance in “black diaspora styles . . . the basic units of commercial consumption in which music is fast frozen and sold have been systematically subverted by the practice of racial politics.” As he points out, such consumption as performance turns object into event. With reference to Michel de Certeau, Gilroy calls for “an enhanced understanding of ‘consumption’ that can illuminate its inner workings and the relationships between rootedness and displacement, locality and dissemination that lend them vitality in this countercultural setting”

(105). Indeed, for de Certeau (1988, xii–xiii) consumption channels agency “through its *ways of using* the products imposed by the dominant economic order.” Of course, Bourriaud (2005, 13) highlights “a scrambling of boundaries between consumption and production” that is typical for postmodernism and notes that, “in our daily lives, the gap that separates production and consumption narrows each day” (33). But what interests de Certeau more specifically are “the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong” (de Certeau 1988, xvii, quoted in Gilroy 1993, 103).

Gilroy sees such tactics of consumption at work in the “montage” strategies that musical innovators such as Kool DJ Herc (a.k.a. Clive Campbell) operated by cutting and mixing available record tracks to produce what became hip hop. Such montage, however, and the transcultural and transnational migrations of hip hop and its commercialization, draw attention also to the relationships between what Gilroy (1993, 105) calls “rootedness and displacement, locality and dissemination.” Commercialization is certainly part and parcel of a nonetheless socially and historically specific aesthetics of hip hop. As the sociologist Herman Gray puts it:

Hip Hop is a commercial form fashioned from a specific confluence of social, cultural, and historical articulations that brought together different subjects, traditions, and narratives, recombining them so that they spoke to the specific local circumstances out of which they were fashioned. At the same time, as a popular commercial form, Hip Hop travels widely—across different social, geographic, media, and discursive spaces—adapting as it is adapted, recombining as it is itself recombined, to speak to local and specific conditions at the same time as it continues to signal identification and belonging to a global imagined community. (Gray 2003, 205)

Hip Hop in the Boondocks?

Wayde Compton is a black writer from Vancouver who often performs his poetry together with turntablists or improvising musicians and has done much to unearth the black British Columbian archive.⁵ His use of hip hop as literary metaphor and performance practice to channel black British Columbian voices is a case in point. Compton has emphasized hip hop as one of the factors intervening in his usage of forms of black englishes: “For black writers in North America, these conditions constitute a new relationship to the old and treasured orality of our collective memory. While writers like

Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka looked to blues and jazz as their sources for memory and form in both poetry and prose (blues and jazz were received as much live as they were from recordings), black writers today have hip hop as their musical concomitant, their living extension of orality” (Compton 2003b). Compton is aware that hip hop, like any form and medium, comes with its own historical and cultural weight and logic. The relationship “between rootedness and displacement” evoked by Gilroy and Gray is one of Compton’s concerns when he reflects on the mediated nature of this orality in hip hop, and the mediation of place that determines some of the meanings of consuming, and performing, hip hop in British Columbia: “Ironically, it is a type of music that is never quite completely live, but is plugged into a vast media machine that extends into every home and every ear individually more than communally. In the small culturally isolated black communities of western Canada, this individualization is exacerbated” (Compton 2003b). In *Performance Bond*, he thus speaks of “hip hop / in the boondocks, / the relief package / drop zone. I echo New York back / like a code cracker. / Reality hacker” (Compton 2004, 108). Yet he will also claim (via Chuck D), “Hip Hop is black Canada’s CNN [*sic*]. / Talk stops for no border cop” (102).

While Compton reflects critically on the mediated, transcultural, and potentially colonizing effects of hip hop “in the boondocks,” he effectively consumes and practices hip hop in de Certeau’s sense and in keeping with the claims to the style’s adaptability to local circumstance. Compton employs hip hop as literary structural metaphor and practiced improvisational form. The result is a border-crossing and intermedial social and historical aesthetics that adapts a number of historical and symbolic “tracks” to make them answer to the needs of a black British Columbian here and now.

History as Present: Legba’s Technological Tidalectics

Compton’s remixing of borders and histories for local consumption is coded under the sign of Legba, the Voodoo trickster at the crossroads who controls traffic between humanity and the *loa* who preside here indeed over numerous other crossroads. Compton’s text crosses the borders not only between the written and the spoken (black) word, music, and various other modes of conveyance, but also between the present and the past. Consider the opening poem of *49th Parallel Psalm*:

conductor, conductor,
this is over

ture. I sure
 foot halfstep
 to drums splayed for you. does rum

 conduct electricity? drop a dram
 on the ground to be grounded,
 to be landed,
 so we can dig the sound
 of the switches and the channels.
 Shango flows into the amp.
 the tubes warm up.
 the filaments erupt.

 go fourth and multiply,
 go north and fly
 to each cardinal point,
 and us just
 the forth generation from slavery. (Compton 1999, 12)

The book opens under the sign of the “MC,” here the first in a “cast” that is introduced in the first section and that includes, among others, Sam, the Voodoo loa of Baron Samedi; J. D., the initials of James Douglas, the first governor of British Columbia; and, at the end, DJ, the disc jockey as modern-day *griot*, Papa Labas or Legba at the crossroads.

The opening doubled invocation of a “conductor” replays and mixes musical and electronic references with historical tracks that point here to the legacies of slavery, black disenfranchisement, and diaspora. The “conductor” as Underground Railroad guide across borders and to freedom of oppression takes on multiple references and overtones, first in musical terms as a kind of orchestral DJ, and then in electronic terms as a channeling device.

These doublings of the first line are replayed and complicated by the line break, with its remix of the word “overture.” In terms of doubled content, the break signals historical pastness (e.g., of the Underground Railroad and the following history of black British Columbia) *together with*, or as a form of, a new beginning, as “over” becomes “overture”: musical and historical opening, but also “overture” as “proposal,” a meaning that also links the past of “over” to future possibilities.

The line break links also with some of Compton’s acknowledged inspirations—for instance, Black Mountain–influenced Vancouver TISH poetics⁶ along with Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s poetic trilogy *The Arrivants* (see

Compton 2003a, 492–97) and his concept of “tidalectis,” with its emphasis on repetition. In the introduction to his anthology *Bluesprint*, Compton describes the larger emphasis on repetition in tidalectics as

an Africanist model for thinking about history. . . . In contrast to Hegel’s *dialectics* . . . *tidalectics* describes a way of seeing history as a palimpsest, where generations overlap generations, and eras wash over eras like a tide on a stretch of beach. . . . Repetition, whether in the form of ancestor worship or the poem-histories of the *griot*, informs black ontologies more than does the Europeanist drive for perpetual innovation, with its concomitant disavowals of the past. In a European framework, the past is something to be gotten over, something to be improved upon; in tidalectics, we do not *improve upon* the past, but are ourselves *versions* of the past. (Compton 2001, 17)

Commenting again on Brathwaite’s tidalectics in a discussion of the connection between poetry and hip hop turntablism, Compton applies similar ideas of repetition and variation to small-scale decisions of utterance and rearticulation in black and electronic orality (here especially through remixing): “I think he means that each person, each beat, each stage of culture is a version of the last one, and is not a progressive disjuncture. If this is the case, then the orality of temporally and spatially removed Africa can also be this new electronic orality. The idea is not to break, or even to preserve, but to repeat; and to celebrate repetition, knowing that you will mis-duplicate—and that the mis-duplications are the closest achievable thing to an actual you” (Compton 2003b). This sense of connection and repetition also plays out, on a smaller scale, in the sound repetitions and connections that modulate meanings and overlays as “MC” continues its remixing of historical tracks, personal identity, electronic circuitry, and Voodoo mythologies. From the narrator’s *dance* we come to *drums*, associated with the Voodoo loa Shango, and then—guided again by the sound pattern—to a *dram* of *rum*, often associated with Baron Samedi, the loa of death but also of sex and resurrection (and the subject of the following poem). The poem first inquires about rum as a “conductor” in its various senses (material, spiritual, historical), then recommends a small sacrifice of it—or feeding of the loa—“to be grounded / to be landed” as immigrant in this enabling tidalectic mixing of Voodoo mythology, black history, and electronics. This circuitry continues as Shango, the loa associated with thunder and hence the African resistance to enslavement, as well as with drums and music, dance and art, is amplified by the

old-school heat-radiating conducting technology of tubes and filaments. The remix, here, is clearly part of a historical and social aesthetics, replaying and mis-duplicating in the next lines Noah's post-deluge command "go forth and multiply"—also urban slang for "get lost"—as the misspelling doubled double "go fourth and multiply" to signify finally the direct connection ("go north . . . and us / just the forth generation from slavery") between the speaker's here and now with slavery-fleeing earlier generations of the black diaspora moving north into Canada.

At the Border of History and the Present:

Legba's Turntables, James Douglas, and the DJ

The enabling figure of Legba is omnipresent in Compton's improvisational tidalectics. As Voodoo trickster at the crossroads, he is here also the gatekeeper at the border. He appears later in "MC" and then again in two poems connected as inverted doubles by their titles, "JD" and "DJ." The first title evokes James Douglas, the mixed-race first governor of British Columbia, who invited a founding group of blacks from San Francisco to cross the border into his province in 1858. The inversion of his initials as the title of a poem a few pages later, "DJ," relates him to the manipulator of tracks and hip hop. The time-crossing remix of the two signals, or what Compton calls "the temporal conflation of past, present and future (synchronic narrative)" that he associates with Voodoo syncretism (Compton 2003a, 484), channels again a historical and social aesthetics through tidalectic Voodoo poetics and electronic media. Compton's James Douglas, apostrophized as "our own quadroon Moses," is a Legba at the crossroads:

you held the keys
like a lesser Legba—laughing, shuffling passports,
passing
in your black and white
archival stance. (Compton 1999, 18)

Chains of alliteration and assonance tidalectically replay and remix here again sounds that lead from a "lesser Legba" to "laughing" and "shuffling" (and thus, card playing and chance), and from "passports" to James Douglas's own "passing" and mixed race. This "black and white" is then remixed as the signifier of print and of the vagaries of historiography and the written archive.

The later, doubling poem "DJ" calls on "Papa Labas / [to] open the doors /

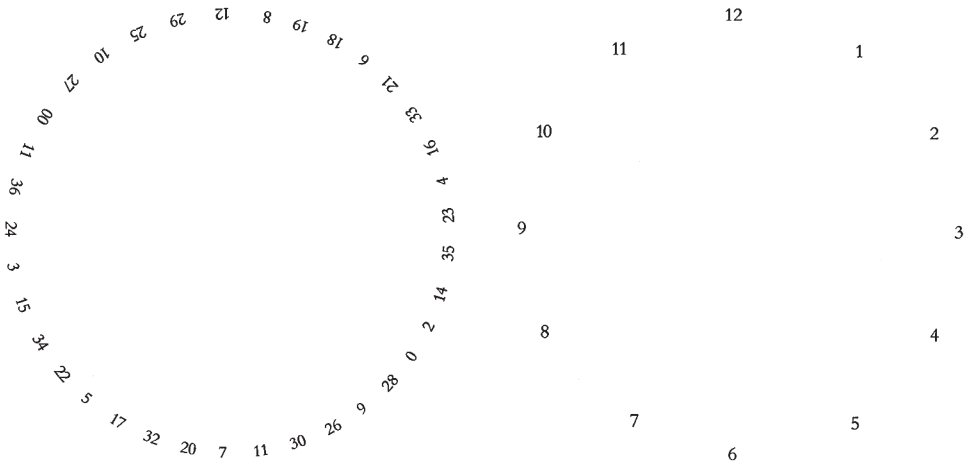


Fig. 11.1 Reprinted from *49th Parallel Psalm* by Wayde Compton (Arsenal Pulp Press, 1999) with permission of the publisher.

straddle the roles,” after invoking the DJ as the conductor at the crossroads of contemporary narratives, secondary orality, and knowledge:

a hand on the texts and tomes
 the keeper
 spins limbs
 the griot
 holds in his collection the keys to corporeal
 wisdom
 this body of texts
 these twelve-inch tables of counterclockwiseness. . .
 more singles in the crates than scrolls in the ancient library
 of Alexandria. (Compton 1999, 25)

Compton’s *49th Parallel Psalm* closes with the section “Hear,” a counterpart in the present to the earlier “Their” and equally predicated on the oral. The very last poem is “49th Parallel Psalm,” which invokes again the DJ with two “parallel” circles inserted after the line, “living on the weals of steal” (see figure 11.1). Concrete poetry here remixes the wheels of steel—or turntables—themselves as the conjunction of time and chance, with a DJ Legba controlling the crossfader between the two “reinventing wheels.”

The clock of the right circle is doubled by a wheel of an American roulette on the left (which, in contrast to the single-zero French wheel, uses both 0 and 00 for the bank, increasing its statistical advantage). Compton makes

a few substitutions: number 1, the sign of beginning, has been replaced by two numbers 11: a doubled double. One of these takes up the place of the numbers 1 and 13, with the latter thus also missing, as is its inversion, 31. Note that in roulette, the croupier or dealer spins the wheel and the ball in opposite directions, like the DJ when scratching the “twelve-inch tables of counterclockwiseness” (Compton 1999, 25).

Turntablism thus becomes the sign and medium of the DJ Legba and of tidalectics: two circles doubling, mixing time at the crossroads between past and present, turning horizontal progression and dialectics into vertical repetition and counter-clockwiseness. The remixing of the tracks of history and time thus envision the past as accessible resource of the present, suggesting agency and another chance.

Vèvè

Compton includes a performance of turntablism and MCing on a CD that is part of *Performance Bond*. Significantly titled “The Reinventing Wheel,” it offers examples of a secondary orality as remix of history, opening up to crossroads of past and future at the faultlines and interstices of its reiteration.⁷ As one line states, “The rupture is the inscription, the brokenness the tradition” (Compton 2004, 103). The corresponding printed section precedes directly the section “Rune” on Vancouver’s former black neighborhood, Hogan’s Alley, which was erased by urban planning and a road viaduct around 1970. One of the first poems here, “Vèvè,” articulates in other ways the interventionist tidalectics of “The Reinventing Wheel.”

“Vèvè” is the sign in Voodoo that *invokes* Legba as the master of the crossroads, and the poem with this title is followed, toward the end of *Performance Bond*, by further historical remixes and border crossings. We find here, for instance, a photo essay that reenvisions doors under the signs of a reinvented black community, such as a “Coloured Benevolent Society,” a Muslim temple, a black newspaper, and the “Pacific Negro Working Men’s Association.” Another remix supplements oral histories with black Vancouver residents, originally recorded by Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter (1979) and reprinted in Compton’s *Bluesprint*, with two further oral testimonies attributed to a fictive volume, *Portals: East Vancouver Oral Histories* (1972).⁸ These invocations are thus prefaced by Compton’s “Vèvè” itself, a dialogue that takes place on a bench “beside the Georgia Viaduct,” the former site of Hogan’s Alley. Two characters whose names reference modes of recording and conveyance, Digital and Analogue, discuss Brathwaite’s poem equally

entitled “Vèvè,” and his evocation of Legba at the end of *The Arrivants*. Brathwaite here evokes Legba’s sign as the ground of writing, albeit a broken one.⁹

When Analogue uses his trail mix snack food to pour a version of Legba’s “Vèvè” on the broken ground of Hogan’s Alley, it is eaten up by pigeons, an evanescence that prompts Digital to inquire about more permanent materials such as ink. A coyote—another incarnation of the trickster—walking by unnoticed (Compton 2004, 120), however, signals the efficacy of the Vèvè, despite its subsequent erasure. Analogue later suggests that “maybe an ephemeral language that can drift away in the wind or be eaten by birds would be able to say things we can’t think of” (121). The writing of the Vèvè is ephemeral, a performance and evocation in real time, yet the vanishing result of this writing performance—if the passing coyote is any indication—has the power to invoke Legba. Analogue remarks, “It’s more than language, it’s sorcery or worship. It’s a portal between worlds,” adding later, “I don’t think it’s quite right to call it writing. I think what Brathwaite means is that it’s the *beginning* of writing or the urge to make a new kind of language, one unique to the New World” (118–19).

It is no coincidence that Brathwaite’s poem appears at the very end of a trilogy, in a section called “Beginning,” just as Compton’s “Vèvè” comes in the last section as preface to his remixed “portals” of Hogan’s Alley. This Vèvè is thus a preface at the end that invokes Legba to grant the remix of history, passage at the border, and conveyance to the loa. The performance of writing the sign—and Compton’s section title can be seen as both descriptive and performative—is a conjuring that invokes a new language with transforming powers, crossing borders from a past that elides black histories into a new history and future mediated by acts of tidalectic writing.

While the signs and materials of this performance and social aesthetics belong to diasporic archives and displacements—Voodoo, Caribbean (Bajan) exilic writing, hip hop—they are adopted and adapted here to speak to the (re-)rooting of a dispersed local history and culture. The history and culture of black British Columbia is tidalectically re/cognized by Compton’s lit-hop portals. Compton’s texts and performances not only cross geographical borders of the African diaspora but also reconfigure possibilities of memory that include black diasporic experience and the remixing of history and storytelling with the performative power of invocations.

Compton’s sampling of resources is in many respects improvisational, but at the same time it follows certain scripts that are not indeterminate with respect to their social contexts. The terms “transcultural” and “hybrid” have

to be used with a certain caution, in this respect, to speak of the encounters in historical and geographical “contact zones” orchestrated in *49th Parallel Psalm* and *Performance Bond*. The term “transculturation,” originally developed by the Cuban sociologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz in the study of Cuban culture, was used by Mary Louise Pratt in its entry into Anglophone literary studies in 1992 to denote critical selection and appropriation by subaltern social actors in the “contact zone” for contestatory or survival purposes. (The term also entered other literary fields, as well as psychology, health care, and management studies.) In many of its subsequent migratory incarnations, however, the term has tended to signify a kind of hybridity that often elides cultural specificity.

But Compton’s improvisation and consumption of hip hop are circumscribed by socially identifiable tactics that offer an aesthetic that, I would argue, remains dialogic—or what he calls tidalectic—rather than dialectic. The performative moment of the circulation of the signs and relocation of archives and contexts—the moment of transcultural encounter facilitated by sound-writing technologies—does not efface their singular particularities. Compton’s choices at the crossfader that connect his resources are improvisational, perhaps not so much in the real time of a sound performance as in their decisions, which are often led by the sound qualities of the signifier in the real time of writing and composition. These moments of improvisation bind the signs together, however, to make their social particularity more striking, not to subsume them under the hybrid logic of their circulation.

Notes

1. Compton also recuperates black British Columbian writing in his anthology *Bluesprint* (2001) and records oral history as a member of the Hogan’s Alley Memorial Project, which is dedicated to preserving the memory of a black neighborhood in Vancouver that was erased by urban planning.

2. For Bourriaud (2005, 29), “emblematic figures” in this context are not only the DJ but also the programmer, producers of the “emergence of a new cultural configuration” that seems to answer to the demands of Guy Debord’s situationist “Methods of Detournement” (1981; originally published in 1956). Debord demanded that the “literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. . . . Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations” (quoted in Bourriaud 2005, 29).

3. In this respect, Bourriaud’s *Postproduction* (2005) rearticulates aspects of a postmodern aesthetics that emphasizes the active role of the audience and inter-

action to the point of blurring the line of producing and consuming art. Yet the “cultural” itself is marginalized here to the extent of its disappearance: any aesthetics of the transcultural one might find here seems socially fairly indeterminate. While his aesthetics of the “encounter” puts a premium on sociability, the social dimensions mediated in this “contact zone” (to use Pratt’s phrase from 1991) point mainly in the direction of de-scripting and defamiliarization.

4. Lewis (1996) critiques John Cage’s elision of jazz in his statements about experimental music, which emphasize spontaneity, uniqueness, indeterminacy, and “chance operations” but at the same time dismiss jazz. Jazz improvisation, however—and certainly the bebop innovators who changed U.S. music a few years before Cage made his comments about jazz—can lay claim to the central notions adduced by Cage. As part of his critique, Lewis (1996) also makes it clear that for “African-American improvisers . . . sonic symbolism is often constructed with a view toward social instrumentality as well as form.” Any elision of social specificity thus would radically underdetermine such forms of improvisation. Or, as Walter Muiyumba (2009, 18) puts it, “Studying how musicians communicate in jazz performance is a way of developing a more cultural music theory and a more musical culture theory.”

5. For an example of a performance by Wayde Compton (with Nick Storrington), see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MuUirGB2Oo>. Compton’s collections of poetry are *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) and *Performance Bond* (2004). He has edited the groundbreaking anthology *Bluesprint* (2001) and further commented on this corpus and his own work in *After Canaan* (2010).

6. The TISH poets—identified with the Vancouver TISH poetry newsletter launched in 1961—include Geroge Bowering, Frank Davey, Daphne Marlatt, and Fred Wah. Their influences include the Black Mountain poets Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson.

7. See also the sound sample in Compton, “The Reinventing Wheel,” <http://www.horizonzero.ca/flashsite/issue8/issue8.html?lang=en§ion=compton>.

8. Incidentally, 1972 is Compton’s year of birth.

9. “So on this ground, / write; / within the sound / of this white limestone *vèvè*, . . . / talk / of the empty roads, / vessels of your head, / claypots, shards, ruins. . . . / the Word becomes / again a god and walks among us / look, here are his rags, / here is his crutch and his satchel / of dreams; here is his hoe and his rude implements . . . / on this ground / on this broken ground” (Brathwaite 1973, 265–66).