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Barg, L.; van de Leur, W.

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# “Your Music Has Flung the Story of ‘Hot Harlem’ to the Four Corners of the Earth!”: Race and Narrative in *Black, Brown and Beige*

Lisa Barg and Walter van de Leur

From his early “jungle-style” and “mood” pieces to his later extended works and suites, the function and meaning of programmatic and narrative elements in Ellington’s music has generated a wealth of critical commentary and debate among critics, scholars, and fans. To take a recent example, Brent Hayes Edwards has argued for the primacy of the “literary imperative in the Ellington oeuvre,” observing that Ellington was “consistently concerned with ‘telling tales’ in *language*, not only in sounds—or more precisely in both: spinning stories in ways that combined words and music.”<sup>1</sup>

While Ellington’s oeuvre does have some pieces that are almost literally descriptive—such as the trains in “Daybreak Express” and “Happy-Go-Lucky-Local”—the correspondence between program and music does not move along direct or literal paths. Even in the most avowedly programmatic and literary-based works that Edwards examines, such as *Black, Brown and Beige* (1943) and *Such Sweet Thunder* (1957), the relation between program and music is seldom straightforward and often elusive. Indeed, the evidence for those supposedly programmatic works often runs contrary to the fanciful stories offered by the composer. For instance, Ellington introduced the three-movement *The Tattooed Bride* (1948) as a “musical striptease” about a man who during his honeymoon finds out that his bride is tattooed repeatedly with the letter W, “in different sizes and shapes and places.”<sup>2</sup> The autograph scores, however, are curiously titled “Kitchen Stove,” “Omaha,” and “Aberdeen,” which leaves one to wonder what the composer truly had in mind while writing the music.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the 1944 *Perfume Suite* tries, in Ellington’s words, “to capture the character usually taken on by a woman who wears different . . . blends of perfume. . . . We divided them into four categories: ‘Love,’ ‘Violence,’ ‘Naïveté’ and ‘Sophistication,’”<sup>4</sup> but the

four movements of this suite stem from such distinct and unrelated sources (partly composed, titled, and performed well before the suite's premiere) that the program rather than the music provides the continuity, if any.<sup>5</sup> As would be customary in many of the later suites—such as *The Deep South Suite*, *Such Sweet Thunder*, *The Far East Suite*, and *A Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald*—the *Perfume Suite* contained movements composed by Billy Strayhorn, some written for quite different occasions. Ellington regularly titled and retitled such works once they were recorded, providing programmatic explanations afterward. Strayhorn's composition "Pretty Girl" received a new life as the "Star-Crossed Lovers," now depicting Romeo and Juliet in the Shakespearean suite, *Such Sweet Thunder*. And his "Elf," composed before he even set foot in the Middle East, was retitled "Isfahan" and included in the *Far East Suite* as a portrayal of the Persian city. In pointing such discrepancies out, however, we do not mean to suggest that Ellington's (and Strayhorn's) choices were somehow arbitrary; rather, these two examples rely upon generalized levels of associations: the title "Pretty Girl" and the romantic affect of Strayhorn's ballads for Johnny Hodges made it a good fit for "Star-Crossed Lovers," and the shared programmatic terrain of "otherness" connected the supernatural, dreamy concept of "Elf" and exotic *mise-en-scène* of "Isfahan."

Whereas in *Black, Brown and Beige* (hereafter *BBB*), and his later *A Drum Is a Woman*, Ellington worked from a story that inspired the music (as discussed below), in other instances, it appears that the inspiration moved in the opposite direction. As he frequently did for the titles of many individual "programmatic" works, Ellington often came up with programs after having composed the music, a process that is corroborated by the original titles on many autograph scores. For example, after Ellington had revised his 1939 composition "Take It Away" to be a feature for his newest bass player Jimmie Blanton, he retitled the work "Jack the Bear," a salute to another bass player.

Ellington's practice of weaving stories around his music in order to offer specific interpretations to his audience reveals a dialectic process between narratives and music. At times stories and people inspired the music, and at other times music shaped the stories. It is precisely this elusive process that allowed Ellington to create accompanying stories, alter titles at will, and merge separate blocks of music into new compositions. Taking the relationships between program and music in *BBB* as a focal point, in this article we argue for a hearing of narrative or literary framing in the Ellington oeuvre in terms of a poetics of association and assemblage, one rooted in African American expressive modes. In the case of *BBB*, we theorize how this dynamic and improvisatory relation between sound, form, and narrative in Ellington's historical-musical text

engages with issues of race, identity, and historical consciousness as well as with problems of black self-representation. Awareness of the complexity and fluidity of this network of relations is central to critical evaluations of the work both in its original “long” and later “shorter” versions.<sup>6</sup>

### **(Dis)Orienting Form or the Critical Reception of *Black, Brown and Beige***

In his spoken introduction to *BBB* recorded at the premiere in January 1943, Ellington explained: “This is a parallel to the history of the American Negro and, of course, it tells a long story.” Performed at the end of the first half of the evening’s (already lengthy) program, Ellington’s remarks obviously reflected his concerns about how the length of the work would be received. At nearly forty-five minutes, *BBB* was by far Ellington’s most extended work to date. Ellington’s explanations were (characteristically) brief, even elliptical; yet his comments stressed the centrality of *BBB*’s program—its social and political message and meanings. Ellington’s engagement with extended or symphonic form in *BBB* (and elsewhere) have occasioned a great deal of critical speculation, nowhere more so than in the controversy that erupted immediately following the original performance. As Scott DeVaux and others have observed, the responses of jazz and art music critics to *BBB* focused excessively on issues of form and style, and this narrow concern with the work’s “formal problems” in effect erased the work’s “long story” and the critical resonance of this story with larger historical and political contexts such as African American struggles for civil rights and solidarity, Second World War discourses of consensus, and the outpouring of symphonic works on American themes, commonly known as “musical Americanism.”<sup>7</sup> That most reviewers simply neglected the work’s program thus points to an assumed readership and concomitant race and class hierarchy in which the history Ellington sought to parallel was deemed of marginal critical interest. Notably, one of the only critical notices to highlight the program was penned by Langston Hughes, whose review captured the ways in which the historical narrative traversed in *BBB* addressed present struggles for social and racial justice.<sup>8</sup>

Although most reviewers strongly praised Ellington, his orchestra, his achievements, the ambitions he expressed by his Carnegie Hall debut, and the progress it constituted for his “race”—at the time known as racial advancement—they were also critical of *BBB* as a composition.<sup>9</sup> Part of the criticism was rooted in a problem of category, which led the classical reviewers to blame *BBB* for not answering to classical European, or “serious music,” standards, and most complained that the work was

formless. The jazz critics, on the other hand, felt that the work lacked typical jazz content, such as improvisation.<sup>10</sup> In the end, the subtext to much of the criticism had two questionable themes: (1) African Americans should stick to their own musical territory, which to these critics was marked by a pure and innocent simplicity (in Gunther Schuller's later words, Ellington's "natural innate talents"); and (2) complex composition should be left to those who have studied European music. Gunther Schuller echoed these sentiments decades later in his own discussion of *BBB*, in which he suggests that "the unavoidable truth is that large forms do require certain developmental, variational, and integrative skills of the composer." Schuller argues that Ellington did not only lack these skills, but more seriously he "never really understood the nature of the problem he was facing in undertaking to write in larger forms."<sup>11</sup> Such views are quite Eurocentric and implicitly disqualify all those musics—from North Indian ragas to West African drumming, and from Native American chant to Japanese gagaku—that are structured differently from Western concert music, and that use other narrative strategies than developmental technique to attain formal or aesthetic goals.

Ellington's approach to form in *BBB* is typically described as a fusion of African American-derived vernacular styles and practices—an aesthetic based in performance and improvisation—with extended formal-temporal procedures associated with European/Euro-American symphonic practice. Building on the pioneering work of Mark Tucker, John Howland's detailed analyses of the work in relation to the expressive practices, arranging traditions, and programmatic topics of interwar Harlem entertainment and symphonic jazz models richly historicizes and expands this general notion of the piece. As he compellingly argues, Ellington's formal conception in *BBB* is best understood as an Afro-modernist admixture of black vernacular styles with what he calls the "variety entertainment aesthetic" of revue-based production numbers and the "glorified" concert-style arranging practices of symphonic jazz.<sup>12</sup> Though Howland's insights move the conversation on form and program in *BBB* well beyond the narrow interests and agendas of Ellington's critics at the time (and since), we want to argue that the critical responses to the work's perceived formal problems continue to raise a number of vital issues around questions of form that deserve closer examination. What interests us most about these responses is not the inability and failure of *BBB*'s critics to properly appreciate the work and its contexts (or the obvious overtones of racial paternalism of some of the responses, notably those of John Hammond and Paul Bowles), but how these responses index the complex relationship of *BBB*'s "formal problems" to discourses of race and of black modernism. Indeed, though the syncretic mix of musical styles, codes, and

themes in *BBB* can be made legible in relation to practices such as jazz rhapsody production numbers or multistrain symphonic jazz techniques, as Howland argues, the formal unfolding nevertheless troubled prevailing notions of aesthetic and stylistic difference, throwing into sharp relief the close relationship of categories of musical and formal difference and those of racial difference. Ellington's experiments with form in the work and his fluid conception of the relationship of music to program point to larger questions of representation around race, narrative, and historical memory.

As Tucker has argued, Ellington's desire to compose a "serious" jazz-based work depicting the history of African Americans grew out of his middle-class education in black history as a youth in Washington, DC, an atmosphere in which pride in black heritage was instilled in him not only through traditional channels of family and school, but also through the language of theater and performance.<sup>13</sup> Tucker describes the influence of vibrant historical pageants and stage shows performed in Washington during Ellington's youth. A more direct theatrical route of influence, however, came less from such didactically oriented stage representations of black history than from the more commodified representations of the black experience Ellington encountered on the stage of the Cotton Club and in other New York theaters.<sup>14</sup>

Although Tucker observes links between the conventions Ellington drew upon to fashion the program of *BBB* and those featured in Harlem nightclub revues—a link mined in Howland's analyses—he nevertheless finds it difficult to reconcile *BBB*'s serious historical treatment and conception with the kind of satirical minstrel hokum to which these themes were applied in Cotton Club floor shows.<sup>15</sup> Rather, Tucker argues that Ellington's desire to compose *BBB* reflected the discourses of race consciousness and black cultural nationalism promulgated by Harlem Renaissance intellectuals such as Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson, whose theorizing on the nature and promises of African American high art had a decisive impact on the production of literary and artistic works during the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>16</sup>

Yet Howland makes a case for drawing a sharper distinction between the literary and art world agendas and concerns of Harlem Renaissance artists and those emanating from Harlem entertainment networks. Certainly, the most critical context here would be the tradition of black composers writing extended works dramatizing the African American historical experience. In its most basic outline, *BBB*'s narrative traces the same "bondage to freedom" narrative as do a host of concert music works by black composers, such as James P. Johnson's 1927 *Yamekraw* (orchestrated by William Grant Still) and Still's *Darker America* (1924), *Levee Land* (1925), *Africa* (1928), and *Afro-American Symphony* (1931).<sup>17</sup> In its

themes of racial pride and advancement and in its commemoration of the contributions and sacrifices of black Americans, Ellington's program seems a virtual compendium of both popular and more elite versions of "New Negro" black cultural nationalism.<sup>18</sup> From this view, however, Ellington's historical project has something of a retrospective, even conservative veneer. For example, there is little in *BBB*'s program—as well as its overall ebullient swing-based tone—that seems directly connected to the turn in black writing and cultural theorizing of the 1930s toward political critique in the form of proletariat and folk realism, such as that found in works by Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and Richard Wright.<sup>19</sup> By the date of *BBB*'s premiere, even the cultural patrician Locke had been advocating the development of a black "proletariat" or "folk" fiction and theater for nearly a decade.

There are, however, other possible contemporaneous intellectual contexts for situating the historical resonance in Ellington's program, ones that do in fact link Ellington's narrative to the more radical spheres of black cultural production and historiography of the late 1930s and early 1940s. This period, for example, witnessed the groundbreaking publication of works such as Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* (1935), C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins* (1938), and Herbert Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943).<sup>20</sup> These works posed radical challenges to white historiography by producing counter-narratives that wrote black agency into the history of the West as an active and activating force. We wish to argue that taking into consideration this register of reference imparts a much more radical ideological gloss to the work and points toward the ways in which the textual and musical programs of *BBB* addressed contemporaneous political and social contexts.

Despite, or perhaps because of the political orientation of his works during the late 1930s and early 1940s, Ellington rarely became directly involved in specific political causes. As Michael Denning has remarked, Ellington was not "a signer of petitions. He was less interested in the politics of affiliation than *the politics of form*. For Ellington, political and orchestral movements were inextricably connected."<sup>21</sup> Publicly, Ellington often spoke of these connections. In one of his first published statements on the subject, Ellington expressed it this way:

The music of my race is something more than the "American idiom." It is the result of our transplantation to American soil and was our reaction in the plantation days to the tyranny we endured. What we could not say openly we expressed in music, and what we know today as "jazz" is something more than just dance music. It expresses our personality, and, right

down in us, our souls react to the elemental but eternal rhythm, and the dance is timeless and unhampered by any lineal form.<sup>22</sup>

Notably, Ellington concludes this 1931 article by announcing for the first time his intentions to compose “a rhapsody unhampered by any musical form” portraying “the experiences of the coloured races in America in the syncopated idiom.” He continues: “I am putting all I have learned into it in the hope that I shall have achieved something really worthwhile in the literature of music, and that an authentic record of my race *written by a member of it* shall be placed on record.”<sup>23</sup>

Such statements clearly show Ellington adopting, and indeed affirming, cosmopolitan notions of artistic evolution, racial authenticity, and cultural nationalism, balancing his uncompromising and unapologetic commitment to black vernacular music with a desire to frame that music within the bourgeois vocabularies of high art. In this sense, Ellington’s artistic ambitions were not all that dissimilar from other contemporaneous black artists and intellectuals—or, for that matter, from his white modernist counterparts. Yet Ellington’s “politics of form” shared with African American modernist cultural production an ethical and political concern for the recovery of historical memory, an orientation that implicitly criticized European and Euro-American cultural biases that situated art at the margins of social life and, more directly, rendered black music making (or makers) invisible. This tension points up a historically central problematic in black nationalist thought in general and black modernism in particular, namely that of preserving a discrete racial and cultural identity while at the same time embracing “European” evolutionist ideology, a problem thematized in the title of Ellington’s historical project itself: *Black, Brown and Beige*.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Program(s) of *Black, Brown and Beige***

In a 1930 interview with Florence Zunsler for *New York Evening Graphic Magazine*, Duke Ellington announced that he was working on “a tremendous task, the writing, in music, of ‘The History of the Negro,’ taking the Negro from Egypt, going with him to savage Africa, and from there to the sorrow and slavery of Dixie, and finally, ‘home to Harlem.’”<sup>25</sup> Throughout the 1930s, references to this work in progress occasionally appeared in the press. Alternatively referred to as “a rhapsody unhampered by any musical form . . . [in] four or five movements,”<sup>26</sup> or “a suite in *five* parts, tentatively entitled *Africa, The Slave Ship, The Plantation, Harlem*,”<sup>27</sup> or “a full-length Negro opera [that] traces Negro life from the jungle to Harlem,”<sup>28</sup> there is no factual evidence that Ellington’s project (or projects?) had



surpassed the early stages of conception, and that he actually had started writing. In 1938, Ellington was hospitalized for a long-overdue hernia operation. When released from the hospital, he reportedly had done “some solid thinking” about his “*African Suite*: five parts, Africa to the present; the History of the American Negro.”<sup>29</sup> According to Barry Ulanov (Ellington’s first biographer), this *African Suite* eventually became *Black, Brown and Beige*.<sup>30</sup>

At its Carnegie Hall premiere, on 23 January 1943, *BBB* was accompanied by a printed program (by Irving Kolodin) that gave pointers to the programmatic nature of the work, and provided an introduction to the composition as a whole. Whereas Ulanov connected the work to Ellington’s 1938 plans for an *African Suite*, Kolodin noted that it “had its inception in an unproduced opera which has been stirring in his [Ellington’s] mind since 1932. . . . In this ‘tone parallel to the history of the American Negro,’ three main periods of Negro evolution are projected against a background of the nation’s history.” The program notes further explain:

*Black* depicts the period from 1620 to the Revolutionary War, when the Negro was brought from his homelands and sold into slavery. Here he developed the work songs to assuage his spirit while he toiled; and then the spirituals to foster his belief that there was a reward after death, if not in life. *Brown* covers the period from the Revolution to the first World War, and shows the emergence of the Negro heroes who rose to the needs of these critical phases of our national history. *Beige* brings us to the contemporary scene, and comments on the common misconception of the Negro, which has left a confused impression of his true character and abilities.<sup>31</sup>

In keeping with the times—proceeds of the concert were to go to Russian War Relief, a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to help the Russians financially in their fight against Nazi Germany—the program noted: “The climax reminds us that even though the Negro is ‘Black, Brown and Beige’ he is also ‘Red, White and Blue.’”<sup>32</sup> Further on in his notes, Kolodin offered a movement-by-movement “musical synopsis” that furnished additional explanations and connected certain elements in the story with the music. During the concert, Ellington provided spoken introductions to each movement, and these comments likewise joined music and narrative. Nevertheless, either the connection between story and music was lost on (or ignored by) most reviewers, or they felt that the story provided insufficient explanation and justification of what went on musically in *BBB*.

Ellington appears to have been unpleasantly struck by the critical reception of his first magnum opus, as he silently withdrew the complete

work. Though he never performed it again in its entirety after the scheduled performances of early 1943, he did revisit excerpts from *BBB* on a regular basis.<sup>33</sup> The often biting criticism must have made it clear that somehow he had failed to show the master plan behind his composition. Later that year, introducing an excerpt of the work, he told his audience: “We thought we wouldn’t play it in its entirety tonight because it represents an awfully long and a very important story. And in that I don’t think that too many people are familiar with the story, we thought it would be better to wait until that story was a little more familiar before we did the whole thing again.”<sup>34</sup>

A couple of months before this cut-down rendition of his tone parallel, *Variety* reported that Ellington had plans to publish a book that contained the score of *BBB*, together with the aforementioned story, “to help toward a better understanding of the work. To this end the story will be printed on the upper half of each page in the book, with the music related to each portion below on the same page so that readers with a knowledge of music can follow both at the same time.”<sup>35</sup> By conceiving this book as a music score with text, Ellington targeted all those “ace musicians and writers [who] said it [*BBB*] was a complete failure.”<sup>36</sup> The book was never published.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of a simultaneous publication of the score and the story made sense. Although Ellington, at times in cooperation with composer Billy Strayhorn, would later loosely base works on extramusical art forms—including plays (such as *Such Sweet Thunder*, based on characters from Shakespeare), film (*Anatomy of a Murder* and *Paris Blues*), and literature (*New World A-Coming*, based on Roi Ottley’s book of the same title, and *Suite Thursday*, based on John Steinbeck’s novel *Sweet Thursday*)—nowhere in his oeuvre, it seems, is there such a direct connection between his own literary efforts and his music.<sup>38</sup> Though numerous press releases about Ellington’s projects were a bit optimistic (usually cooked up by the publicity departments that promoted the orchestra), and often certain announced projects never materialized (such as the aforementioned opera), the publication of this book might have been closer to completion than anyone could imagine. In the repository of the Duke Ellington Collection of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, are a number of documents that make the *Variety* announcement of a book publication plausible. One is an unsigned, handwritten, twenty-nine-page manuscript in Ellington’s hand, and the other is a thirty-three-page typescript titled “*Black, Brown and Beige* by Duke Ellington.” Both documents are undated. In addition to these texts, the Ellington Collection houses a seventy-five-page copyist’s score (in the hand of Thomas Whaley, one of

Ellington's copyists) that reproduces most of the music for *BBB*, in so-called short score format.

The autograph seems to be written in a relatively short span, during which Ellington must have been able to dedicate some undisturbed time to its creation. Unlike all other surviving sketches for his larger works, be it music (such as the opera *Queenie Pie*, written at the end of his life and premiered posthumously) or text (such as his memoirs, which led to his autobiography *Music Is My Mistress*), the autograph script for *BBB* is not scattered over odd bits and pieces of music paper and hotel stationary.<sup>39</sup> This text is neatly penciled on pages that appear to stem from the same ream of paper, which gives further creditability to a 1938 *Down Beat* announcement which had it that "Ellington Completes Negro Opera at Bedside."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, this document might have been written during Ellington's aforementioned 1938 two-week hospital stay—one of the very few periods since his 1927 Cotton Club engagement that found Ellington confined to a single location and being unable to work with his orchestra.

The typescript appears to be created later than the autograph. In all likelihood, the typescript was put together *after* the premiere of *BBB* in 1943. For instance, unlike the autograph, it follows the three-part structure of *BBB*, complete with movement titles, whereas the autograph bears no movement titles (the header "Brown, 2nd mvt" in Ellington's hand appears to have been added later).<sup>41</sup> Press coverage shows Ellington settling on the final three-movement structure shortly before the premiere. For instance, about a year before he started to compose, he still told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that his "opera traces Boola's whole history in four scenes."<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that in spite of its three movements, the final work displays a four-part or even a five-part division. *Black* falls apart in two main segments: Boola's journey from Africa to the Americas and Boola as a slave, but the second segment can be divided in two sections, too: "Work Song" and "Spiritual."<sup>43</sup> This suggests a three-part division of *Black*, a plan that the music seems to follow as well.

The typescript offers a seriously edited and expanded version of the autograph script, as well as some further clues to its creation date. "Now, do you fight for the freedom he fights for in 1944?," it asks in the second movement, *Brown*.<sup>44</sup> Later, in *Beige*, there are allusions to the Second World War ("The drums of war BOOM out again"), but the script does not mention the war's ending, and instead brings up "a world of suffering / in it's [sic] blackest hour."<sup>45</sup> Why, when, and by whom the typescript was created remains unclear. It is not even certain whether Ellington is the sole author of the typescript, since it is possible he hired a collaborator to edit his autograph into a more coherent work. After all, he worked with a number of people throughout his career who served as literary aides (such

as Stanley Dance, Patricia Willard, and Inez Cavanaugh). Stylistically, many passages in the autograph and the typescript differ significantly, and at other times, the same voice seems to ring through. Below, we will cite as much as possible from the autograph, which in all likelihood was authored by Ellington only.

Ellington's literary epic narrates the history of Africans in America primarily through its mythical protagonist, Boola, who appears across historical epochs, as if in a time machine, to bear witness to the struggles and strivings of African Americans from bondage to freedom. In 1941, Ellington explained to music critic Alfred Frankenstein that "if [Negro historians] want to tell you that Negroes took part in this or that event . . . they will say 'Boola was there.'"<sup>46</sup> Here the figure of Boola seems to exceed the realms of myth and symbol: through successive human incarnations, Boola acts as history's eyes, as a constant but changing presence, both agent and angel of historical remembrance.

Tucker and others have detailed key musical and dramatic features that link Ellington's extant sketches for *Boola* to *BBB* as well as to the nine-minute dramatic short *Symphony in Black* (1934–35).<sup>47</sup> The film's four tableaux portray scenes or "moods" that prefigure central themes in *BBB*.<sup>48</sup> Considering points of similarity and difference among the film, the program for *BBB*, and the autograph narrative poem and typescript/text discloses a critical formal tension at the heart of Ellington's racial narrative. The complexity of these tensions—and, in particular, how they engage with issues of race, identity, and historical consciousness—is usefully illustrated through an examination of these relationships in the musical and textual program(s) of *Black*.

Like the tripartite structure of the work as a whole, *Black* unfolds through three main sections or movements: "Work Song," "Spiritual Theme," and "Light." Of these, "Work Song" and "Spiritual Theme" ("Come Sunday") form the two principal thematic ideas of *Black*, which Ellington brings together in the third "finale" section, "Light." A comparison of the two existing texts points up some of the differences, in style, length, and prose. These are the first lines from the autograph script:<sup>49</sup>

1526

A message is sent thru the Jungle By Drums.  
 Boom [Boom] [Boom] [Boom]  
 like a Tom Tom in Steady Precision.  
 [Like] many Blacks treking [sic] across a Desert  
 [Like] lash after lash to the Body from  
 Four Directions

like Hunger pains.  
[Like] kidneys that thump so Hard they  
Feel Somebody Driving their Fists into your Back  
Like the Butt of the Whip or axe Handle  
laid [sic] on the skull  
Boom [Boom] [Boom] [Boom]  
Like the Exploding Shell in a gun.  
Boom [Boom] [Boom] [Boom]  
Like Many Boot Heels Stomped on Bare  
Black Feet  
this Constant Thumping Continues  
in the Brain  
the nerves of a Black Mass is in  
tempo—Boom [Boom] [Boom] [Boom]  
Each Pulse Beat Jars His Entire  
Frame  
Poor Boola—Beaten Down<sup>50</sup>

In the typescript, this staccato mixture of free verse and prose is expanded, and partly replaced by more sophisticated, at times more convincing, lines:

FIRST MOVEMENT

BLACK:

A message is shot through the jungle by drums.  
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!  
Like a tom-tom in steady precision.  
Like the slapping of bare black-feet across the desert wastes.  
Like hunger pains.  
Like lash after lash as they crash and they curl and they cut.  
DEEP!  
Like kidneys that thump.  
Like heart-beats that bump . . . out of tempo.  
Like the thud of the butt of the whip.  
Like an axe-handle crushing the skull.  
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!  
Like the crush of the weight of a hob-nailed boot stomping on  
bare black feet  
Like exploding a shell in a gun.  
This BOOMing is echoing In the brain.  
Nerves of a black brood . . . in tempo.  
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!!<sup>51</sup>

As we follow Boola from a grueling trek across the African desert in chains to the Middle Passage to the New World, the sound of the tom-tom becomes associated with, in turn, the “thud of the butt of the whip,” “an axe-handle crushing the skull,” and, after he has been made a slave, Boola’s bodily toil. Yet throughout these passages, we argue, the ancestral connotations of the tom-tom linger as a kind of sonic trace. At the same time, Ellington recasts or, more precisely, *overlays* the stock symbolic sound of African ancestral origins, the “tom-tom,” with the rhythm of racial bondage.

“The history of the Negro in America [is] a subject on which Duke has read extensively,” *The New York Times Magazine* pronounced in a concert preview.<sup>52</sup> However, Ellington views the history of his people through an original musician’s filter. Music is omnipresent in the scripts: “A symphony of torture,” “hearts that bump out of tempo,” “tones that somehow don’t hold their pitch . . . but seem to smear off,” “a new note entered his mind,” etc. In fact, the scripts not only chronicle the trials and tribulations of the American Negro, but they provide an allegorical history of African American music as well:

Out of this deep dream of freedom  
 Evolved the blessed release  
 Of freedom of expression in song.  
 Out of this great need for freedom  
 The work-song was born.<sup>53</sup>

Although these passages from the narrative poem and typescript constitute the fundamental programmatic matrix for Ellington’s music-historical tone parallel, the two principal themes in *Black*—“work song” and “spiritual theme”—also have significant programmatic and compositional connections to two pieces Ellington composed some nine years earlier for the film *Symphony in Black*. These pieces underscore different but related “scenes” from black life, specifically the first and third scenes titled “The Laborers” and “Hymn of Sorrow” (and these were the only two parts of the film for which Ellington composed original music). The similarities between “Work Song” and “The Laborers” are especially striking, and both evoke passages from the first section of the narrative poem, quoted above. *Black* begins with a steady four-beat rhythmic “tom-tom” motive pounded out by Sonny Greer on the timpani. This rhythmic motive strongly recalls, as Gunther Schuller has observed, the dramatic timpani downbeats heard in “The Laborers.”<sup>54</sup> However, in place of the somber, blues-tinged brass theme that underscores the scene in the film, the

“Work Song” theme is announced by an ascending, fanfare-like phrase stated in unison brass and saxes that establishes the tonic key of E-flat.

This principal theme, or “motto” theme as Brian Priestley and Alan Cohen have dubbed it, is heard throughout the “Work Song” section, accompanied by the pounding tom-tom rhythm, in a rich variety of rhythmic and melodic transformations and juxtapositions.<sup>55</sup> Such variety produces a sense of constant shifting, a restless forward momentum that runs through much of the movement. Following directly upon the sounding of the tom-tom motive, the “Work Song” theme is stated three times in quick succession, after which the tempo abruptly doubles: nimbly swinging saxes usher in an up-tempo version of the theme initiated by a unison trombone passage. This “swing” version is then passed between the saxes and trumpets. The contrast between these two versions constitutes an important formal opposition in *Black*, an opposition emblematic of other large-scale formal tensions (a point to which we will return later).

Another less apparent parallel between the music for “The Laborers” and that of “Work Song” warrants comment. In his discussion of *Symphony in Black*, Schuller draws a connection between the dramatic gestures that open *Black* and the thirty-two-bar introductory section to “The Laborers,” called “Introduction.” Heard as a “curtain-rising” underscore to the title credits and opening sequence, the music for “Introduction” features—as in the “Work Song” theme—rising, fanfare trumpet passages and theatrical timpani accents. But where the “boisterous clang and clatter” heard in the film’s underscore symbolize, in Schuller’s words, the “fast-paced, nervous, noisy stridency of modern city life,” the opening of “Work Song” frames a very different historical “noise”—the “noise” of slavery, itself laden, via the tom-tom motive, with the *topos* of ancestral memory.

In the second section of *Black*, the secular world of slavery represented by the “Work Song” segues into the sacred sounds of the “Spiritual” theme: the ethereal “Come Sunday,” long hailed not only as the work’s most poignant section but also as containing some of Ellington’s most inspired and beautiful music. The programmatic and musical parallels between “Come Sunday” and “Hymn of Sorrow” from *Symphony in Black* are more generalized than those between “The Laborers” and “Work Song.” Both are set in the environs of a Christian church and attempt, in different ways, to capture the affective registers of black religious expression through the richly evocative prism of Ellington’s delicate harmonic and timbral blends.<sup>56</sup> A characteristically elusive mix of muted brass and reed voicings infuse the relatively sparse texture and slow, serene tempo of both scenes with shimmering warmth and a powerful sense of things remembered.<sup>57</sup>

The transition to the “Come Sunday” section is announced by way of Joe “Tricky Sam” Nanton’s “Work Song” solo: in the latter part of his solo as the tempo slows, Nanton’s mournful “ya-yahs” soar into the upper register of the trombone, setting the scene for the emergence of the “Come Sunday” theme. Nanton’s plunger-mute vocalizing functions simultaneously to provide a transition *from*, as well as to suggest affinities *between*, the secular and sacred worlds of slavery times. Strikingly, the mix of the sacred and secular enacted in Nanton’s solo brings sonic resonances to *Black* of a different, less remote “primitive” past: jungle style. As is well known, Ellington’s jungle style developed in performance contexts at the Cotton Club during the band’s tenure there from 1927 to 1931. A stylistic marker of protean dimensions, jungle style was less a single, discrete style than a fusion of timbral, gestural, and harmonic elements that Ellington and his band used in a variety of contexts and combinations.

Significantly, an important rising melodic figure in Nanton’s solo resembles the opening minor triad of the theme for another jungle-style classic, “East St. Louis Toodle-O.”<sup>58</sup> Like “Black and Tan Fantasy,” the theme—and underlying “story”—for “East St. Louis Toodle-O” was composed by Bubber Miley, who, Ellington remarked, “always had a story for his music.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, Ellington associated the practice of “telling stories” with Miley in particular and the jungle-style period more generally. An oft-cited passage in his memoirs retells (literally quotes) the story-picture that Miley told for “East St. Louis Toodle-O” thusly: “This is an old man, tired from working in the field since sunup, coming up the road in the sunset on the way home to dinner. He’s tired but strong, and humming in time with his broken gait—or vice versa.”<sup>60</sup>

As evidenced in the following passage from the “Come Sunday” section of the narrative poem, Ellington’s allusions to “East St. Louis Toodle-O” in *BBB* explicitly reference Miley’s image of a “tired old man” limping stoically home after a day of hard work in the fields, projecting his story back in time to represent the figure of an elderly slave:

Saturday Evening found many  
 Black man trudging up the Dusty  
 Paths & Roads after a Hard Day  
 in the Field—their Walks Broken  
 to a toodle-o—By the Hard times they  
 Had survived—Humming to themselves  
 Humming in a Voice more Sonorous.

Ellington’s linking here of syncopation—the “broken walk”—with “the tempo that was beaten into them” defines the origin of African



American rhythmic sensibility as rooted in the racial violence of slavery—not as the “natural” expression of a metaphysical “African Soul.”<sup>61</sup>

In his recorded introductory comments to *Black*, Ellington characterized the shape of the “Work Song” theme as a programmatic simulation of “the place to work” answered by “a place to grunt.” The transformations and juxtapositions of the principal theme heard throughout the “Work Song” section can, then, be heard as a reflection of the poetic transformations in Ellington’s narrative text.<sup>62</sup> But the “Work Song” theme performs another, equally important purpose in the context of Ellington’s musical program: just as “The Laborers” theme provided a backdrop for Hodges in the film, the “Work Song” acts as a frame for the section’s two central solos played by Harry Carney (baritone sax) and Nanton (trombone). The solos of Carney and Nanton embody what Ellington called different forms or “aspects” of the “Work Song.” As he did for the work’s other featured solos, Ellington wrote out large patches of Carney’s and Nanton’s parts, a practice that Wolfram Knauer has dubbed “simulated improvisation.”<sup>63</sup> Carney’s deep, resonant baritone sax voice emerges during a four-bar break that arrives in the wake of a strong return of the principal theme. The texture thickens with heavy muted brass intoning sustained chords over which float softly singing lines. This comes as a moment of focus and reflection, stopping or slowing down the initial rapid series of formal shifts described above. Carney’s solo seems, then, to surface within (or perhaps *from*) the prior frenetic movement, as if to simulate what Ellington called “the impact” of a slave’s work. Nanton’s solo emerges through a similar process following another strong return to the principal theme.

With Nanton’s statements of the “Work Song” theme, the tempo steadily slows. Ellington uses Nanton’s signature “talking” trombone style to represent a contrasting perspective of the “Work Song,” one that Ellington described as the “tired-out ‘Work Song.’” In both text and music, the “Toodle-O” passage directly precedes what Ellington called the “Church Window” mood of the “Come Sunday” section. In the narrative poem, it appears as a penultimate stanza in an extended passage narrating the mass spiritual (re)awakening of the slaves, a passage that culminates in the climactic birth of the Negro spiritual. This spiritual awakening spans a week, beginning with Boola’s “discovery” of the Bible one Sunday. Boola first passes on the “Word of God” to “his woman,” Voola, and, eventually, to the masses of slaves as they congregate outside the window of a white church.

When the Whites inside Sang their  
Beautiful Hymns—the Blacks outside  
Would Hum along with them + add their

own touch to it—weaving gorgeous  
melodic, Harmonic + Rhythmic Patterns  
This was the Beginning of the Spiritual—<sup>64</sup>

Ellington's text here marks not only the interracial web in which the spiritual first emerged but the transformative "racial" process—and racialized distance—in which that transaction took place. Otto Hardwick's lyrical alto sax introduces the "Come Sunday" theme, setting up the "Church Window" perspective. This moment segues into a slow, serene, homophonic statement of the theme. Led by a tightly Harmon-muted trumpet, a muted brass choir "hums" the theme as Greer's tubular bells sound out at the chord changes, suggesting the sound of distant church bells. The overall effect of this passage is strongly cinematic, a kind of sonic reverie or dream sequence that frames an otherworldly space and time.

In succession, the "Come Sunday" theme is "passed" on first to Juan Tizol on valve trombone and then to Ray Nance on violin, whose solo continues the extended orchestral introduction. The sounds of both players impart a refined, elegant character to the spiritual. During this passage, Tizol briefly quotes a fragment from the canonical Negro spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," an apt quotation to prepare the way for *BBB*'s spiritual. After a brief transitory up-tempo reed passage with the rhythm section, Nance's solo begins as muted, low-register reeds softly "growl" a murky harmonic countermelody that turns out to be another allusion to the introductory theme of "East St. Louis Toodle-O."<sup>65</sup> With lucent bowed glissandos and pizzicato accents, Nance's violin brings the "Come Sunday" theme into full focus. A series of jarring, percussive piano chords and darkly muted brass interjections interrupts the dreamy atmosphere; Ellington takes a short solo (modulating to a new key) that segues directly into the climax of the entire section: Hodges's full thirty-two-bar (AABA) chorus of "Come Sunday." Hodges's free-floating, *arioso* line evokes a kind of disembodied sensuousness that powerfully translates the sacred/secular mix of Ellington's spiritual theme.

### Between Theater and History

In the foregoing overview of *Black*, we examined at some length similarities between *Black*'s program and the scenario for *Symphony in Black* as well as the relationship of these common themes to Ellington's narrative scripts. In all these different media, Ellington drew upon an interconnected cluster of imagined racial scenes, stories, and sounds. But the narrative framing of these ur-scenes of black life differed (or changed)

crucially: in the film, these scenes and sounds unfold as a series of tableaux that take place in the “present” and are meant to depict different aspects of the modern black experience; in *BBB*, many of these same scenes become the stuff of historical remembrance, projected into the past and mapped onto a narrative or linear temporal framework. And this linear trajectory from bondage to freedom is, in turn, expressed as a geographic and social trajectory: from rural South to urban North.

Such a dual ambiguity or, more precisely, blurring of temporalities and geographies discloses a tension in *BBB*’s racial imaginings between the past and the present. To put it in terms of narrative theory, the ambiguity in *BBB* between the black past and present may be conceived of as a formal tension between the diachronic, chronological narrative framing of “history” and the synchronic or spatial/mythical framing of “memory.” The writer, poet, and critic Melvin Dixon has observed that through conjuring particular places, gestures, images, or objects (*lieux de memoire*) the exercise of memory in black writing produces an “alternative record of critical discussion. . . . Memory becomes a tool to regain and reconstruct not just the past but history itself.”<sup>66</sup> But this space of historical remembrance or consciousness is at odds, Dixon emphasizes, with chronological or historical temporality, that is, with history:

If history were mere chronology, some might see Africa as the beginning of race consciousness—and racial origin—rather than the fulfillment of ancestry. Enslaved Africans were brought to the New World, mainly to the American South. . . . But in much of the material centered in a construction of racial culture and identity, an ahistorical, cyclical, figurative movement emerges as the reverse. An investigation of Harlem as a northern urban community reveals direct ties—deliberate, crafted ties—to the American South and then to Africa. And these are not places but stages or sites on which the drama of self-acquisition is played.<sup>67</sup>

Dixon’s notion of the “stages or sites” of racial memory and historical consciousness—Africa, the South, Harlem—foregrounds the imaginative or “crafted” nature of remembrance, culture, and identity. Yet Dixon’s purpose is not simply to make a banal postmodern pronouncement about the constructedness and instability of identities but rather to theorize the special or specific modernist problematic that the contradictions of memory and history pose for black writers and artists—contradictions rooted in the historical and social dislocations and ruptures wrought by the experience of slavery and racial oppression. Dixon’s formulations about memory and history also suggest a racialized tension at the level of form between historical-chronological and cyclical-spatial modes of

remembrance. “If history as story promotes narrative,” he writes, “then memory, which is often expressed episodically and through visceral imagery independent of chronology, very much like a dream, reveals itself often as metaphor. The tension between history and memory then can also be expressed as a tension between narrative and metaphor.”<sup>68</sup>

What we argue is that the formal and stylistic contrasts and juxtapositions and tensions we described above may be understood as musical engagements with, or more precisely *parallels* to this larger, conceptual problematic that Dixon describes. *BBB*'s thematic material functions both to carry the program's narrative (historical-chronological) and to provide a spatial frame for soloists (the cyclical-spatial mode of remembrance). This dual function can also be related to Ellington's compositional approach in the work as a whole, an attempt to integrate African American-based improvisational forms and practices with the (white) imperatives of symphonic continuity. Or put the other way around, Ellington reinterprets thematic transformation and other formal devices associated with symphonic narrative codes through jazz practice. Following upon compositional strategies pioneered in his previous extended works, Ellington experimented in *BBB* with mapping episodic forms (stringing together alternating four- and eight-bar phrases, and modified standard jazz forms, including AABA/thirty-two-bar song format and twelve-bar blues) articulated, as we have seen, through shifting tempi and evocative arranging onto a more linear or continuous formal design. In the “Work Song” section of *Black*, for example, the solos of Carney and Nanton are stitched into a continuously unfolding frame; both solos emerge in the “B” part of theme and carry forward thematic ideas.

The stylistic and formal shifts and contrasts in *BBB*, then, emerge through the *sound* or “tonal personalities” of the Ellington band. Ellington everywhere calls upon the specific stylistic character of his soloists to enact the part of the story being told; thus their voices/improvisational styles (as imagined by Ellington) not only mediate the historical narrative but embody, literally and figuratively, black racial identity and historical consciousness. In effect, Ellington worked with the cultural and social codes/associations of different soloists: the “idiolect” of Nanton's trombone vocalism fit the “Work Song”; Hodges's refined but intense lyricism for “Come Sunday”; Webster's soulful tenor sax for “The Blues” in “Brown”; and so on. Their voices *are* *BBB*'s “folk” sources. As Ellington put it in a preconcert interview with Helen Oakley for *Down Beat*: “The music was inspired by the character of the playing of the men in the band and is characteristic of ourselves, and we hope, of the saga which motivates our effort. Quite simply we are weaving a musical thread which runs parallel to the history of the American Negro.”<sup>69</sup>

Would a better understanding of the connection between program and music have helped to advance Ellington's ideas, and would it have helped listeners to better grasp the musical narrative? Would critics have accepted the "chaotic care-freedom" and the "Harlem Hotcha" that opens *Beige* with its "blaring tom-toms" and "screaming brass" had they known that it was intentional, and not out of some presumed lack of compositional technique? Possibly.

At the heart of the story underlying the music stands Ellington's conviction that an unbroken heritage ties his contemporaries to their African roots, yet on the surface, as the narrative sweeps through more than four centuries of African American history, the story is quite fragmented. A greater awareness of some of the motivic material—such as the connecting rhythmic opening gesture—certainly helps the listener to better appreciate the music. Here Ellington's scripts point up different interpretations, since the consecutive boom-boom-boom-boom drum patterns serve to depict the banging in Boola's head when he is close to dying on the slave ship, the trampling feet on the deck, the thud of the whip, the sound of the heavy work in the fields ("Work! Work! Work! Work!"), the work song ("Sing! Sing! Sing! Sing!"), or the bells on Sunday ("Ding! Dong! Ding! Dong!"). Boola's quickening pulse, the cannons that drive the British from Boston, or the marching of the black armies led by Barzillai Lew—all are accompanied by this rhythmic motive.

It could be argued that the formal tensions we have been describing are rooted in the idiomatic or material differences between literary texts and music; and, in this case specifically, the impossibility of translating the epic historical sweep and discursivity of the Boola scenario to an instrumental/symphonic program. The extramusical references of large parts of *BBB* remain elusive, even if one compares score and scripts. Compiling the book-and-score that Ellington reportedly had in mind would have been a daunting, if not impossible, task. To be sure, there are important issues of genre and medium with respect to the translation of language to music in *BBB*. However, structuralist explanations alone (whether from the point of view of jazz, concert music, or symphonic jazz hybrids) fail to address not only the ways in which issues of form raised in Ellington's historical project engage with problems of race, identity, and historical consciousness but also the relationship of *BBB*'s formal strategies to the larger problem of black self-representation in black modernism. Far from unique to Ellington's project, the formal and conceptual tensions in *BBB* have an extensive history in black literary and performative genres, in particular theatrical conventions for representing the narrative of black history from bondage to freedom. Indeed, by the early 1930s, the period in which *BBB* was first conceived, staged representations of slavery to freedom

narratives—"Dixie to Harlem"—had become a stock scenario in African American theater.

As we noted at the outset, Mark Tucker persuasively links BBB's program to the vibrant historical pageants and stage shows performed in Washington during Ellington's youth. Such pageants include Du Bois's *The Star of Ethiopia*, which was performed in DC in 1915 at a baseball park where Ellington worked as a teenager selling refreshments.<sup>70</sup> Du Bois's pageant takes the form of a recounting of a heroic black past, a black nationalist narrative designed to counter white supremacist narratives of black inferiority. Echoing both the themes and rhetoric of his great 1903 *Souls of Black Folk*, the pageant dramatized "10,000 years in the history of Negro race" through a succession of six episodes or scenes, each announced by a banner reading "The Gift of Iron," "The Gift of the Nile," "The Gift of Faith," "The Gift of Humility and the Sorrow Song of Pain," "The Gift of Struggle Toward Freedom," and "The Gift of Freedom for the Workers."<sup>71</sup> Like Du Bois's pageant, Ellington's program mixes history and myth. And as history, Ellington's program may be likened to one of Du Bois's main projects as a scholar and artist—to counter the historiography of white supremacy that denied the centrality of and contributions of black Americans and black civilization to world history.<sup>72</sup>

While the black middle class promoted race consciousness and pride in black history through these historical pageants, such dramatic representations existed alongside other, less virtuous representations of black life and history presented on the popular stage. On this stage, the historical drama of black history served primarily as a vehicle for entertainment and parody, one that, more often than not, drew on the racial vocabulary of blackface minstrelsy. In place of the dignified rhetoric of racial uplift and black cultural nationalism, these entertaining portrayals represented African American history as a joyful romp from the carefree jungles of Africa and the southern plantation to the modernist primitivist chic of the northern black metropolis.

Of course, it was this commodified tradition that Ellington and his band most regularly encountered while accompanying nightclub revues and playing in the pit of black musicals. By then, as Tucker observes, the "Dixie to Harlem" scenario had become a fixture in black stage shows, largely through the tremendous success of Lew Leslie's productions. The prologue of Leslie's 1924 revue *Dixie to Broadway* (written as a vehicle for Florence Mills) featured a number titled "Evolution of the Colored Race."<sup>73</sup> Although the prologue was presented as a narrative framework for the show, the historical scenario was more farcical than educational, a flimsy narrative premise for the "real" joys of such productions—the performances. The "Dixie to Harlem" narrative was also the basis of two

other Leslie productions, his famous *Blackbirds* of 1928 and *Rhapsody in Black* of 1931. The latter featured “a musical transition of the Negro from Africa to Harlem,” and the former commenced its historical journey “Way Down South” in the pastoral environs of a southern plantation, followed by a “Scene in Jungleland,” and later traveled in time and space to modern-day Harlem.<sup>74</sup> The main purpose of such “entertaining” images, however, was not to remember historical realities but to forget, displacing the uncomfortable racial–social realities onto nostalgic or parodic images of plantation life, chic “uptown” Africanisms, Harlem dandies, and erotic jungle skits.

That the “Scene in Jungleland” *followed* rather than *preceded* the plantation number is significant. That is, the confusion around the succession of scenes in *Blackbirds* of 1928 points up the larger geographic and temporal ambiguity of “jungle” scenes in the racial imagination. As an ideological artifact, the jungle was a highly portable construct: at once modern and archaic, urbane and primal, it could be transported freely in time and space between imaginary African lands, sultry southern backwaters, and smoky Harlem cabarets. And this ambiguity was a chief source for the primitivist fantasies of white audiences.

Whether intended to teach or entertain, theatrical representations of African American history shared a formal or narrative vocabulary marked by an episodic, visual–spatial frame, one that emphasized mimesis and performance. This type of framing permitted very little narrative or discursive space to interpret events. What distinguished Ellington’s treatment of this commodified narrative from its predecessors, however, lies in his ability to transform the narrative’s minstrelized frames through a modernist refashioning as an essentially personal, mytho-poetic journey. The simplicity of jungle-plantation-modern-metropole narrative in *BBB* appears not so much as an unproblematic “progress,” as it does a piling-up or layering of experiences; thus the continuity of African themes—the nonlinear “re-rooting” of the jungle—complicates the evolutionary narrative of savage-to-citizen through exposing a kind of productive racialized tension between chronological and cyclical narrative frames. *BBB* historicizes these “scenes” of black identity; they become the sites for the recovery or restoration of history/narrative. This process resonates with Hortense Spillers’s arguments about the discursive nature of slavery in slave narratives, a process by which the site of slavery must be continually reinvented by and through readers/reading: “The collective and individual reinvention of the discourse of ‘slavery’ is, therefore, nothing other than an attempt to restore to a spatio-temporal object its eminent historicity, to evoke *person/persona* in the place of a ‘shady’ ideal.”<sup>75</sup>

Just as jungle style shed its stylizations in the 1930s to become an integral ingredient in the “Ellington effect,” so too we may think of *BBB* as a (further) liberation of both “jungle style” and the minstrelized representations of black identity and history it surrounded.

The roots of *BBB* in Ellington’s jungle-style/Cotton Club period were in fact inscribed in the design of the concert program for the original performance. The story of *BBB* was included in a larger story: a concert retrospective of Ellington’s career, a kind of revue of Ellingtonia. The first half of the concert began in the milieu of the Cotton Club with “Black and Tan Fantasy” and finished with the premiere of *BBB*, a musical route that itself is suggestive of the links between the conventions Ellington drew upon to fashion the program of *BBB* and those featured in nightclub revues he encountered at the Cotton Club. Yet where Ellington’s formal and stylistic fusions and juxtapositions were celebrated in the three-minute form of a jungle-style classic such as “Black and Tan Fantasy,” they were faulted as “formless” in his extended work. In his review for *Down Beat*, Mike Levin complained: “Duke has a habit of shifting tempos with solo instruments, and throwing recaps right smack on top of a developing theme. . . . The abrupt shifts from loud to soft and back again with no shading . . . made it all but impossible to detect the various ideas moving in the score.”<sup>76</sup> It would be easy enough to dismiss such a response as simply a case of critical misunderstanding, yet stripped of its negative interpretive lens (“Duke has a habit”), Levin’s statements—as well as those of other critical notices by Paul Bowles and John Hammond—pay witness to the disorienting, indeed disturbing effect of *BBB* at the level of form: its shifting tempi and movements between metered and nonmetered passages, its rapid transitions and cross-cutting between solo sections and unison passages, and its layering of thematic material. A reference to this type of formal practice or concept is disclosed in a passage from Ellington’s autograph script that identifies a poetics of extreme and abrupt transitions as a defining characteristic of black music: “American Negro Music . . . goes to Fantastic Extremes – Joy + Sorrow . . . and makes the Transition unbelievably Quick.”<sup>77</sup> Strikingly, this passage comes soon after a section in which Ellington links the emergence of syncopated rhythmic sensibility to the social ruptures and violence of slavery. Read in this context, Ellington invites us to hear the many abrupt formal transitions and rapid shifts in tempi as a reflection of social and historical ruptures.

Perhaps the most jarring of all such moments comes in the final climactic return of the themes and scenes from *Black* at the end of *Beige*. The large-scale formal trajectory of *BBB* is one of increasingly episodic, fragmentary forms, culminating in the highly panoramic structure of *Beige*.



Specifically, *Beige* consists almost entirely of continuous juxtapositions of short, rapidly changing episodes and highly variegated tempi. In fact, with the exception of the dramatic finale in which Ellington brings back the “Come Sunday” and “Work Song” themes from *Black*, there is almost no repetition of material in *Beige* (which lasted some fourteen minutes in the Carnegie Hall performance).

As the counterpart to Ellington’s own time, *Beige* takes the shape of autobiography. In the poem, the shift to modernity/autobiography in *Beige* is accompanied by a distinct shift in point of view. Ellington’s “voice” is no longer mediated through the figure of Boola who, after *Brown*, is notably absent from the text; rather, it is as if Ellington were speaking directly to the reader. In *Beige*, this sense of the autobiographical takes on the guise of a musical memoir. A rapid cut away from the exaggerated “jungle theme” that opens *Beige*—a satirical evocation of the primitivist noise of “hotcha” Harlem—to the relaxed sounds of stride piano brings a particularly memoiristic moment. Here Ellington performs a short piano solo that quotes a tune he wrote as a teenager, “Bitches Ball” (the program notes describe this self-borrowing as bringing the listener “closer to [the] Negro metropolis”). As the movement proceeds, a melodic inversion of the “jungle theme” forms the basis for a contrasting swinging, sophisticated waltz theme that supports Harold Baker’s trumpet solo.<sup>78</sup> Ellington trades in the frenzied distortions of jungle style for an urban jazz waltz meant to depict the high-rise pleasures and “dicty” environs of the Harlem black elite—a Sugar Hill Penthouse. Thus there is not just one but several inversions—formal, stylistic, and metaphorical; for the sweet, lilting but driving tempo of the waltz theme sounds the ethos of racial uplift, a “striving for a better life” and “the Negro bent on education,” as Ellington described it.

The conclusion of the “Sugar Hill Penthouse” scene is announced in the form of what Priestley and Cohen aptly describe as an “everyone-on-the-stage-for-the finale” fanfare.<sup>79</sup> Church bells soon introduce a telescoped reprise of “Come Sunday” played by Hodges with a muted trumpet, responding serenely. After an extended ensemble passage dominated by trombones and baritone, a trombone chorus sounds a final “amen.” This meditative moment is, however, picked up and expanded by the piano until it erupts into a buoyant, patriotic grand finale in which the principal thematic material from *Black* (“Work Song” and “Come Sunday”) is recapitulated and combined. It is an odd sort of recapitulation, for the highly panoramic recapitulation of *Black*’s principal thematic material arrives not as a point of resolution that provides a sense of control, subsuming the intense formal and stylistic “difference” of the work, but rather emerges as a final temporal rupture, as if to suggest the unfinished

historical business of black emancipation. Indeed, Ellington explicitly expresses this message in the final passage of the typescript:

Yes, Harlem!  
 Land of valiant youth,  
 You've wiped the make-up from your face,  
 And shed your borrowed spangles,  
 You've donned the uniform of truth,  
 And hid the hurt that dangles  
 In heart and mind. And one by one  
 You've set your shoulders straight  
 To meet each challenge and to *wait*  
 Till justice unto you is done!<sup>80</sup>

### **“Yes, Harlem!”**

By way of conclusion, we call attention to the rhetoric of “waiting” in the final stanza of Ellington’s narrative poem. Michael Hanchard has written about the specifically racial issues of “waiting” in discourses of Afro-modernism. Central to his argument is the claim that racism, inequality, and injustice “visited on African and African-descended populations have often been understood temporally, as impositions on human time.” Hanchard explores the rhetoric of waiting in black diasporic cultural, intellectual, and political discourse as manifestations of this “temporal inequality,” what he calls, after philosopher Charles W. Mills, the “racial time” of waiting.<sup>81</sup> As he observes, “temporal displacement of racial time (defined as the inequalities of temporality that result from power asymmetries) leaves subjugated populations in the eyes of their masters as only able to mimic. . . . They could either ‘catch up’ with the West by assuming certain practices and behaviors, or forever look across a civilizational chasm.”<sup>82</sup>

By attending to “the temporal displacement of racial time,” Hanchard underscores a central paradox in claiming both modernity and blackness for artists such as Ellington. Indeed, as we have argued, this paradox of racial time in black modernism is made manifest in the musical and narrative programs of *BBB*. Through its successive themes, its restless progression of transitions and modulations, and its sudden changes in tempi and meter, Ellington sought to “parallel” the monumental movements, migrations, and ruptures in racial time and space that have characterized African American historical consciousness. In blurring the boundaries between myth and history or memory and history, Ellington’s narrative underscores the epistemological problems of “history” for peoples

whose voices and experiences have been erased (or repressed) from official white histories.

Though the narrative of Southern bondage to Northern freedom inspired countless African American artists (and art works), Ellington's program did so in a way that resonated with the increasingly militant political milieu of the early 1940s, a time in which the "temporal inequalities" of American history were a prevalent theme in the black public sphere. Writing in the radical journal in *The Negro Quarterly* in 1942, Richard Wright declared:

Standing now at the apex of the twentieth century, we look back over the road we have traveled, and now we see that three hundred years in the history of our lives are equivalent to two thousand years in the history of the lives of whites! The many historical phases which whites have traversed voluntarily and gradually during the course of Western Civilization we black folk have traversed through swift compulsion. . . . Our history and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America. What we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America is.<sup>83</sup>

Not unlike Wright's image, the "swift compulsion" of black historical experience in *BBB* propels its subjects toward the present, a journey that ends with the promise, but not the fulfillment, of equality and citizenship—that moment is deferred to an unspecified future time. After its January 1943 premiere, *BBB* met with much the same fate: Ellington would never again perform the work in its entirety. For his second Carnegie Hall concert on 11 December 1943, Ellington played only two excerpts from *Brown*, or, as he put it, "a very short sketch from *Brown*." During his introductory comments that evening, Ellington wryly proclaimed, "Our program tonight is not a very heavy one, as usual, of course [laughs], but we are sincere about it. And we think that we have many of our good friends who are sincere about the things they do *even though they* [the musical works] *are short*."<sup>84</sup>

Far from being trivial, however, in addition to playing excerpts from *Brown*, the concert included the premiere of a new black nationalist concert work, *New World A-Comin'*. Although it was considerably shorter than *BBB*, lasting some fifteen minutes, its message addressed the profound shifts in understandings of race, nation, and citizenship during the war years. In the final passage of his book by the same name, Roi Ottley laid out the stakes of the war thusly: "The Negro's cause in America is the barometer of democracy. If it falls here, it falls everywhere. . . . America stands today as a symbol of freedom! The loss of this symbol will mean the

loss of hope for white and black alike. . . . To this extent, it may be called a 'People's War'—for . . . a new world is a-coming with the sweep and fury of the Resurrection."<sup>85</sup>

Viewed in this context, even the two excerpts Ellington selected from *Brown*, "West Indian Influence" and "The Lighter Attitude," held pointed significance: the first commemorates the (widely unacknowledged) participation of black soldiers in the Spanish-American War, and the second represents the mood of joy and optimism among young African Americans at the moment of Emancipation. Both statements—Ottley's and Ellington's—are examples of the internationalist orientation and universalist claims of much black cultural production during the early 1940s, what historian Nikhil Pal Singh calls a perspective of "black worldliness."

Singh's notion of "black worldliness" resonates with what Michael Denning and others have called the "national internationalism" of the Popular Front social movement—a commitment to antifascism abroad and social democratic politics at home, with antiracism and worker's rights as the key causes. The centrality of black history, culture, and music in and for Popular Front visions of a progressive national body politic is emphatically raised in Wright's notion of African American history and "present being" as "a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America." Ellington also intended his narrative of nation to hold up such a mirror—that is, to confront the Enlightenment rhetoric of American freedom and democracy with the history of slavery and segregation. Yet, as we have shown, the diverse programmatic and musical forms in and through which Ellington "mirrored" this relational history are themselves a sonic record of what Wright imagined as the "swift compulsion" of the racial temporality of African American historical experience.<sup>86</sup> Swift compulsion demands new temporal forms and ways of imaging and linking program and music. Ellington's approach to programmatic expression in *Black, Brown and Beige* reflects a fluid, dynamic, and improvisatory form of music-narrative relations, and, by extension, a concept of a musical program as a kind of malleable blueprint or set of associative meanings that can—like historical imagination itself—be transported, reframed, and transformed.

### Notes

Lisa Barg is an assistant professor of musicology at McGill University's Schulich School of Music. Her work on race and modernism during the interwar years has appeared in *American Music* and *Journal of the Society of American Music*. Her current research focuses on gender, sexuality, and collaboration in jazz, and she is working on a book tentatively titled, *Queering Jazz History: Billy Strayhorn and Midcentury Jazz*.  
E-mail: [lisa.barg@mcgill.ca](mailto:lisa.barg@mcgill.ca).

Walter van de Leur is professor of jazz and improvised music at the University of Amsterdam and the Conservatory of Amsterdam. His research focuses on the critical reading of archival jazz sources and he published widely on the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. He is the author of *Jazz Behind the Dikes: Vijftientig jaar schrijven over jazz in Nederland* (2009) and of *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (2002). He is the guest editor of the Duke Ellington Special Edition of *Jazz Perspectives* (2012) and editor-in-chief for the *NL Real Book*, an ongoing publication series of jazz compositions from the Netherlands. E-mail: [wvandeleur@planet.nl](mailto:wvandeleur@planet.nl).

1. Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Literary Ellington," in *Uptown Conversation: New Jazz Studies*, ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 331.
2. Leonard Feather, program notes to Duke Ellington's 1948 Carnegie Hall Concert, cited in Andrew Homzy, liner notes (7–8), *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, November 13, 1948*, Vintage Jazz Classics VJC-1024/25-2 (1991), CD.
3. All autograph scores referred to are in the Duke Ellington Collection (hereafter DEC) at the Archives Center of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Washington, DC.
4. Duke Ellington 1944, spoken introduction, issued on Duke Ellington, *The Perfume Suite: The Duke Ellington Carnegie Hall Concerts, December 1944*, Prestige CD 2PCD-24073-2 (1991).
5. For a more detailed description of provenance of the works that comprise *The Perfume Suite*, see Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93–94.
6. On this point, our approach bypasses traditional critical concerns such as determining whether or not Ellington's later reduced presentations of *Black, Brown and Beige* represent a more advanced or "core" version of his ideas or some kind of compromised version born of failure and possibly commercial pressures. See David Schiff's article in this issue.
7. Scott DeVeaux, "Black, Brown and Beige and Its Critics," *Black Music Research Journal* 13 (Fall 1993): 93–94.
8. Langston Hughes, "The Duke Plays for Russia," *Chicago Defender*, 6 February 1943, 14. As Kevin Gaines has argued, this erasure of the antiracist thrust of BBB also haunts contemporary canonizing narratives of Ellington that depoliticize Ellington's "own formulations of his antiracist creative project." Kevin Gaines, "Duke Ellington, *Black, Brown, and Beige*, and the Cultural Politics of Race," in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 600–601.
9. Gaines, "Duke Ellington" passim.
10. Harvey Cohen explains that the elaborate promotional materials for the concert (put out by the William Morris Agency) stressed Ellington's status as an "artist who merged highbrow and popular sensibilities." Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America*, 207–98.
11. Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press 1989), 149–50.
12. John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 140–99; Mark Tucker,

“The Genesis of *Black, Brown and Beige*,” *Black Music Research Journal* 13 (Fall 1993). See also David Schiff’s interpretive reading of form and program in *BBB*, in his book *The Ellington Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 216–31. On Afro-modernism, jazz and black music, see, for example, Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Jeffrey Magee, “Kinds of Blue: Miles Davis, Afro-Modernism, and the Blues,” *Jazz Perspectives* 1 (2007): 5–27.

13. Tucker, “The Genesis,” 72.

14. Tucker, “The Genesis,” 71–72.

15. Tucker, “The Genesis,” 71–72. Howland’s focus is on connections between the revue forms and “racial uplift” program of *BBB* and contemporaneous black and white entertainment stagings of the Africa-to-Dixie-to-Harlem program topic. See, for example, Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 110–17, 135–36.

16. Tucker, “The Genesis,” 71–72.

17. Other pertinent musical models include the jazz concert work, the genre most famously pioneered by Paul Whiteman in his highly influential experiments in “symphonic jazz,” most notably the 1924 Aeolian Hall concert which included the premiere of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. Yet Ellington’s forays into “symphonic jazz” arguably owed less to Whiteman’s example (although Whiteman was an important influence) than to African American composers such as James Reese Europe, W. C. Handy, and Will Marion Cook, whose concert programs of “syncopated” music predated Whiteman’s experiments by nearly a decade. See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, *passim*.

18. Mark Tucker, “The Renaissance Education of Duke Ellington,” in *Black Music and the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 112.

19. Harvey Cohen makes a compelling, if brief, comparison of *BBB* with Langston Hughes’s 1937 agitprop play, *Don’t You Want to Be Free?* See Cohen, *Duke Ellington’s America*, 233.

20. Gaines, “Duke Ellington,” 595.

21. Emphasis added. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 318.

22. Duke Ellington, “The Duke Steps Out,” 1931, reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 49.

23. Ellington, “The Duke Steps Out,” *Rhythm*, March 1931, repr. in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 49–50 (*italics in original*).

24. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 270.

25. Florence Zunsler, “‘Opera Must Die,’ Says Galli-Curci! Long Live the Blues!” *New York Evening Graphic Magazine*, orig. 27 December 1930, reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 45.

26. Ellington, “The Duke Steps Out,” 50.

27. Quoted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 98. Remarkably, no fifth part is mentioned.

28. From *Variety*, 10 July 1934, cited in Klaus Stratemann, *Duke Ellington, Day by Day and Film by Film* (Copenhagen: JazzMedia Aps, 1992), 115.
29. Barry Ulanov, *Duke Ellington* (1946; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 205–6. See also *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 116n3, for further references to the gestation of his opera.
30. Ulanov, *Duke Ellington*, 206.
31. Irving Kolodin, program notes for “Duke Ellington and His Orchestra: Twentieth Anniversary Concert, Carnegie Hall, January 23,” 1943, reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 161–65.
32. Kolodin, program note.
33. For an overview of recordings and performances of BBB, see Sjef Hoefsmit, “Chronology of Ellington’s Recordings and Performances of *Black, Brown and Beige*, 1943–1973,” *Black Music Research Journal* 13 (Fall 1993): 161–73.
34. Duke Ellington, *Live at Carnegie Hall, December 11, 1943*, Storyville 1038341 (2002), CD; also cited in Andrew Homzy, “*Black, Brown and Beige* in Duke Ellington’s Repertoire,” *Black Music Research Journal* 13 (Fall 1993): 89.
35. From *Variety*, June 1943, cited in Graham Lock, *Blutopia: Visions of the Future and Revisions of the Past in the Work of Sun Ra, Duke Ellington, and Anthony Braxton* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 110.
36. Mike Levin, “Duke Fuses Classical and Jazz!,” *Down Beat*, 15 February 1943, reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 167. An unpublished copyist’s score of BBB—in the hand of Thomas Waley—can be found in the DEC.
37. According to Timmie Rosenkrantz, the text for this project may have been co-authored by Inez Cavanaugh who worked as Ellington secretary during this period; he credits her as the principal author of what he describes as a one-hundred-page text written in blank verse. Timmie Rosenkrantz, *Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European Baron’s Memoir, 1934–1969*, trans. and ed. Fradley Hamilton Garner (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 156. Cavanaugh also contributed a summary of the program for the deluxe RCA-Victor album releases of the shortened versions of BBB.
38. Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943); John Steinbeck, *Sweet Thursday* (1954; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1996). Although Ellington’s later *A Drum Is a Woman*, the short *A Portrait of Ella Fitzgerald*, and *My People* each use connecting narrative, there is no known underlying written text that informs the music.
39. See, for instance, Edwards, “The Literary Ellington,” 346–47.
40. From *Down Beat*, October 1938, 2, repr. in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 116n3.
41. Duke Ellington, untitled, unpublished autograph (hereafter *Script*), n.d. [1938?], 21, in the DEC.
42. Alfred Frankenstein, “‘Hot Is Something about a Tree,’ Says the Duke,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 November 1941.
43. Ellington, “*Black, Brown and Beige* by Duke Ellington,” unpublished typescript (hereafter *Typescript*), n.d., in the DEC, I:1–4; I:4–20; I:10–20; I:4–10.

44. *Typescript*, II:11.
45. *Typescript*, III:6.
46. Quoted in Tucker, "The Genesis," 75.
47. Tucker, "The Genesis," 76–83. However, as Tucker has pointed out, the Boola sketch also contains ideas that would serve as a primary source for nearly all of Ellington's subsequent extended works on themes pertaining to black history and culture, including *New World A-Comin'*, *Harlem, My People*, *A Drum Is a Woman*, *Deep South Suite*, and the sacred concerts (79).
48. Various commentators have charted these parallels, most notably Schuller, *Swing Era*, 72–74; Stratemann, *Duke Ellington Day by Day*, 121–23; Tucker, "The Genesis," 73–74; and Brian Priestley and Alan Cohen, "Black, Brown and Beige, 1974–1975," reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 186–87. For a detailed account of the music, screenplay, and production of *Symphony in Black*, see Stratemann, *Duke Ellington Day by Day*, 119–28.
49. The quotations taken from Ellington's autograph follow his orthography, most notably his characteristic mix of upper and lower case. Ellington at times uses music notation in his autograph, such as so-called single measure repeats to indicate repeated words, which are written out here between square brackets.
50. Ellington, *Script*, 1.
51. Ellington, *Typescript*, I:2.
52. Howard Taubman, "The 'Duke' Invades Carnegie Hall," *The New York Times Magazine*, 17 January 1943, 10, 30, reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 160.
53. Ellington, *Typescript*, I:8.
54. Schuller, *Swing Era*, 72–74.
55. Priestley and Cohen, "Black, Brown and Beige, 1974–1975," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 189; Tucker, "The Genesis," 78.
56. The "Hymn of Sorrow" scene in the film did not accurately reflect Ellington's original conception for this episode. See Krin Gabbard, *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 174.
57. In terms of thematic parallels, Priestley and Cohen have noted that a descending gesture from the main theme of "Hymn" returns in "Come Sunday." Priestley and Cohen, "Black, Brown and Beige," 187.
58. Priestley and Cohen, "Black, Brown and Beige," 190. Yet as Priestley and Cohen observe, this allusion is set in the much slower tempo of Ellington's 1937 version of the tune. For a detailed analysis of "East St. Louis Toodle-O," see Michael Baumgartner, "Duke Ellington's 'East St. Louis Toodle-O' Revisited," *Jazz Perspectives* 6 (2012): 29–56.
59. Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress*, 106.
60. Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress*, 106.
61. Ellington, *Script*, 13. The only direct public acknowledgment of this idea that we are aware of is found in Boyer's memorable *New Yorker* profile of Ellington from 1946 where the author comments on Ellington's clandestine writing of poetry "in which he advances



the thesis that the rhythm of jazz has been beaten into the Negro race by three centuries of oppression. The four beats to a bar in jazz are also found, he maintains in verse, in the Negro pulse." Richard O. Boyer, "The Hot Bach," part 3, *The New Yorker*, 8 July 1944, quoted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 238.

62. Tucker, "The Genesis," 77–78. See also Schiff, *The Ellington Century*, 216–20.
63. Wolfram Knauer, "'Simulated Improvisation,' in Duke Ellington's *Black, Brown and Beige*," in *The Black Perspective in Music* 18 (1990): 20–38. Ellington's use of "simulated improvisation" is also considered in Maurice Peress, "My Life with *Black, Brown and Beige*," *Black Music Research Journal* 13 (Fall 1993): 158–60.
64. Ellington, *Script*, 14–15.
65. Priestley and Cohen, "*Black, Brown and Beige*," 190.
66. Melvin Dixon, "The Black Writer's Use of Memory," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, ed. Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 20. The term *lieux de mémoire* was coined by the French historian Pierre Nora. See his "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24, reprinted in Fabre and O'Meally, *History and Memory*, 284–300.
67. Dixon, "The Black Writer's Use of Memory," 20–21. For a more extended treatment of these issues, see Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
68. Dixon, "The Black Writer's Use of Memory," 22–23.
69. Quoted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 156.
70. Tucker, "The Genesis," 133.
71. Tucker, "The Genesis," 133–34.
72. See, for example, "The Propaganda of History," chapter 17 in W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), 716–28.
73. Tucker, "The Genesis," 70.
74. Tucker, "The Genesis," 70.
75. Hortense Spillers, "Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed," in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. MacDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 28–29.
76. Levin, "Duke Fuses Classical and Jazz!," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 168. It is worth noting that these types of formal tensions and juxtapositions would not seem out of place in discussions of modernist concert music and in that context would likely be valued as positive manifestations of formal experimentation.
77. Ellington, *Script*, 12.
78. Peress, "My Life with *Black, Brown and Beige*," 158–59.
79. Priestley and Cohen, "*Black, Brown and Beige*," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, 201.
80. Emphasis added. *Typescript*, DEC, 16.

81. Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora" *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 252. Interestingly, Maurice Peress in "My Life with *Black, Brown and Beige*" likens Ellington's rhetoric of waiting at the end of *Beige* to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "How long, O Lord?" (158).
82. Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," 252.
83. Richard Wright, "Men in the Making," *The Negro Quarterly: A Review of Negro Life and Culture* 1 (Summer 1942): 5–6.
84. Italics added. Quoted in Eddie Lambert, *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide*, ed. Dan Morgenstern and Edward Berger (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 31.
85. Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 347. Also see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 266–80; and Schiff, *The Ellington Century*, 230–32.
86. Wright, "Men in the Making," 49–50.