UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Didn't It Rain?: Religiosity, Swingin' Jazz, and Black Community Formations in the Pacific Northwest (1844 – 1967)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Robert Zachary Williams

Committee in charge:

Professor Dayo F. Gore, Chair
Professor Dennis R. Childs
Professor Kirstie Dorr
Professor Sara Clarke Kaplan
Professor Roshanak Kheshti

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The Dissertation of Robert Zachary Williams is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California San Diego

2019

DEDICATION

Shout Out to my family, my friends, my teachers, my coaches – all my peoples! I could not have made it without you and all of your support. I hope that you find bits of yourself in the pages that follow.

For my Ancestors. May my work be of some use to you.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DUWAMISH LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to acknowledge that my project engages with aspects of the geographic histories of the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People past and present. I honor with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish Tribe.

KUMEYAAY LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to acknowledge that the land on which I received my education at UCSD is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. I would like to pay respect to the citizens of the Kumeyaay Nation – past, present and future – and their continuing relationship to their ancestral lands.

VITA

2006 – 2011	Bachelor of Arts, Washington State University, Pullman
2011 – 2013	Master of Arts, University of California San Diego
2013 – 2019	Teaching Assistant, University of California San Diego
2017 – 2018	Associate-In Ethnic Studies, University of California San Diego
2011 – 2019	Doctor of Philosophy, University of California San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Didn't It Rain?: Religiosity, Swingin' Jazz, and Black Community Formations in the Pacific Northwest (1844 – 1967)

By

Robert Zachary Williams

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California San Diego, 2019

Professor Dayo F. Gore, Chair

My dissertation project, *Didn't It Rain?: Religiosity, Swingin' Jazz, and Black Community Formations in the Pacific Northwest (1844 – 1967)*, focuses on the ways in which the material conditions of anti-black racism, segregation, and exclusion affect the development of the Pacific Northwest from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth century. Furthermore I identify and examine the contributions of Black communities over time to the development of the Pacific Northwest, including the ways in which religion and jazz music have functioned to define freedom for Black communities and support community movements for freedom and equality. This project deploys an intersectional analysis, routed through political geography and historical materialism, which considers

the ways in which the logics of slavery affect the development of communal relationships with land in the Pacific Northwest within the prevailing contexts of Manifest Destiny and settler colonialism in the US. *Didn't It Rain* intervenes on the abstraction and normalization of the concept of 'private property' by engaging with the ways in which property is a racialized and gendered concept. At the same time, I am concerned with the ways in which Black communities have imagined and produce different relationships to land that exceed conceptions of private property due the material histories of chattel slavery.

Introduction to *Didn't It Rain?*: North by Northwest

Epigraph

Made it out the CD, LPs wit black 8s/ (made it) off'a Union where pills smack and stack cake/ (made it) off'a Cherry where they will clap and crack bake/ (made it) off'a Jackson unda' Deuce 8's that bag weight/
- Xyz(X), "Sorrows n' Hopes (Ghosts)"[1]

The processes of racial formation we encounter today, the racial projects large and small which structure U.S. society in so many ways, are merely the present-day outcomes of a complex historical evolution. The contemporary racial order remains transient.
- Michael Omi & Howard Winant[2]

the production of space is violent. we should honor black geographies precisely because [they] emerge from that violence *as* rebellion.
- Katherine McKittrick. *Twitter*; tweet 8/13/2015

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, *through* the way of the wilderness of the Red sea… And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light; to go by day and by night.
- *Exodus* 13: 17-22[3]

As a scholar it was never my purpose to exhaust the subject, only to suggest that it was there. – Cedric Robinson[4]

Emily Louise Williams (née Graham) and Robert Lee Williams – my nana and papa – migrated from Bucksport South Carolina in the 1950s, bringing our family out of the South to the Northwest. Both of my grandparents spoke of the Northwest as a kind of opportunity different from those that were available to them in the South. What that particular opportunity/ies was for each of them I do not know specifically. Both of my grandparents passed away in the last twelve months; my grandfather in late 2018 and my grandmother in early 2019. This process of loss and transition of my grandparents (to the

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[1] Xyz(X). "Ghosts (Sorrows 'n Hopes)." *SoundCloud*, 2014, soundcloud.com/xyz-x/ghosts-sorrows-n-
[2] Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*, Routledge, 1994, pp. 31.
[3] *Holy Bible: African American Jubilee Edition: King James Version*. American Bible Society, 1999, pp. 59 – 60.
[4] Robinson, Cedric J. Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition. The University of North Carolina Press, 2005, pp. 5.

afterlife, joining the Ancestors) has had many significant impacts on my life. The most relevant for this juncture is putting this dissertation into perspective and relief.

My grandmother joined First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in Seattle under Reverend C.D. Tolliver in 1956, the same year that a $100,000 building expansion was initiated in order to better serve the congregation's growing membership.[5] I began to think about the wide range of significant "firsts" for the black community in Washington State history witnessed by my grandmother in her time in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) since 1956: the first black woman pediatrician in the state of Washington – Dr. Blanche Sellers Lavizzo – who opened her practice in Seattle that same year of 1956 and would later help found Odessa Brown Children's Clinic; the first black women to serve on the Washington state legislature – Marjorie Edwina Pitter King – in 1965; the first black librarian at the University of Washington (UW) to head a departmental library – Guela Gayton Johnson – in 1969. My grandmother would become employed in the department of Architecture's office at UW the following year, 1970. As my nana told it, she was one of only "a handful of blacks [at UW] at that time," (Emily Williams); the first black woman to be elected to the Washington State House of Representatives – Peggy Joan Maxie – who served from 1970 to 1982; the first black person to be elected to a board of education anywhere in the state – Dorothy Hollingsworth – in Seattle in 1975; Seattle's first black mayor – Norm Rice – elected in 1989 (the first black mayor of a US city with an African American population compromising less than 10% of the total).[6] The list goes on.

[5] Seattle's black population increased exponentially following WWII, growing from 3,789 in 1940 to 26,901 in 1960 (Taylor 160).
[6] Washington State History Link. Online https://historylink.org

I do not construct this list of significant black firsts in order to celebrate racial progress and construct an imagined linear progression toward racial equality in Washington. On the contrary, it is truly astounding how durable and complete the exclusion of African Americans from manifold aspects of US social and political life remained long into the 20th century (and indeed into the 21st c. as well). Rather, the group of prominent black people that I have identified in the preceding paragraph points toward a more proper context for approaching the history of Washington and the PNW more broadly. My dissertation *Didn't It Rain?: Religiosity, Swingin' Jazz, and Black Community Formations in the Pacific Northwest (1844 – 1967)* demonstrates the centrality of black people, as well as anti-black racism such as exclusion and segregation, to the overall construction of Washington state over time. As indicated in the second epigraphic quote attributed to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, it became apparent to me that in order to put the 20th century PNW events experienced by my grandmother into proper contexts, a much deeper historical analysis was required. Indeed the beginnings of anti-blackness in the Pacific Northwest, as well as black people's collective and individual challenges to these circumstances date back to the beginning of US colonial expansion into the region beginning in the early 19th century. Therefore this dissertation investigates the development of the PNW region from 1844 through roughly 1967 in order to identify the ways in which processes of racial formation impacted the settlement of the region on behalf of the United States. Whereas notable treatments of race and inequality in the PNW have tended to focus on Black migration brought on by World War II economic demands and the subsequent civil rights period that follows,[7] *Didn't It*

[7] For example see *Seattle in Black and White* by Singler, Durning, Valentine, and Adams, 2011.

Rain? seeks to understand the long history of blackness in the PNW in order to demonstrate how black people and blackness itself played prominent rolls in the settlement and development of the region on behalf of the US.

Therefore *Didn't It Rain?* is concerned with looking for the place of black people and communities in the ongoing historic and geographic development of Washington State. I have identified First AME church as a significant location that focuses and grounds my investigations into the roles of race, gender, class, and inequality in the spatial elaboration of Seattle in particular and the Pacific Northwest region more broadly, and the ways in which black people forged a community in the early years of the state. Certain historic moments and events capture my interests including the early settlement of the Washington Territory by George Washington Bush in 1844, the founding of First AME church in Seattle in 1886, The Alaska Pacific Yukon Exhibition at University of Washington in 1909, and the elaboration of Seattle black jazz music and social clubs during the 1920s and 30s. These events index important moments in traditional Washington State history and are events through which I am able to identify an alternative reading of history by locating the significance of black people and anti-blackness in Northwest history. The events are also dynamic processes through which black responses to the material circumstances of anti-blackness contribute to the overall production of Washington over time.

While studies of anti-black racism and inequality in the PNW have tended to focus primarily on twentieth century events, the history of the western regions of North America that become California, Oregon, and Washington have also been written as if black people and blackness were absent from the development of place in the West.

However a brief engagement with the material history of the West proves this to be a fallacious assumption. As noted by William Lorenz Katz in *The Black West,*

> Slaves in the West carried on a vigorous battle against bondage and by the 1840s black women were challenging slavery in western courts. A slave known as Mary, brought to San Jose, California in 1846 by her owner, learned Mexican law prohibited bondage and immediately sued for her liberty. The court ruled in her favor and she became the first western slave to win her freedom through the legal system.[8]

The 1856 case of *Mason v. Smith* in which Bridgette "Biddy" Mason successfully won her freedom stands as another prominent California example of race and slavery in the West during the nineteenth century. Mason would later go on to help found First African Methodist Episcopal church in Los Angeles in 1872.[9]

Heading northward along the Pacific there are prominent instances of race and slavery in Oregon territory dating back to early 1850s. For example Katz explains, "In 1852 Robbin and Polly Holmes, who had arrived in Oregon as slaves in 1844, sued to gain possession of their three children. The master had promised the family liberty for helping him start a farm, freed the parents but kept the children. A judge decided the parents were right and the family was reunited."[10] Another example presented by Katz is an 1854 case in which "a daring Luteshia Carson, sued her Oregon master for 'back wages,' and though the case made the local papers, the jury failed to reach a verdict."[11] While all four examples that I have selected to present here would seem to be triumphant

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[8] Katz, William Loren. *The Black West: a Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States: with a New Introduction*. Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 93.

[9] Wagner, Tricia. "Bridget 'Biddy' Mason (1818-1891) • BlackPast." *BlackPast*, 22 July 2019, www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/mason-bridget-biddy-1818-1891/.

[10] Katz, William Loren. *The Black West: a Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States: with a New Introduction*. Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 93.

[11] Ibid.

stories of black freedom in the West, this dissertation will demonstrate the significance and persistence of anti-blackness in the Northwest from territorial formation in 1844 through urbanization and modernization in the first three decades of the twentieth century. While courts worked out whether or not slavery had a place in the West, the early territorial legislation passed in Oregon Territory, discussed at length in chapter one, demonstrates that black people themselves did not properly belong in the burgeoning American society developing in the PNW. The aim of this dissertation is neither to frame the Pacific Northwest as a bastion of freedom for black people, nor to understand racial formation in the PNW as exactly the same as other places in the US. Rather I am attempting to hold the tension between possibilities of freedom and unfreedom for black people in the West.

My dissertation *Didn't It Rain?* looks to the Pacific Northwest in order to ask questions about where and how to look for and find blackness. Pushing beyond traditional understandings of blackness and slavery as properly situated in the Southern context, this dissertation identifies the ways in which the systems established under chattel slavery spread west with the expanding US settler population. The concept of private property is a key aspect of both the US settler colonial project as well as systems of chattel slavery, and undergirds US expansion into the PNW. Therefore, the concept of private property is of much import for this project as evinced in the first chapter. *Didn't It Rain?* understands blackness as a concept and social identity category stemming from and shaped by the particular structures of chattel slavery and property in the US. Following Orlando Patterson I identify 'social death,' 'natal alienation,' and 'generalized dishonor' as three critical components stemming from slavery that shape definitions of

blackness in US society and that undergird black vulnerability to violence as well as proximity to premature death. Furthermore, the work of Sara Clarke Kaplan around the 1662 law *partus sequitur ventrem* and the significance of the 'black reproductive' in affecting meanings of blackness buttresses my conception of blackness as a concept fundamentally connected to systems of chattel slavery. In this way I understand "sexualized racial violence, reproduction, and reproductive labor as defining elements of African chattel slavery and subsequent forms of raced and gendered unfreedom,"[12] and identify these as the foundations from whence racial formation and anti-black racism partially spring in the Pacific Northwest. I extend readings of blackness westward geographically in order to conceptualize the roles played by black exclusion and anti-black practices in the settlement of the West. However, I also engage with the ways in which black people have contributed to the development of Washington through practices that challenge the arrangements of white supremacy. In this way, this dissertation extends scholarly works engaging with chattel slavery and the resistance of black people such as Stephanie M. H. Camp's *Closer to Freedom,* to the West Coast in order to understand the ways in which the settler colonial project of territorial occupation and possession was accomplished in large part through the development of interrelated concepts of race and private property. As demonstrated in chapter one, early definitions of private property in the Oregon Territory are articulated explicitly in relation to discourses of race and gender.

And while blackness definitely stems from the violently repressive, coercive, and dehumanizing structures of chattel slavery, this is not *all* that blackness is. Black people

[12] Sara Clarke Kaplan. "Love and Violence/Maternity and Death: Black Feminism and the Politics of Reading (Un)representability."*Black Women, Gender Families* 1, no. 1 (2007): 94-124. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacwomegendfami.1.1.0094.

themselves have developed culture and community through the concept of blackness that extends far beyond the dominant standards imposed by capitalism and white supremacy in the US. Rather, through cultural formations such as religion and music, deploying improvisation as a core sensibility, black people have elaborated means of searching for elusive notions of freedom, humanity, love, and life that challenge dominant structures of unfreedom and death in the US. The work of James H. Cone in *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation,* as well as Angela Y. Davis in *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism,* and Stephanie M. H. Camp's *Closer to Freedom*, demonstrate the ways in which black challenges to exclusion and repression have contributed to the elaboration of US society over time.

To help focus this claim about challenges to racial hierarchies engaged by black people I follow the development of First AME church in Seattle as among other formations, a complex spiritual and political organization constituted through and constitutive of blackness and community. Furthermore, "First Church" (as it is colloquially referred to by church members) is identified as a significant place precisely because of the ways in which the church locates a complex site, indeed an enduring institution, in/through which black people in Seattle (re)constitute and contest the spatial arrangements of Washington (as state) as they come to be predicated on practices such as segregation (residential, economic, and educational), exploitation, and the violent policing of place. Toward this end, seeking to grapple with the ways in which black praise practices at First AME come to constitute complex and often-competing constructions of blackness in place demands an explicit focus on the ways in which the

contested nature of space presents (perhaps infinite) opportunities[13] for black people to challenge logics of antiblackness. Worded differently, part of the pressing (political) arguments of this dissertation is that blackness itself comes to be a significant and meaningful construction for black people precisely as it is produced by communities in/as place.[14] Black people and communities are not passive recipients of blackness as it comes from the violent structures of chattel slavery that hinge in part on the ability of blackness to render people non/sub human. Rather, black people also produce alternative understandings and elaborations of blackness in place that directly challenge the structural and representational practices of quotidian antiblackness. Turning to the quote from Katherine McKittrick found in the epigraph, black geographies constitute a rebellion in so far as they contest contingent colonial spatial arrangements predicated on white supremacy, imaginations of racial purity, and attendant material practices of segregation. In chapter four, I forward the concept of a 'politics of transfiguration,' as a means of theorizing the ways in which both Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Jimi Hendrix use the electric guitar a means of challenging anti-black racism. I choose to focus on both black religion and First AME church in chapter two and Seattle's black jazz music scene in chapter three in order to locate and identify examples of the ways in which cultural production functioned as a means for constructing alternative definitions of blackness by the local black community in the PNW. Furthermore, both the church and Seattle's jazz scene identify the way in which Seattle's black community constructed itself in relation

[13] Doreen Massey – "Aspatial Globalisation," in *For Space*

[14] In this dissertation I use the term "black community formations" to identify the ways in which community is a concept and construction produced by black people in place through the formation of cultural productions such as music and religion, but also the ways in which the formation of cultural products themselves – as geographic acts – constitute black community. Thus, the formations of black cultural productions such as jazz music, index the ways in which black people have challenged segregation, exclusion, and repression in the Pacific Northwest.

to a larger circuits of national black cultural sensibilities resulting from the manifold challenges presented by anti-black racism and unfreedom across the US.

Exegesis – a "critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture"[15] – emerges as a significant theoretical and methodological framework that structures my alternative readings of Northwest history that I have outlined thus far. I trace my engagements with and early lessons in exegesis back to my time worshiping at First AME church in Seattle. Grounding the concept in material elaborations of the Black church expands the concept of exegesis into a broader significance that locates the function of critical interpretations of texts, in this case biblical scriptures but also primary and secondary archival source materials as well as historical narratives, as processes/practices that challenges material practices of anti-blackness.

As mentioned above, in Chapter one I stage a conversation between branches of US chattel slavery studies and histories of the PNW in part to construct 'chattel slavery' as a meaningful analytic for addressing the continued significance and specificity of anti-blackness in structuring the PNW as a region. Here I begin my dissertation by identifying particular emergent practices and structures of chattel slavery that are relevant to the development of Oregon Territory, Washington Territory (1853) and Washington State (1889). In order to do this I read for spatial outcomes located in and framed by legal texts by deploying chattel slavery as a meaningful analytic and material process that structures and undergirds both legal and geographic productions in the US west as they relate to racial hierarchies and white supremacy.

[15] *Oxford English Dictionary* iPhone Application accessed October 11, 2019.

Toward this end, the Oregon Black Codes of 1844 and the subsequent Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 are significant legal objects of study that focus my theoretical engagements with the political geographies of the PNW in the first chapter. A close reading of the 1844 Black Codes helps to delineate relevant aspects of practices of anti-blackness in the northwest. Furthermore, pairing this reading with a historical narrative that follows George Washington Bush helps to think about the ways in which the Oregon Black Codes of 1844 affected the territorial development of the lands of indigenous peoples of the PNW into settler 'property,' as well as the movements of black people themselves (across space and over time) within these prevailing colonial contexts. In this way I disrupt prevailing narratives of the Pacific Northwest as location absent of racism and identify the ways in which black people were relationally situated within the histories of empire and capitalist market expansion in the US.

Chapter two engages with the history of First AME church in Seattle in order to follow the developments racial formation and racism in the Pacific Northwest in the closing years of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century. While Washington State never had strict segregation laws on the books, anti-blackness and segregation were persistent patterns across the PNW and undergird the regional development and incorporation of Washington into the US national body. First AME church founded in 1883 is an important sight for identifying the ways in which the black community in Washington established itself and contributed to the development of Washington Territory into statehood. This dissertation pays particular attention to the ways in which black religion and religiosity, including musical praise and exegesis, function as tools for producing community, identity, and challenging racism as well connecting Settles black

community to the larger national black community. In this second chapter I look at significant secondary source materials in order to trace the ways in which the church developed from a small group of determined people meeting inside the homes of local black residents to a substantial church housed in a sanctuary constructed on the corner of 14th Avenue and East Pine Street. I pair tracing this historical development with readings of W.E.B. Du Bois's experiences with black praise worship depicted in *The Souls of Black Folk* and James Baldwin's short story "The Outing," in order to frame how the development of Seattle's First AME relates to the possibilities and limitations contained in Black religious challenges to practices of anti-blackness in the US.

Chapter three concentrates on the development of black Seattle's jazz traditions and coinciding trends of urbanization and segregation during the first three decades of the twentieth century. While chapter two discusses the construction of black culture and community in relation to the church, chapter three takes similar concepts of music and religiosity as core aspects of cultural elaboration, but looks at the (secular) public space of black clubs and alcohol consumption during prohibition. By identifying prominent figures in Seattle's black jazz scene such as Oscar Holden, Evelyn Bundy, and Joe Darensbourg I seek to identify the ways in which a distinct jazz sound and aesthetic emerges to challenge the specific forms of anti-blackness, such as segregation and repression, that prevail across the PNW. A key aspect of the chapter is an effort to contribute to the body of work on West Coast Jazz traditions by extending the area of focus northward all the way to the Canadian border.

Chapter four stages an encounter with the guitar playing practices of Jimi Hendrix and Sister Rosetta Tharpe in order to conceptualize music as an example of Paul Gilroy

calls a "politics of transfiguration."[16] Specifically, I listen to the opening moments of Hendrix's performance of "Foxy Lady," in London in the mid 1960s in order think about two related processes: the ways in which the electric guitar evolves out of the black church and specifically black women's usage of the instrument as means of praise, leadership, and perhaps redress; and how Jimi Hendrix's international migrations allow for speculation on the ways in which black Seattle's musical sensibilities developed during Seattle's jazz era circulate internationally as a means of challenging race and racism. In this way chapter four functions as a kind of a case study; using the framing of the differential PNW black history developed in the first three chapters, I engage with Jimi Hendrix and speculate on a different way of listening to his guitar playing in a transnational context. By drawing a guitar-based genealogical connection between Hendrix and Sister Rosetta Tharpe I focus on the ways in which the development of techniques associated with rock and roll demonstrate the genre's foundation in the practices of black women and black religiosity. In this way, this chapter re-imagines potential origins of Hendrix's musical sensibilities expressed in the song "Foxy Lady," and reads for alternative meanings in performance.

[16] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 37.

Chapter 1 – 'Moments' in the Long Settlement of Washington State: Slavery, Racial Formation, and the Territorialization of Land in the Pacific Northwest

Epigraph

Although Washington Territory never had the laws restricting Aframerican settlement, in contrast to Oregon's restrictive laws, the merest hint of an influx of Aframericans into the Puget Sound area [in 1865] was enough to cause a controversy, or to set off a political storm…The racial views of the white population in the territory were basically anti-black.
- Esther Hall Mumford, *Seattle's Black Victorians 1852-1901*[17]

The South was the stronghold of racism. In the white migrations through history from the South to the North and West, racism was carried to poison the rest of the nation. Prejudice, discrimination and bigotry had been intricately imbedded in all institutions of Southern life, political, social and economic.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Where Are We?"[18]

We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises.
- Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*.[19]

A thousand ways to get killed 'n I'm still livin'/
out my grave I spiel writtens, a reel villain/
no hands, they still feel him my grill glisten/
Go Ham, they steel grippin' to seal distance/
In those lands where ill visions reveal sickness/
No-man meets hu-man, watch 'em deal wit 'em/
- Xyz(X) "the kILL," (2014)[20]

Intro – Property, Civil Society, Racial Formation, and Relationships to Land in the Pacific Northwest

This chapter engages with the history of settlement in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) – the region that becomes present-day Oregon State and Washington State – on behalf of the United States' nation-building processes during the mid nineteenth century. During this time 'Settlement' was a significant strategy employed by the US in the PNW in order to nullify challenges from other colonial claims on the region including Russian,

[17] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 20.
[18] King, Martin Luther. *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community*. Beacon Press, 2010, pp. 20.
[19] Marx, Karl, et al. *The Marx - Engles Reader*. Princeton, 1972, pp. 155.
[20] Xyz(X) the4thKind. "The kILL." *SoundCloud*, 2014, www.soundcloud.com/xyz-x/the-kill-im-goin-in. This chapter is conceptually paired with the song "The kILL."

Spanish, and especially British. According to Derek Hayes in *Historical Atlas of the Pacific Northwest* "The United States government knew that its claims [to the PNW region] were weak historically, compared to those of the British. They therefore encouraged immigration to the disputed territory with the idea that actual occupation would be hard to counter…During the 1840s, many settlers migrated to Oregon, although they generally tended to settle south of the Columbia, in the Willamette Valley." Retrospectively, the ideology of Manifest Destiny was as material as it was moral; if US settlers occupied the lands of the PNW, the logic went, all other forms of colonial territorial claim, such as the Spanish claim argued through historic mappings of Pacific Coastlines, or British market claims established through fur trapping in the region, could be rendered moot. Within this process of 'settlement-as-strategy,' the history of Washington State is bound up with, yet distinct from other parts of the region, most notably Oregon. As demonstrated by the epigraphic quote attributed to Esther Hall Mumford above, histories of the region that tend to focus on anti-blackness as an Oregonian phenomenon have the side effect of rendering anti-blackness an epiphenomenal occurrence north of the Columbia River. Therefore, this chapter looks back to the early days of the Oregon Territory in order to reconsider the history of settlement in the region, and the place of anti-blackness and black people within this process. In particular, this chapter looks at the Oregon Black Codes of 1844, the Donation Land Act of 1850, and the Westward movement of George Washington Bush along the Oregon Trail in 1843 in order to locate the significance of anti-blackness, private property, and market expansion to the transformations of the lands of indigenous

peoples such as the Duwamish Tribe into Oregon Territory and ultimately Washington State.

Private property is a concept of primary significance for understanding the settler colonial process in the US West. In chapter two of *The Legacy of Conquest* Patricia Nelson Limerick explains, "If Hollywood wanted to capture the emotional center of Western history, its movies would be about real estate…Western history is a story structured by the drawing of lines and the marking of borders."[21] A reading of the earliest legislative actions in the Pacific Northwest region, the Oregon Black Codes of 1844 and late the Donation Land Act of 1850, demonstrate the veracity of Limerick's claim, but also extend her conception of property by linking the establishment of territorial lines and borders, including private property, to the lines and boarders drawn amongst and between races under the logics of colonization, 'racial formation,'[22] and the ideology white supremacy.[23]

In June of 1844 the Provisional Government in the Oregon Territory passed the Oregon Black Codes, which proscribed the presence of Black people in the Northwestern territory claimed by the US. According to Elizabeth McLagan "Oregon passed exclusion laws against African Americans twice during the 1840s, considered another law in the

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[21] Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *The Legacy of Conquest: the Unbroken Past of the American West*. W.W. Norton, 2006, pp. 55.

[22] In the seminal monograph *Racial Formation in the United States* Michael Omi and Howard Winant offer the following definition of 'racial formation,' "We define *racial formation* as the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed. Our attempt to elaborate a theory of racial formation will proceed in two steps. First, we argue that racial formation is a process of historically situated *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized. Next we link racial formation to the evolution of hegemony, the way in which society is organized and ruled…From a racial formation perspective, race is both a matter of social structure and cultural representation," (Omi & Winant 55 – 56).

[23] White supremacy is a complex ideology that changes overtime. However for this dissertation white supremacy can be thought of as an artificial racial hierarchy, based on false notions of racial purity, in which those identified as white are placed at the top, and those identified as black are placed at the bottom.

1850s, and in 1857 approved an exclusion clause as part of its constitution."[24] In this way the anxiety regarding the presence of African Americans was an ever-present feeling in the early Oregon Territory, prompting waves of legislation. Additionally, that a black exclusion law was drafted into the state constitution of Oregon demonstrates that blackness and black people were central to the elaboration of place in Oregon. According to Quintard Taylor, "The Pacific Northwest was often described by land promoters and politicians as 'the white man's country'."[25] In order for US settlers to claim the lands of the indigenous people of the PNW and occupy them as their own, the (re)production of a new social order on top of that land, with a central emphasis on private property, was of primary significance. The successive waves of anti-black legislation in Oregon Territory demonstrate that racial formation and the social hierarchies of white supremacy established in chattel slavery are foundational to the elaboration of settler society in the PNW. An explanation of 'Civil society' as a concept and analytical tool is instructive here.

According to Tom Bottomore, civil society in its broadest sense "involves the relationship between individuals, and between individuals and the community, a view of society as organized or not, the delineation of public and private."[26] Where Bottomore draws our attention to the key distinction between public and private spaces, Walter Johnson's work in the third chapter of *Soul By Soul* extends this formulation of civil society to the specific US contexts by identifying the ways in which slavery undergirds the formation of whiteness. Johnson explains, "One of the may miraculous things a slave

[24] McLagan, Elizabeth. "The Black Laws of Oregon, 1844-1857 • BlackPast." *BlackPast*, Black Past, 21 Aug. 2019, www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/black-laws-oregon-1844-1857/.
[25] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 23.
[26] Bottomore, Tom. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Blackwell, 2006, pp. 84.

could do was to make a household white…By liberating them from work their slaveholding neighbors did not do, slave ownership promised nonslaveholding white women as full a transformation as it did their husbands and fathers." [27] In the liberation from labor, a slave held the potential for whiteness and upward mobility in US society founded on white supremacy. It is precisely this strange ability to facilitate transitions in racial formation and movements into whiteness that renders blackness an available resource for the newly migrated white settler society to establish new kinds of social relations, including the racialized concept of private property, in the lands of the PNW.

In the first chapter of *The Transit of Empire* Jodi A. Byrd contextualizes connections between race, cartography, and productions of the 'frontier' in the US West by citing the ways in which it became a location of "transformation, possibility, and mapping," for Frederick Jackson Turner and countless other white/anglo settlers.[28] Byrd further emphasizes the violence of the 'frontier' as a place of becoming:

> The maps of settler colonialism were always already proliferative, the nation-state's boarders were always perforated, and the U.S. lines of flight across the treaties with indigenous nations were always rhizomatic and fluid rather than hierarchical, linear, and coherent, located not just in the nation-state but within individual settlers and arrivants who saw indigenous lands as profit, fortune, and equality.[29]

In noting the sheer proliferation of colonial maps Byrd demonstrates that the supposed fixity of cartography is undercut by its methods and process as a (un)disciplined form of knowledge. Furthermore, the fluidity and fluctuation of maps indicates something about the relative processes by which the lands of indigenous peoples were violently disposed

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[27] Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 90.
[28] Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Univ of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 13.
[29] Ibid.

over time; not only through the US nation-state's establishment and repetitive violation of treaties with various indigenous communities which include massacre as legitimate policy, but also through the desires and imaginations of individual Anglo-settlers established through racial borders and boundaries. It is precisely racial formation and the attendant practices of anti-blackness that created the PNW as a place of becoming for emigrant Euro-American populations. Importantly, Byrd indicates that in terms of history, desires, and imaginations not all peoples who migrated to and through the 'frontier,' were the same, prompting Byrd to deploy the relative categories of 'settler,' and 'arrivant.'[30] In relation to Bush and his place in the territories of the West, it is my contention here that neither 'arrivant,' nor 'equality,' are sufficiently nuanced categories and therefore are not able to engage the centrality of anti-blackness and chattel slavery in structuring geographic productions of white supremacy and empire in the 'frontier' of the Pacific Northwest or the spatialized responses of black communities in that place. Pinned between the anti-blackness in Missouri which prompted Bush's westward migration, and the wholesale exclusion of black people in the Oregon Territory, Bush was tangled in the histories of US empire, slavery, war, and capitalist market expansion. Emma Belle Bush, a descendent of George Washington Bush, provides an illuminating perspective. In a 1960 interview Belle Bush explains, "I am not sure why George came west in 1844. As far as I know, he was having a hard time in Missouri. People would not sell him anything

[30] Byrd defines arrivant as "a term I borrow from African Carribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite to signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe…" (Byrd xix).

because they said he was a Negro. That was probably the reason why he wanted to leave there."[31]

Returning to the Oregon black exclusion laws it is evident that Oregon was unique in its foundation, for while both Indiana and Illinois passed forms of black exclusion laws, Oregon was the only free state admitted into the Union with a constitutional black exclusion clause.[32] The Provisional Government of Oregon, established in 1844 by newly emigrated US settlers, immediately set about establishing its territorial sovereignty by passing the first Black Codes of 1844 which "included a ban on slavery and a requirement that slaveowners free their slaves. African Americans who remained in Oregon after their freedom was granted, however, would be whiplashed and expelled."[33] Missourian Peter Burnett, who had arrived in Oregon Territory in 1843, originally introduced the law excluding African Americans.[34] And while the law would later be repealed in 1845, it was this first iteration of black exclusion that awaited George Washington Bush as he finished the homestretch of the Oregon Trail in 1844. A subsequent black exclusion law was passed in 1849, this one allowing African Americans already present to stay, but prohibiting the immigration of any new black people to the Oregon Territory.[35] In this way, the regulation of race and immigration form the *primary* ways in which the region was settled on the behalf of the expanding US settler state, with the logics of anti-blackness and racial exclusion undergirding the development of white

[31] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, 1994.
[32] McLagan, Elizabeth. "The Black Laws of Oregon, 1844-1857 • BlackPast." *BlackPast*, Black Past, 21 Aug. 2019.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, 1994.
[35] McLagan, Elizabeth. "The Black Laws of Oregon, 1844-1857 • BlackPast." *BlackPast*, Black Past, 21 Aug. 2019.

settler civil society. The proscription of black presence offers a material explanation for the supposed absence of black communities in the PNW, but also demonstrates that even in absence, black people and the regulation of 'blackness' make up central aspects of the US's northwest territory. Furthermore, by tracing the Black Exclusion law itself as well as the legal and social precedents of the spectacle of public whipping-as-punishment to various slave codes across the US south, the geographic narratives that discursively produce the West as 'free'(soil) in contrast to the South as 'slave' are partially disrupted and restructured. Finally, the public-ness of whipping as punishment set forth in the black exclusion law is intended to discipline not only the apprehended black body that, according to Katherine McKittrick, is "seemingly in place by being out of place,"[36] but also to discipline any potential black persons who may be found out of place in Oregon in the future. In this way Black Exclusion produces 'blackness' as something that is simultaneous located in, yet continuously exceeding the corporeal body. Looking at the epigraph to this chapter, in the quote attributed to Esther Hall Mumford, the anxieties among white settler communities around a perceived 'blackening' of the region due to an influx of black peoples into the Puget Sound is an explicitly geographic example of the dual properties of 'blackness' as both embodied and excessive.

In June of 1844 as the Provisional Government in the Oregon Territory adopted the Black Exclusion Law George Washington Bush, a Black man born in Pennsylvania in 1790, was in transit along the Oregon Trail.[37] A year latter Bush, along with thirty white settlers including his white wife Isabella and their five sons, established the first

[36] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. xv.
[37] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.

permanent settlement in the territory north of the Columbia River during the fall of 1845.[38] As a black man, George Washington Bush's prominence in early Oregon Territory partially disrupts normative narratives of 'How the West was Won,' – from John Wayne to Snoop Dogg – and challenges the effectiveness of legally proscribing black people. But this is not a recuperative move to include Bush within the pantheon of great US settlers. Rather, turning to the history of George Washington Bush - the contentions around his land claim, and the subsequent proscription of his political participation - cites the ways in which spatio-temporal projects of anti-black racism emerge as key sites through which white settler communities articulate social control over the lands of indigenous peoples and communities in the 'frontier' region that comes to be recognized as Washington State.

News of the proposed Black Exclusion law made its way eastward down the Oregon Trail, and it is evident that Bush was quite aware of the legislation. According to John Minton, author of "Reminiscences of Experiences on the Oregon Trail in 1844," and Bush's contemporary Oregon Trail party member,

> …but it was not in the nature of things the he [Bush] should be permitted to forget his color. As we went along together, he riding a mule and I on foot, he led the conversation to this subject [Black Exclusion]. He told me he should watch, when we got to Oregon, what usage was awarded to people of color, and if he could not have a free man's rights he would seek the protection of the Mexican Government in California or New Mexico. He said there were few in that train he would say as much to as he had just said to me.[39]

Indeed, upon arriving at the Dalles in Oregon Territory he was not awarded the rights of a free man. Having emigrated West to escape forms of anti-blackness including economic

[38] Ibid.

[39] Katz, William Loren. *The Black West: a Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States: with a New Introduction*. Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 76.

and political exclusions – the excesses of blackness and chattel slavery that affect the social status of black people whether freeborn, emancipated or enslaved – Bush encountered new forms of racism remixed and articulated in westward transit. Furthermore, that Bush would not confide in many members of wagon train indicates that anti-black sentiments were fairly common if not pervasive among the prospective white settler population. However, according to historian William Loren Katz, there were a few in the group including Minton and Irish immigrant Michael T. Simmons who, "determined that the Bush family avoid this [Black Exclusion] law…decided they would not settle anyplace where Bush might suffer because of his color."[40] Though it is not known precisely why Bush decided to forgo protection of the Mexican government and instead to strike out north of the Columbia River, it is likely that the group's decision to stay together and search for other places to inhabit affected Bush's resolution.

After wintering in the Dalles, the Bush-Simmons party left Fort Vancouver in the spring of 1845 bound for Fort Nisqually in the Puget Sound region.[41] For Bush this seems to have been a move into the relative freedom of a territorially disputed region not governed by the Black Exclusion laws of the white settler population in the Willamette valley to the south. But for the US government relying on 'settlement-as-strategy' to challenge British territorial claims in the PNW, Bush's northward migration was an important venture. Indeed the PNW was strategically important in the national political sphere as James Polk was elected president in 1844 by campaigning under the slogan "54-40 or Fight." According to historian Darrell Millner the slogan reflected, "a strong

[40] Katz, William Loren. *The Black West: a Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States: with a New Introduction*. Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 75.
[41] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.

desire by many Americans to acquire all of the Oregon Territory…"[42] As one of the first and most successful migrants in the settlement of the Puget Sound region – by 1855 Bush's farm had grown to 640 acres, and supported the families of many white settlers on what is now known as Bush Prairie near Tumwater[43] – Bush's internal migration north of the Colombia River motivated by anti-blackness was fundamental in the US settler colonial project in the PNW. In fact, Bush played such an essential role in the settlement of Washington State and the establishment of the current US-Canadian boarder that it could be argued that the state moniker should properly be interpreted as homage to George Washington Bush himself, rather than the first president of the United States. However, the erasure of Bush's participation as well as the foundational position of black people in the process of western settlement more broadly, continue to obfuscate this understanding. Importantly, this is not a recuperative move wherein identifying the contributions of black people fixes the archive and alleviates the tensions and violence of US settler occupation of indigenous land. Rather, by identifying the foundations of PNW settler society in racial projects of private property, white supremacy, slavery, and anti-blackness I seek to highlight the material movement of black subjects within the tangle of US racism, war, empire, and capitalist market expansion.

As ensuing waves of white US settlers followed Bush northward, the US territorial and legislative control followed. In 1850 Congress passed the Donation Land Act, legislation that would subsequently endanger Bush's 600-plus acre Tumwater farm. Explaining the outcomes of the law Darrell Millner writes,

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Katz, William Loren. *The Black West: a Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States: with a New Introduction*. Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp. 75.

> the Donation Land Act that was passed for the Oregon Territory in 1850…stipulated that only whites (males and married females) and "American half-breed Indians" were eligible to receive land in Oregon. Bush was so well liked and respected by his white fellow settlers that 55 of them asked the new Washington territorial legislature on March 1, 1854, to petition the United States Congress to exempt Bush from these provisions to the act…[44]

Congress passed the law, which granted settlers the right to claim un-surveyed lands, ostensibly to create a landed group of armed white settlers capable of repelling attacks by indigenous communities who had been living in the PNW since before the last Ice Age.[45] The impact of the law was to structure the concept of 'private property' in explicitly racial terms, but also to structure the racial formation of whiteness and blackness through fixed Manichean relationships to land. For although Bush's knowledge, experience, determination, luck, and labor scratched out the successful farm at Tumwater, the land could only be recognized as his through *exception* at the behest of white desires. In an act that simultaneously reified the power of white settlers locally and US federal sovereign power in the Oregon Territory "the United States Congress passed a special act granting Bush his land claim" on February 10, 1855.[46] This connects to Jodi Byrd's argument that the US settler state proceeds in large part through the lives and labors of black peoples[47] - my contention here is that while the settler colonial state is fundamental dependent on black communities, black labor, and anti-blackness for it elaboration, none of the power or accumulated surplus value produced in circuits of colonialism therein

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[44] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.

[45] For example according to the Duwamish Tribe's website, "The Duwamish people have been in th Seattle/Greater King County area since time immemorial. Our stories, such as 'North Wind, South Wind', tell of the last Ice Age, and an Ice Weir breaking over the Duwamish River." <https://www.duwamishtribe.org/history> accessed November 20, 2019.

[46] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.

[47] See Byrd, *Transit Of Empire* "introduction."

become available to those same black people and communities who provide the conditions of possibility for the ongoing reproduction of the US as state. In this way, black land proves to be an aberration informing the differential relationships that black communities form to land in the PNW.

In the epigraphic quote above Karl Marx explains a key difference between historical materialism and German philosophy that is germane to the present discussion of race and private property in the PNW. Whereas racial formation and the ideology of white supremacy structure the development of civil society in Oregon territory, these ideological processes are given meaning and significance by the real life-processes of violence that construct land as private property. In the article "Whiteness as Property," legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris demonstrates the ways in which the significance of whiteness is given meaning expressly through relationships of property. Using an anecdote to illustrate key elements of the concept of 'whiteness as property' Harris explains,

> It was given to my grandmother that being white automatically ensured higher economic returns in the short term, as well as greater economic, political, and social security in the long run. Becoming white meant gaining access to a whole set of public and private privileges that materially and permanently guaranteed basic subsistence needs and, therefore, survival. Becoming white increased the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one's life rather than being the object of others' domination. My grandmother's story illustrates the valorization of whiteness as treasured property in a society structured on racial caste.[48]

Reading the Donation Land Act of 1850 in the contexts of Harris analysis of power and privilege in US society I am seeking to emphasize the ways that the concept of private property in the PNW is expressly racialized, and develops through the material

[48] Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 106, no. 8, June 1993, pp. 1713.

dispossession of the lands of indigenous peoples, as well as the objectified bodies of enslaved African people in the US.

George Washington Bush, Blackness, and Transitions in Washington State Territory

On March 2, 1853 Washington became an independent territory separate from Oregon with the mighty Colombia River forming the boundary between the two.[49] By the spring of 1854 Washington Territory had organized a provisional government and had began to take legislative action such as petitioning Congress on behalf of George Washington Bush's land claim.[50] However, this does not mean that the logics of racism and anti-blackness were absent from Washington's development. As noted by Quintard Taylor, "…nineteenth-century Seattle was not without antiblack prejudice. Local white attitudes were a curious mixture of condescension and opprobrium."[51] As I have demonstrated above, Bush navigated the early structures of anti-blackness in Oregon territory and would continue to do so in Washington. In order to understand Bush's relative positioning upon arrival in the Puget Sound area in 1845, and the subsequent development of Washington Territory, I would like to further engage histories of chattel slavery in the US and the ways in which the structures relate to productions of blackness in the US.

[49] Washington State Historical Society, online. <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/support/heritage/wa125/> Accessed, November 18, 2019.
[50] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.
[51] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 22.

In 1790 Bush was born in Pennsylvania to an Irish mother (employed as a maid in the house of a merchant in Philadelphia) and a West Indian father.[52] Additionally, records show that Bush was literate due to his early childhood spent in Pennsylvania being educated under Quaker influence.[53] Within these contexts, it appears that Bush was born and raised as a free black man in the northeastern US. As a young man Bush moved from Pennsylvania to Tennessee and then again to Illinois at the age of twenty. It was in Illinois that Bush started the cattle business that would ultimately finance his family's migrations west by northwest.[54] In this way, Bush's geographic mobility as well as business activities seem to be aspects that distinguish him as a historical actor. However, Bush was also dogged anti-black discrimination no matter where these activities took him in the US. Systems of chattel slavery and ideologies developed therein are foundational to definitions of 'blackness,' and even the experiences of free black people such as Bush. Therefore any 'freedom,' that might have been available to Bush was always relative (to formally/legally enslaved black people), contingent (on white desires), and in its final iteration illusory.[55] In this way, Bush navigated the spatial excesses of blackness and slavery that rendered even freeborn black people outside the scope of citizenship or protections of the law. The work of Orlando Patterson in *Slavery and Social Death* provides a foundational structure for defining blackness throughout this dissertation project *Didn't It Rain?* and explains the relative positioning of Bush outside rights and protects of US society.

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[52] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.
[53] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.
[54] ibid.
[55] See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* page 7. Also Orlando Patterson' discussion of the cultural problem of 'freedom'/manumission on page 211.

Orlando Patterson's description of the three 'constitutive elements of slavery,' contextualize chattel slavery as a particular structural formation in the US that produces the definitions of blackness that inform settler colonialism in the PNW and locate Bush's identity in relation to limited freedom within the region. In the introduction to *Slavery and Social Death* Patterson discusses the first constituent element, 'social death,' by explaining that Slavery is unique "both in the extremity of power involved…and in the coercion that brought the relation into being and sustained it."[56] That violence and coercion together constitute 'social death,' as "The condition of slavery did not absolve or erase the prospect of death [posed by capture during war or as punishment for transgression]. Slavery was…a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in [her/]his powerlessness…Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of [her/]his master, [s]he became a social nonperson."[57] Thus, slavery structures blackness as an ever-present death sentence that is only conditionally suspended insofar as the black subject acquiesced under white demands. In relation to 'social death' Bush's positioning as 'free' in the West is illusory indeed as his ongoing presence in the region and subsequent land recognition were fundamentally predicated on the recognition of the immediate white settler community and his ability to garner their support.

The second constitutive element of slavery, 'Natal alienation,' is significant in relation to Bush's nominal freedom. For Patterson 'natal alienation,' encompasses "a move to the cultural aspect of the relation, to that aspect of the relation that rests on authority. This is achieved…[by defining the slave] as a socially dead person. Alienated

[56] Orlando, Patterson. *Slavery & Social Death: a Comparative Study*. Harvard Univ Press, 1985, pp. 1.
[57] Ibid, pp. 4.

from all 'rights' or claims of birth [s]he ceased to belong in [her/]his own right to any legitimate social order."[58] Furthermore, Patterson identifies that 'natal alienation' is central to the ways in which slavery becomes a transgenerational phenomenon, as the status is passed on from mother to child.[59] For example the state of Virginia passed the law *partus sequiter ventrem* in 1662. Applying the concept of 'natal alienation,' to Bush's particular experiences gives contexts to some of the resources that conveyed him to the PNW in 1845. Bush's mother was white (though Irish) and free.[60] Coupled with his birth and early childhood spent in Pennsylvania under Quaker tutelage, Bush's matrilineal proximity to whiteness in the contexts of abolitionist communities emerges as a fundamental 'moment,'[61] in Bush's ability to articulate a liminal and ephemeral freedom in the PNW.

Finally, Patterson distinguishes the third constitutive element of slavery, 'Generalized Dishonor,' – the psychological aspect of power under slavery – in the following way, "The peculiar character of violence and the natal alienation of the slave generates the third constitutive element of slavery: the fact that slaves were always persons who have been dishonored in a generalized way."[62] It is important to note that for Patterson 'generalized dishonor,' emerges as an outcome of the first two constitutive elements, and as such seems to function as an indication of the profound (social and

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[58] Orlando, Patterson. *Slavery & Social Death: a Comparative Study*. Harvard Univ Press, 1985, pp. 4.
[59] Ibid., pp 7.
[60] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.
[61] According to Robert C. Tucker in *The Marx-Engles Reader*, "'Moment' is a technical term in Hegelian philosophy meaning a vital element of thought. The term is used to stress that thought is a process, and thus that elements in a system of thought are also phases in a movement," (Tucker 69).
[62] Orlando, Patterson. *Slavery & Social Death: a Comparative Study*. Harvard Univ Press, 1985, pp. 8.

material) significance of a system that produces people of African and Aframerican[63] descent as chattel. And while the concept of 'generalized dishonor' has many implications indeed, in the context of my work I would like to think about how it is a central aspect of the ways that blackness is being elaborated as a specifically racial category in binary opposition to whiteness – especially significant in contexts like the PNW where whiteness and/as property function to imagine a national body of citizens that is distinguishable and exceptional. In this way, blackness and the presence of people of African descent in the PNW function to demonstrate everything that the new US nation emerging in the contexts of the 'frontier' could never be. The Black Exclusion Law (1844) and the Donation Land Act (1850) serve as two examples of this connection between 'generalized dishonor' and the discursive production of blackness as a racial category in the West.

To this point I have been arguing that the constitutive elements of chattel slavery and attendant practices of anti-blackness structure Bush's relationship to land in the Puget Sound region as it comes to be recognized as Washington. By following Bush I have identified a monumental contradiction at the core of geographies of white supremacy in the US 'frontier' (indeed, the production of the US as a discrete nation, occupying finite territory); anti-black racism and the violent exclusion of black peoples from the right to be in place are fundamental aspects of the ways in which Washington becomes incorporated within the larger nation, yet the territory could not have been successfully settled without black people and their labor to establish that place. Furthermore, it is precisely that anti-black racism, and particularly its repetitive spatial articulations, that

[63] A term used by Esther Hall Mumford to delineate black people of African descent born in the US, yet excluded from the nation due to slavery and anti-blackness.

brought Bush to the northern-most part of the Oregon Territory in the first place thereby realizing Congress's strategy of 'settlement-as-strategy.' To the extent that this contradiction is cognitively subsumed and concealed under the logics of Eurocentric rational space as geography, race, gender, and sexuality come to be key processes that resolve Bush's place in Washington Territory – especially in relation to the concept of the white family unit. Worded differently, not only was Bush's matrilineal proximity to whiteness a significant social aspect that allowed him to accumulate the necessary capital to migrate west and settle the Tumwater region, but so too was the fact that his wife Isabella was white as were their children, at least phenotypically, in terms of communal recognition.[64]

Given the structuring of blackness identified above as both embodied and excessive, this functionally white family unit worked to ease the collective minds of white settlers in the region. Evidence for this claim is found in Millner's essay when he quotes prominent early settler and folk-historian John Minton as saying, "'Bush was a mulatto, but had means, and also a white woman for a wife and a family of five [white] children. Not many men of color left a slave state so well-to-do and so generally respected'."[65] The construction of Bush as being "well-to-do," and "so generally respected," points to what I mean when I argue that the functionally white family functions to cognitively conceal the extent to which Bush's blackness posed a particular kind of problem for the settlement of the Northwest region. Whereas in other places in the nation, for example the slave state of Missouri (the place from whence Bush departed

[64] For example William Loren Katz notes that Bush's son William Owen Bush was elected to the Washington State House in 1889 (Katz 74).
[65] Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." *Columbia Magazine*, Winter, 1994.

west), reproductive acts of white women and black men (whether imagined or actual) posed a particular kind of problem for racial formation in the context of *partus sequitur ventrem* (among other legal/social formations), in the northwest Bush's position as a 'Mulatto' (sic) married to a white woman allowed his family unit to be incorporated within the broader logics of US settler colonialism which must reproduce not only its sovereignty over the land of various indigenous communities, but also must reproduce a white settler population on that land.[66] In this way, Bush's ability to secure land on behalf of the US nation coupled with a nullification of the threat posed by the reproduction of black families and the social relations therein evinced by Bush's ostensibly white family, functioned to conscript Bush's struggle for "freedom in place," within the logics of US white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-black racism.[67]

Finally, turning to *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) reveals some of the ways in which blackness functions through an extension of 'generalized dishonor,' as structured by the systems of chattel slavery. Whereas Bush was a freeborn black person (relative to enslaved communities of black people across the US south), I would like to strengthen the connection between the heretofore-developed discussion around slavery, and his relative social position. In 1857, just three years after Congress recognized the Washington Territorial government's claim on behalf of Bush's, the Supreme Court handed down the now infamous *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision in which the court ruled that whether free or enslaved, black people were fundamentally (read racially) unfit for citizenship and therefore had no rights that were bound to be protected under the US

[66] See Lorenzo Veracini in the Introduction to *The Settler Colonial Present*.
[67] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. x.

Constitution.[68] What this decision demonstrates in the context of this argument is that as an extension of the systems of chattel slavery, and particularly as an extension of Patterson's third constitutive element of 'general dishonor,' blackness functions to produce 'black' as a racial category that transcends the spatial and temporal boundaries of formal emancipation.

In order to contextualize the aberration of Bush's familial 'whiteness' more needs to be said about the ways in which race and slavery come to be affected through and effected by productions of gender and space. Toward this end I will turn to Hortense J. Spillers in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in order to initiate our conversation around space, gender, and slavery by thinking about the position of the "flesh," as a material limit to social imagination through discourse. Blackness as a racial concept proceeding from slavery is bound up in the body as opposed to the "flesh" with the delineation between the two concepts proceeding through discourse and relative productions of freedom. To quote Spillers at length:

> But I would make a distinction in this case between 'body' and 'flesh' and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions. In that sense, before the 'body' there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies – some of them female – out of West African communities in concert with the African 'middleman,' we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the *flesh*, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of the 'flesh' as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-appartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped' overboard.[69]

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[68] The ruling stated that "A free negro of the African race, whose ancestors were brought to this country and sold as slaves, is not a "citizen" within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States." See http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/60/393

[69] Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, pp. 67.

The distinction drawn by Spillers in the opening line of the quote points to the ways in which blackness functions to evince who is free to own and who is free to be owned, not only in individual terms, but collectively in terms of the production of relational subjectivities. This delineation can be found in the Donation Land Act of 1850. Because blackness is mapped onto the 'flesh,' of black women and men, blackness discursively produces the body through gender and violence in ways that appear 'natural'. In this way, the 'flesh' is a primary narrative; it is primary not only in the sense that it precedes the body and the attendant discourses of gender that produce it as such, but also in its relation to the material violences of slavery as they come to be enacted on the corporeal being of captured African peoples. The violence of slavery is not only located in the whipping, the searing, the ripping, and the marking of the African body as technologies which produce the slave through subjection. Rather, there is a primary and profound form of violence that is constituted as the material violences of slavery come to be discursively justified prior to the moment of their enactment through "…the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet."[70] In relation to the whipping-as-punishment set forth in Oregon's Black Exclusion Law, the discourse of blackness as non-human functioned as an extant condition of possibility that simultaneous justified the violence of punishment and rendered it available as a technology for producing white social structures as part of the territorialization of the PNW.

Conclusion

[70] Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1987, pp. 67.

As demonstrated in the epigraphic quote attributed to Esther Hall Mumford at the beginning of this chapter, the views of settlers in Washington Territory was basically anti-black. According to Quintard Taylor, "While Washington Territory never passed antiblack legislation, the early white settlers nonetheless sought to limit the black population."[71] Limit has the double meaning of both limiting options such as jobs available to black people, and also limiting the overall number of black people in Washington. Tolerance seems first and foremost predicated on a limited black population. An 1879 *Daily Intelligencer* newspaper article discouraged black people, in mass exodus from across the US south, from settling in Washington. The editorial cautioned, "There is room for only a limited number of colored people here…Overstep that limit and there comes a clash in which the colored man must suffer. The experience of the Chinese on this coast indicates that beyond question…And so we fear it would be with the negro."[72] In the second chapter I explore the ways in which the black community in Seattle elaborated itself in these specific conditions by engaging with the foundation of First African Methodist Episcopal Church in the early 1880s.

[71] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 22.
[72] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 22.

Chapter 2 – The AME Church in the Northwest: Black Religiosity and Exodus in the Wilderness of the Pacific

Epigraph

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, *through* the way of the wilderness of the Red sea… And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light; to go by day and by night. – *Exodus* 13: 17-22[73]

The idea of the black Atlantic, then, requires a different conception of tradition. In light of the claim that all black cultures result from the crossroads that is the diasporic experience, tradition can no longer function within the narrow boundaries of a specific territory. – Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.[74]

To interpret the religious significance of that spiritual for the black community, "academic" tools are note enough. The interpreter must *feel* the Spirit; that is, one must feel one's way into the power of black music, responding both to its rhythm and the faith in experience it affirms. – James H. Cone[75]

PART I: The AME Connection and the Pacific Northwest

While black people in the Pacific Northwest have practiced many different forms of religious and spiritual traditions over time, the preeminence of the Black church both locally and nationally warrants further investigation. Within the historical development of Seattle's black community two Black churches in particular occupy significant positions – Mount Zion Baptist Church located on 19th avenue and Madison street, and First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church located on 14th avenue between Pike and Pine. Both churches have served Seattle's black community since the 1880s. Furthermore each institution has participated in the development of black communities throughout the Pacific Northwest by forging links with black communities in places like Portland OR, Spokane WA, and Roslyn WA. This chapter looks specifically at the founding of First AME church in 1886 and the subsequent development of the church as

[73] *Holy Bible: African American Jubilee Edition: King James Version*. American Bible Society, 1999, pp. 59 – 60.
[74] Glaude, Eddie S. *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 103.
[75] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 4.

it participated in the elaboration of Seattle and the PNW more broadly following the US Civil War. I focus on First AME because the AME church has a long and storied history in the US. Formed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1794 the church was particularly successful spreading rapidly across the US nation, establishing churches on the West Coast in places like Los Angeles (1872), San Diego (1887), and Seattle (1886). It is the labor of the AME church to establish its self across scale that is of particular interest for me in this chapter as I seek to explore the ways in which Black Seattle established itself in relation to larger trends and patterns across the US nation. If as Sallie A. Marston argues "scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents,"[76] then the labor done by the black community in Seattle to establish First AME in the structural contexts of segregation, exclusion, and repression demonstrates their active participation in the elaboration of Seattle as place.

I am also interested in engaging with First AME because I grew up worshiping there with the congregation in the 1990s and 2000s. Turning to the quote attributed to James H. Cone in the epigraph above, the scholar of black theology provides an important framing for my engagement with black religiosity. There is something about black religious practices that exceeds objectivity and "academic" modes of analysis and interpretation. Cone's claim that one must feel their way into black music in order to interpret its significance constructs black cultural practice including music and religion as processes that must be approached and understood on terms established by the church

[76] Marston, Sallie A. "The Social Construction of Scale." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 2, no. 24, 2000, pp. 220.

and black community themselves. My experiences with worship in the sanctuary of First church, the feelings and meanings of being black in Seattle produced through praise and exegesis, guide the questions that I pursue in this chapter and influence the interpretations that I draw from the data that I identify.

For the purposes of this chapter the development of First AME is situated within the prevailing historical contexts of ongoing Settler colonial social structures based on race and racial hierarchies after the Civil War and the closing of the frontier, the intensification and sedimentation of racial boundaries including residential segregation in Seattle, and the establishment of Seattle as a preeminent city in the larger territory of the Pacific Northwest.[77] This chapter argues that the development of black culture in Seattle as articulated in part through music, worship, and praise locates an example of community (communal) relationships to land that differ from, and in certain instances challenge, the relations established through the settler colonialism concept as 'private property.'

As noted above, the national body of the AME church began with the formation Bethel AME in Philadelphia Pennsylvania in 1794. The historic contexts that produced Bethel include segregation, exclusion, and the outright objection of White Christian congregations in Pennsylvania to the equal treatment of Black Christians in various protestant institutions. In "The Rise of African Churches in America," Will B. Gravely succinctly summarizes the events that prompted black people in Philadelphia to establish their own separate institutions of worship. According to Gravely, "the famous incident,

[77] Seattle was officially incorporated in 1869 and "In spite of its late start, [Seattle] was challenging Olympia for the lead in population. In 1872 the town formally claimed 2000 residents and 575 buildings…there were 57 two-story structures and 151 of one-and-a-half stories. With a tannery, a brick works, a shipyard, a blacksmith shop, and two sawmills inside the town, Seattle was the leading industrial community in the territory," (Morgan 67 – 68).

traditionally dated as November 1787, [occurred] when trustees from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia pulled several black members and local preachers from their knees during prayer at a public service."[78] Richard Allen, who would go on to become the Right Reverend Allen and the first presiding Bishop of the AME church in 1816, was among those so cruelly treated. At issue was the fact that black members had refused to sit in the gallery section located in back of the church, a place "set aside for their race," and that they refused to wait until white parishioners were done praying to kneel at the alter.[79]

While significant and egregious acts in and of themselves, these spectacular public examples of segregation and second-class status were but the quotidian manifestation of the larger abandonment of anti-slavery positions within US Protestantism following the Revolutionary War. In fact, "Between 1785 and 1818, three of the Protestant denominations within which African Churches were established [including Methodism] backed away from explicit opposition to slavery, both in the larger political order and in the disciplinary norms for membership and ordination."[80] As slavery worked its way further and further into the heart of the economy of the newly forming US nation, Protestant denominations became reluctant to challenge the social and economic systems that gave their institutions life. Of primary concern then is not the traditional theological debate over dogmatic or organizational differences in denominational formation but rather the compromise over slavery that characterizes mainstream US culture. In this way the subsequent formation of distinct black churches,

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[78] Gravely, Will B. "The Rise of African Churches in America (1786 – 1822)." *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, by Timothy Earl. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, Routledge, 1997, pp. 136.
[79] Ibid,, pp. 137.
[80] Ibid,, pp. 145.

whether North or South, demonstrates that slavery was a fundamental issue affecting adoption and adaption of Christianity by Black people whether enslaved, emancipated, or freeborn.

If the specific circumstances of slavery, segregation, and exclusion in the Northeast affected the foundation of the AME church as a national institution from whence First AME Seattle sprang, then the regional specificities of race, migration, segregation, and exclusion similarly affect the formation of African Methodism in the Pacific Northwest. In *Glimpses in Pioneer Life on Puget Sound* originally published in 1903 Reverend A. Atwood undertakes a broad survey of the history of the Methodist connection in the Pacific Northwest. In the final pages of this the volume Atwood contends that while differential treatment of Black people during worship services may have been a minimal factor influencing the founding of distinctly black churches in the Puget Sound, there existed no clear-cut segregation and exclusion as that represented by the events of St. George's of Philadelphia described above.[81] According to Atwood, the relative tolerance of black worshipers among predominantly white congregations in the PNW stemmed from the relatively small numbers of Black people present.[82] And while I read the telltale signs of the minimization of segregation and racial violence that is characteristic of many white narratives of social formation and stratification in the PNW[83] we are still want to ask: in the absence of strictly enforced segregation and exclusion such as Jim Crow, why did black people in Washington decide to form distinctly black denominational forms of Christianity? For they did so with great vigor at

[81] Atwood, A. *Glimpses in Pioneer Life on Puget Sound*. W.C. Cox, 1974, pp. 460.
[82] Ibid.
[83] As demonstrated in the first chapter of *Didn't It Rain?*, one cannot separate the demographic realities from the influence of anti-black legislation such as the Oregon Black Codes of 1844 that intended to limit black migration to and ongoing presence in the PNW region.

the close of the Nineteenth Century. The rest of this chapter, then, will explore the development of black Christianity and praise practices in Seattle by focusing on the distinct aspects of black religious formation, paying particular attention to the ways in which ideas of land and freedom function for black Christian communities in the PNW. In this way, this chapter highlights alternative possibilities and relationships to land offered by forms of black Christianity in the Northwest.

According to distinguished historian Esther Hall Mumford the elaboration of the AME church in the PNW begins in the early 1880s, when "Bishop Abraham Grant, presiding bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church hierarchy, assigned a Rev. Thomas as missionary to the Pacific Northwest with instructions to survey Seattle as a possible new field in which to extend the church."[84] When Reverend Thomas arrived in Seattle the city's total population was approximately 3,533 of which nineteen were black.[85] Among this small group of black Seattleites were a few who were familiar with the AME church, having lived back east or down south where the church had already established itself. Finding the PNW field viable, Reverend Thomas met with this handful of church familiars and the first steps toward AME church formation were initiated.

The next steps were taken in 1886 when "persons of the African Methodist Episcopal persuasion began meeting in various affiliates' homes where they were visited intermittently by travelling missionaries."[86] When a traveling missionary was not available Seaborn J. Collins, who would later become a deacon in the church, ministered

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[84] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 147.
[85] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 19.
[86] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 147.

to the small congregation.[87] In this initial stage the church was transitory and ephemeral, transforming the living spaces of Seattle's small black population into sanctuaries of worship. This alternative and improvised use of private property arose out of the necessity created by the small number of black people living in a relatively dispersed pattern across the nascent city. According to Mumford, "Because the holdings of Aframericans were so widely scattered over what became the city of Seattle, it is difficult to assess whether or not they met discrimination in their attempts to buy property. But it is worth noting that where one bought property, within a short period of time, others bought in the same area."[88] Thus, whether or not racial restrictions existed in the early real estate system, it seems that black people themselves preferred to live close to one another for mutual aid, protection, or perhaps both. What is clear though is that as Seattle's population increased, and the region moved closer to the twentieth century, residential segregation became increasingly apparent.[89] The formation of the early AME church was influenced by these circumstances.

First AME, originally called Jones Street AME, was officially incorporated on August 13, 1891 under the leadership of Reverend L. S. Blakeney.[90] Atwood gives the following account of the evolution of First AME,

> Their work [the AME connection] in Seattle was begun in 1886 by Rev. S. J. Collins. The first services were held in Stewart's hall, on Madison Street, near Twentieth Avenue. A lot 60 by 120 feet, on Jones Street, now Fourteenth Avenue, near Madison Street, with a dwelling house on it, was purchased in the early 90's for $2,000. This building was enlarged,

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[87] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 147.
[88] Ibid., pp. 108.
[89] In a 1936 letter written by Bonita Riley Wright the author recalled, "…during the nineties the only place a colored person could live was what was known as Coon Hollow, a swamp and mudhole…" (Mumford 111).
[90] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 37.

> remodeled and used for church purposes. The enlargement of the church and the erection of a parsoneage [sic] on the lot adjoining the church was accomplished under the pastorate of C. C. Holford. The property is worth about $5,000. It is free from debt and favorably located. S. S. Freeman is the present pastor. The society has a membership of 75; and a good Sunday school. The outlook for their work in this city is hopeful.[91]

This account is important as it gives us the material foundation of First AME between 1886 and 1903, paying particular attention to land and community development as key aspects of church vitality. This connection between land and community is one that I seek to identify and explore in this dissertation. In the preceding chapter the role of anti-blackness in producing settler society based on the racial logics of white supremacy was examined. Here, Atwood lays out the history of the ways in which the AME church articulated its self within the broader contexts of the settler colonial society established by the US in the PNW as it transformed following the end of the "frontier." However, to read the establishment of First AME as simply the extension or passive replication of settler property relations decontextualizes the church from the broader social relationships of race, hierarchy, and inequality that developed under slavery and were extended after the collapse of Reconstruction following the Hayes Compromise of 1877. Through the development of black culture within and beyond the AME church the Black community in Seattle also challenged the prevailing colonial relationships with land and property based on race, inequality, and white supremacy.

At the turn of the Twentieth Century the AME church had "charges in Portland Ore., and in Tacoma, Seattle, Spokane, Roslyn, Everett, Franklin and New Castle in the state of Washington."[92] This list demonstrates both the wide network of black

[91] Atwood, A. *Glimpses in Pioneer Life on Puget Sound*. W.C. Cox, 1974, pp. 460.
[92] Ibid.

communities extant across the PNW at the turn of the century as well as the relative effectiveness with which the AME church was abele to establish churches in locations where Black people resided. This indicates that the particular form of Christianity practiced by the AME connection, with its emphasis on the continued significance of slavery and inequality in US society, resonated with black communities in the PNW at the close of the 19th century.

PART II: Chattel Slavery, Religion, Culture, and Black Community Formations Through Exodus – Church Institutions Visible and Invisible

The relative success of the AME church as demonstrated by its wide spread distribution across the Washington and Oregon indicates that something about the church's approach to worship and praise resonated with black populations in the PNW. The AME church's ability to successfully mediate between the "Invisible institution" of black religiosity and spirituality developed by Black people in contexts of slavery and the Church Institution developed in the North is a significant aspect of this success.[93] An additional aspect is the ability of the AME process of service, it's structuring through biblical scripture and exegesis, to give explicitly religious meanings to concepts such as 'land' and 'freedom,' as significant factors in this expansion of the church. If settler colonial models of private property are based on abstract notions of freedom and ownership as defined by race and law, as argued in the previous chapter, then these alternative meanings routed through religion, slavery, culture and collective meaning are significant departures from, and perhaps liminal challenges to, prevailing social meanings and so-called civil society in the US West.

[93] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 35 – 37.

Culture, an elusive concept rich in connotative implications, is especially complicated for African American communities in the US as a result of slavery. In the article "The Birth of African-American Culture," Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price propose a flexible model for conceiving of the production of Black culture in the US because "If we define 'culture' as a body of beliefs and values, socially acquired and patterned that serve an organized group (a 'society') as guidelines of and for behavior, then the term cannot be applied without some distortion to the manifold endowments of those masses of enslaved individuals, separated from their respective political and domestic settings, who were transported in more or less heterogeneous cargoes, to the New World."[94] During Middle Passage captured African peoples were transported in ships according the demands of trade as opposed to cultural or regional similarities as organizing principles. Furthermore in marked contrast to European groups in the Western Hemisphere which tended to form communities based on regional and cultural homogeneity - i.e. British colonies in North America and Jamaica, or Spanish Cuba, or French Sant-Domingo – enslaved African peoples lived in groupings (in)formed by the logics of plantation society, including labor demands and the ever looming threat of slave insurrection.[95] Part of the difficulty here is that culture, under European settler colonialism in what comes to be the US, is a marker of humanity from which Black slaves were banished. In other words, as chattel slavery came to be justified among European colonists by the supposed non/sub-humanity of African peoples, cultural differences, culture itself as something produced by humans, could not be acknowledged

[94] Mintz, Sidney W. and Richard Price. "The Birth of African American Culture." *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, by Timothy Earl. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, Routledge, 1997, pp. 40.
[95] Ibid.

and attributed to slaves. Therefore in looking for the active part that Black people played in adopting and adapting Christianity into the African Methodism Episcopal form for example, I am seeking to demonstrate the active and dynamic process by which black people produced culture for themselves in the larger contexts of US plantation society.

In assessing the African roots and routes of black culture in the US one also runs the risk of homogenizing wide-ranging African cultures, ethnicities, and religious traditions that are varied and distinct. Rather than coming from a single cultural and geographic background, captured Africans were stolen from all over the continent as well as Madagascar. The African slaves bound for North America came from the following locations: "13.3 from Senegambia; 5.5 from Sierra Leone; 11.4 from Windward Coast (Iberia-Ivory Coast); 15.9 from Gold Coast; 4.3 from Benin; 23.3 from Biafra (Southeastern Nigeria); 24.5 from Angola; 1.6 from Mozambique and Madagascar; and 0.2 from unknown [origins]."[96] Given this widespread distribution of origin, an analysis of black culture in the US that is predicated on origin, fixity, uniformity, and the intact transmission of specific cultural practices is specious. Rather, I seek to understand the ways in which various African traditions and backgrounds, in the contexts of chattel slavery, came to be negotiated into a new cultural form based on the day-to-day experiences of Black communities. Therefore I agree with the assertion of Mintz and Price that "An African cultural heritage, widely shared by the people imported into any new colony, will have to be defined in less concrete terms, by focusing more on values, and less on sociocultural forms, and even by attempting to identify unconscious

[96] Worthy, R. L. *The Racialization of Slavery*. Kornerstone Books, 2009, pp. 146 – 147.

'grammatical' principles, which may underlie and shape behavior response."[97] This is important because if, as argued above, the AME church was formed in *response* to the prevailing conditions of chattel slavery and the increasing compromises over the institution within the church and mainstream US civil society, then the import of African culture(s) can be properly indexed in the worship and institutional practices developed under in the African Methodism Episcopal formation.

Finally, I would like to extend my framing of culture by engaging the ways in which the field of cultural studies has sough to identify and understand the relationship between culture and the broader social relationships of a particular society.[98] Departing from abstract definitions which treat culture as a dead list of social traits or characteristics, Stuart Hall forwards that 'culture' ought to be understood as "the actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages, and customs of any specific historical society," and importantly "the contradictory forms of 'common sense' which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life."[99] Applied to our specific conversation, then, black culture is properly situated at the junction between the prevailing conditions of US society based on chattel slavery and property relations under settler colonialism, and the contradictory forms of common sense that have been produced in order to challenge these relations. The Black church produces contradictory forms by redefining relationships to land through biblical interpretation, as well as elaborating concepts of 'freedom,' and 'humanity,' through exegesis. A discussion of the

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[97] Mintz, Sidney W. and Richard Price. "The Birth of African American Culture." *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, by Timothy Earl. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, Routledge, 1997, pp. 41.
[98] Grossberg, Lawrence, et al. *Cultural Studies*. Routledge, 1992, pp. 4.
[99] Ibid., pp. 5.

uses of the Exodus narrative and biblical typology in US society brings the distinctions of the black church into relief.

During the Revolutionary period the Exodus narrative and typological interpretation of biblical literature offered manifold ethnic groups in the US tools for the constitution of collective identity under a national identity. Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. explains that it is "far better to see Exodus as both national and cultural, as a story that provides vocabularies for our beliefs as well as tools for the imagining of our nation."[100] Indeed it is precisely the capacity of Exodus to provide cultural meanings to national imaginations that rendered biblical typology so functional. It is telling that Exodus was central in the elaboration of US dominant culture as well as distinct Black cultural traditions that evolved in opposition to that dominant culture. Exegesis and the historical contexts of slavery and settler colonialism are important for the alternative interpretive understandings derived from the same biblical source.

Within dominant US culture, the elaboration of a national identity – 'the people' – in the prevailing contexts of religious, cultural, and economic plurality[101] was indeed a monumental task. Furthermore, that the country could be founded on narratives and ideals of freedom and equality in the concomitant presence of intensely isometric property and power relations of plantation slavery is indeed perplexing. Glaude, Jr. demonstrates that this was accomplished in large part through the deployment of Exodus narratives in the early US republic and the typological interpretation of errand, migration, and revolution. Glaude, Jr. explains that

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[100] Glaude, Eddie S. *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 51.

[101] What ethnic studies scholar Ronald Takaki would call the "giddy multitude," (Takaki 78).

> the idea of errand among the Puritans of New England entailed notions of migration, pilgrimage, and progress. Each of these was an element in an ideological mode of consensus used to fill the needs of a certain social order. Migration suggested not simply movement from one place to another but the journey from the Old World to a New Canaan. Migration was prophetic. It signaled the coming of the new millennium in the bounty that was America, for the Puritans' claim to the New World had been sanctioned in the promises of the Bible.[102]

This represents the religious, cultural, and social underpinnings of the dominant settler colonial society in the US and undergirds the construction of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion in the US, the roots of settlement in the PNW. One may also read the very robust roots of persistent 'American Exceptionalism,' in this account. In the years immediately preceding the American Revolution, 1740 – 1760, the rhetoric of errand, pilgrimage, and progress was extended to every Protestant denomination in the colonial US.[103] Essentially, following the political underpinnings formed by Exodus, the people of the US become the New Israelites.

However, this same narrative also explains the ways in which US society was produced through hierarchy, and significantly established through the exclusion of Black people from the nascent national identity. The American Revolution produced a people, sure; but it also produced a population of "chosen people" within the "people." In this way biblical typology was also used to explain white upper class domination of US society and ameliorate the tension created by the contradiction between the espousal of freedom and democracy, and the realities of economic subjugation by a class of landed aristocracy – the planter class – and racialized chattel slavery. "These men [propertied, white, Anglo-Saxons] were the chosen people, and they were representative Americans –

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[102] Glaude, Eddie S. *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 46.
[103] Ibid., pp. 47.

not members of the people. Exodus history, then, provided the words for the imagining of the United States as a peculiar nation comprised of ordinary and chosen people."[104] Of course enslaved and even free black people were completely outside of this nation (and increasingly so, the further the US expanded across the North American continent, expanding settler colonial society and extending the system of chattel slavery). This is a devastating paradox for the American psyche: the representation of US people as the New Israelites is articulated by ignoring the "Old Israelites" still enslaved in the contemporary US society.

Thus, Black Christian exegesis such as that practiced during AME church service inverts the Exodus narrative characteristic of dominant US society. "The image of America as the New Canaan is reversed within African American reenactments of the Exodus story. We are still the New Israelites, but the United States is Egypt, and the seat of Pharaoh is in Washington, D.C."[105] This is not a reversal in the sense of mirrored image, but rather akin to the inversion of image on the retina; black culture is articulated through different and differential usage of existing data, signs, and materials. Here slavery is not a metaphor, not a distant decontextualized memory, not something ancillary to the constitution of society. Rather it is a concrete definite social situation present in and definitive of US society. Furthermore, God would punish those responsible for the present situation of society, its constitution through the mutual imbrications of slavery and settler colonial occupation. Therefore black people, once the outcast and dejected dregs of society are rejuvenated; rise ye mighty people of God, triumphant; countering the dominant biblical interpretations used to justify African enslavement as a natural

[104] Glaude, Eddie S. *Exodus!: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth-Century Black America*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 49.
[105] Ibid., pp. 48.

condition and God's law.[106] To be clear, in identifying and thusly engaging with Exodus and the different black cultural formations articulated through the black church I also demonstrate the ways in which improvisation, in this case the framing and interpretation of narratives, is central to black cultural productions in the US.

According to scholars such as James H. Cone and E. Franklin Frazier, the "Negro Spirituals" are significant black cultural developments that index black adoption and adaption of Christianity in the US through music – especially along social and psychological axes articulated through contemplations of death. For Cone death and the contradictions of life as a slave impel a search for truth in the black experience that is manifested in black music.[107] According Frazier, "One of the best sources of information on the manner in which the Negro adapted Christianity to his peculiar psychological and social needs is to be found in that great body of sacred folk music known as the 'Negro Spirituals.'... the sacred folk songs or Spirituals were essentially religious in sentiment and…otherworldly in in outlook."[108] The form and content of Spirituals register relevant aspects of cultural formation under slavery. Furthermore death, and its frame for life as chattel, functions as one of the central phenomenological experiences for, and theologically orienting principles of, Spirituals. Howard Thurman explains that the phenomenological preoccupation with death expressed in Spirituals exists "because of the cheapness with which his life [the slave] was regarded. The slave was a tool, a thing, a utility, a commodity, but he was not a person. He was faced constantly with the imminent threat of death, of which the terrible overseer was a symbol; and the awareness

[106] Passages such as Romans XIII (recently used by Jeff Sessions in defense of US immigration policy to separate immigrant families detained by US custom authorities), and Genesis IX, 18 – 27.
[107] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 100.
[108] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 19.

that he (the slave) was only chattel property, the dramatization."[109] In this way, the objectification of black slaves demonstrates the linkage between physical and "social death."[110] Therefore, the preoccupation with death indexes the extent to which the concept was a fundamental aspect of the social construction of blackness stemming from enslavement, in the representations, languages, and social arrangements of US society before Emancipation.

However, the definitive position of death in Spirituals also exceeds the normative constraints produced by US 'law and order,' because it was also connected to, and representative of, the transcendental qualities of black religious sensibilities. Speaking to the sociality produced amongst slaves for themselves evinced in Spirituals Frazier notes, "The concern with death is connected with the predominantly other-worldly outlook of the Negro's religion. In many of the Spirituals death appears as a means of escape from the woes and weariness of this world."[111] In this way death, while stemming from the definite arrangements of life and death under slavery, also functions as a release from those circumstances. Furthermore, because of the Omniscience of God under Christian doctrine, death as a moment of reckoning functions differentially as a instant of release for the slave, and of judgment for those complicit in the enslavement of Black people. In this vein Frazier notes, "Death was not only always at hand, but it was also a terrible experience because God holds one accountable for the way in which one has behaved in

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[109] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 21.

[110] The reader will recall that in chapter one I defined chattel slavery in the US in part through the scholarship of Orland Patterson, in which 'social death' is definitive characteristic. In discussing the concept of "Social Death," Patterson writes, "Slavery was…a conditional commutation. The execution [death] was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in [her/]his powerlessness…Because the slave had no socially recognized existence outside of [her/]his master, [s]he became a social nonperson," (Patterson 4).

[111] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 21.

this world."[112] Therefore, the implicit complexity of death demonstrated in Black folk music such as Spirituals and the Blues can also be read as an analytical inversion of the social system set up under slavery and white supremacy, thereby fulfilling the Scripture in which "the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen," (Mathew 20:16).[113]

For Richard Allen and others in agreement with him in the 1790s, the form of Methodism was uniquely desirable among the many Christian denominations active in the US Northeast at the close of the 18th century because it most appropriately related to the circumstances in which Black people found themselves in the US, including relative proximities to slavery, and the subsequent black culture that was elaborated in response to these social relations. According to Frazier, "[Richard] Allen was of the opinion that the Methodist form of worship was more suited to the religious needs and form of worship to which Negroes had become accustomed."[114] Here it seems that the form of worship itself and the religious needs of Blacks in the US are the most relevant aspects when appraising the relative usefulness of a church institution as a viable tool for black religious expression. Rather than more traditional sectarian considerations such as denomination and institutional structure, Allen's argument is couched in terms of culture and the prevailing social relationships such as slavery, segregation, and oppression. The "forms of worship" to which Black people had become accustom can be understood here as cultural markers which include the "The Preacher," "The Music," and "The Frenzy,"

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[112] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 21.
[113] *Holy Bible: African American Jubilee Edition: King James Version*. American Bible Society, 1999, pp. 840.
[114] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 33.

as identified by W. E. B. Du Bois in chapter ten the *Souls of Black Folk*. Therefore part of Methodism's unique appeal flows from the ways in which the form of worship could be adapted to black cultural forms, functioning as a vessel for the transmission and transmutation, of both Black culture and Black religion – what Frazier calls the "Invisible Institution."[115]

For the AME church in Seattle at the end of the 19th century, the constitution of black culture stemmed from church, but was not limited to purely sacred or religious matters. The constitution of the church and coinciding black culture was also about self-determination and the elaboration of community structures of fellowship, support, and mutual aid. As noted by Esther Hall Mumford in *Seattle's Black Victorians 1852-1901,* "The church was the most important and basic expression of an Aframerican [sic] group initiative. It was their own, run without dictation and regulation by those who affected their lives in so many ways in the outside world."[116] Mumford's reference to the 'outside world' implies that black people produced their own sphere that was in contrast to the prevailing social contexts governed by white supremacy and the white communities empowered under these prevailing social contexts. In this way, the constitution of black communities in the PNW stem from alternative definitions of 'freedom' as they depart from self-determination contextually elaborated in response to the dynamics of race and repression in the US. Furthermore, the significance placed on the church by the Black community in Seattle is demonstrated by the fact that it was the single largest investment in the black community in the late 1890s and early 1900s.[117]

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[115] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 35.
[116] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 145.
[117] Ibid.

The institutional elaboration of the AME church in Seattle produced black culture not only through worship, but also by acting as the nadir for all of Black Seattle's social life. If the cultural significance placed on "The Music," "The Frenzy," and "The Preacher," come to define black religious sensibilities and significantly affect the forms of worship practiced in the AME church, then these traits were used as the fabric to stitch together a holistic sphere of black sociality in Seattle that exceeds the sacred and merges with the secular. For example, the AME church functioned as *the* site through which migrant Black people became integrated into the local community. Mumford explains,

> Being the center of the social life of the community, it was at the church that newcomers met the established population. Following the establishment of the [AME] church, Charles Harvey and George W. Turner are reported to have met strangers at the railroad station and invited them to church, and to their homes for dinner. Local news was exchanged as people got together for worship service as well as revivals, various entertainments and fundraising activities. All of the major holidays, except Independence Day, were celebrated with services at the church.[118]

The incorporation of new potential members was an important goal for the AME church as at the turn of the twentieth century membership floated around fifty people.[119] However, the exchange between "strangers" as identified by Farrah Jasmine Griffin also allowed black people to constitute new forms of community relations that were expressly 'modern.' The contact between newly Emancipated Black people and the free-er exchange of ideas is one the key changes following Emancipation.

Indeed, the Black church in Seattle was the locus of social life and precipitated the formation of other public forms of Black life in the PNW. The church provided the

[118] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 154.
[119] Ibid., pp. 149.

literally and metaphorical space for black culture to develop where it was historically restricted on other places (such as schools). Mumford explains, "Much of the dramatic, literary, musical, and oratorical talent of the community was nurtured and displayed in the churches."[120] As I demonstrate in chapter three of this dissertation, much of Seattle's swing jazz culture came from training and practice cultivated in spaces of worship. Additionally, the AME church's first annual picnic held in 1891 showcased the talent of the popular Seattle Comet Band.[121] This tradition continued on well into the twentieth century providing opportunities for the Seattle jazz sound and scene to develop. In these contexts the line between the sacred and the secular is blurred as the development of popular culture brushes continuously against the sacred and the spiritual. In the process of affirming black success in cultural fields, the church and God are omnipresent. The following chapter picks up this thread by engaging with the development of a black jazz culture in Seattle following the turn of the century.

If the sharing of local news, and connections to experiences of black people in other parts of the country – especially the South – were significant aspects of the constitution of the local black sociality, then their connection to the larger AME national body and national black politics writ large were also important aspects of the black culture produced through First AME church. Noting the active connection of Seattle's black community to national processes Mumford elucidates,

> Visiting dignitaries often spoke at the church. In July of 1891 the Right Reverend Abraham Grant, Bishop of the A. M. E. Church, delivered a public address followed by a reception in honor of him. In September of that year the Rev. D. E. Johnson, a representative of Paul Quinn College

[120] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 147.
[121] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 4.

> of Texas, preached as part of his fund-raising tour of the Northwest. Evangelist Amanda Smith conducted a series of preaching meetings in February of 1898. During these visits national issues of concern to Aframericans [sic] were usually discussed. In the nineties the two main topics were the condition of the Aframerican population in the South, and the Emigration issue.[122]

The merging of the national and local evinced in the last two block quotes is an important hallmark of black cultural development in Seattle. Paul Quinn College is a historically black college officially affiliated with the AME Church. Located in Dallas, Texas Quinn College was originally founded in 1872 to educate newly emancipated Black people and their children and is the oldest Black college west of the Mississippi.[123] The fundraising excursion of Rev. Johnson demonstrates not only the participation of Seattle's black community in the constitution of a larger black public though education and monetary contributions, but also through the exchange ideas over the situation in which black people found themselves following the Civil War, and debates about what was to be done.

The two issues of the state of Black people in the South and Emigration back to Africa are directly related to the status of black people under apartheid in the US. Prominent members of Seattle' black community and church members represented both sides of the Emigration issue. In throwing themselves into larger regional and national debates Black people simultaneously (re)produced/reconstituted the community at the local and the national scales. The local black population of Seattle understood itself as distinct from Southern black communities in terms of the social codes that structured

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[122] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 154.

[123] From the Paul Quinn statement of "Christian Doctrine of Education," < http://www.pqc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PQC-Catalog-BOT-Approved-Sept-4-2015-rev-Jan-19-2016.pdf > accessed Nov. 2019.

daily life, at the same time that they felt implicated in these Southern communities and shared some similar experiences. Furthermore, Quintard Taylor notes that Seattle's Black population around the turn of the century was largely of Southern origin. And while Washington lacked the rigid segregation in education or anti-miscegenation laws present across the South, labor exclusion, state sanctioned violence, and generalized dishonor were continuities for black life in the northwest as well as the south.[124]

However, similar to the ways in which Frazier identifies that the black folk music of "Negro Spirituals" demonstrates the adoption of Christianity and are fundamentally religious in nature, much of Black community constitution in Seattle was undergirded by explicitly spiritual events such as baptisms and christenings, or by more apparently secular events such as the yearly picnic affected through explicitly religious practices such as preaching and singing. As noted by Mumford, "Gradually the congregation grew as the black population increased. Those who had not been admitted to the Church elsewhere were baptized in Lake Washington near the foot of Madison Street. Following the baptisms the congregation boarded the cable car and rode to the church for Holy Communion and baby christenings."[125] In the summer of 2017 while researching this dissertation chapter I traveled this same route as I journeyed from First AME Church down Madison Street to the Fiske Genealogical Library located in the Washington

[124] "The overwhelming majority of Seattle's newcomers in the 1880s were native-born white migrants primarily from Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Michigan. The black population, composed mainly of southerners, grew from 19 at the beginning of the decade to 286 by 1890," (Tayor 19). Taylor goes on, "If [black] migrants such as Oxendine faced employment restrictions, they also found a city with surprisingly few racial barriers in other spheres. Unlike neighboring Oregon with its 'black laws' dating back to its territorial period, or segregationist legislation in the South, Washington Territory had no discriminatory statutes. In 1890 the first state legislature passed a public accommodation law which specifically prohibited racial discrimination," (Taylor 21).

[125] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 149.

Pioneer Hall.[126] And while the cable cars have long since disappeared First AME continues to play a prominent role in organizing and producing black community in the greater Seattle area.

Beginning in 1891 the Sunday School at First AME began to hold an annual picnic outing for members of the congregation and the larger Seattle community. This yearly 'outing' into nature is a reoccurring pattern, transpiring at black churches in many cities across the US. Esther Hall Mumford provides relevant details relaying, "On May 18, 1891 the Sunday School held the first of a series of annual picnics which continued until the 1930s. The first picnic was held on the banks of Lake Washington. In later years Woodland Park was the favored site…The Seattle Comet Band furnished music. After lunch the group took an excursion around the lake on a small steam ship."[127] While the religious underpinnings of the baptismal procession described in the preceding paragraph are explicit, I would like to emphasize the ways in which this picnic outing reveals many significant aspects of the relationship between black religion, culture, and community that I have identified in this chapter. By pairing the above description of First AME's picnic with a close reading of a passage from James Baldwin's "The Outing," the spiritual constitution of the black community in public and nature as an extension of "worship" becomes clear. In the collection of short stories titled *Going to Meet the Man* Baldwin writes,

> The entire church was going and for weeks in advance talked of nothing else. And for weeks in the future the outing would provide interesting conversation. They did not consider this frivolous. The outing, Father James declared from his pulpit the week before the event, was for the

[126] Located at 1644 43rd avenue East., in Madison Park on the shores of Lake Washington. See figure 1 below.
[127] Mumford, Esther Hall. *Seattle's Black Victorians, 1852-1901*. Ananse Press, 1980, pp. 153 – 154.

> purpose of giving the children of God a day of relaxation; to breathe a purer air and to worship God joyfully beneath the roof of heaven; and there was nothing frivolous about *that.* And, rather to the alarm of the captain, they planned to hold church services aboard the ship.[128]

The church body itself becomes formulated as 'the children of God' and in this way exegesis gives meaning and significance the process of congregation. To breath purer air and worship beneath the open sky situates the constitution of community as serious business of the *body*. Indeed there is nothing frivolous about this. As the communal body is reconstituted in nature below the heavens, so too is the individual black body in excess of the flesh-ly imposisitons of anti-blackness. This situation of black people in proximity to nature is significant and represents the (cultural) production of identities through relationships (histories and memories) of land that differ greatly from the dominant civil society in the Washington at the close of the 19th century. Due to the material histories of slavery and the dispossession of the body, the impacts mobility and self-determination, that inform black worldviews, alternative relations to land can be traced through story and exegesis.

In his discussion of Spirituals above, Frazier demonstrates that death is a central part of the music because it was a central part of the lives of captive black people. For James H. Cone the Spirituals and the blues "flow from the same bedrock of experience…they are impelled by the same search for the truth of the black experience."[129] This search for truth in experience is what constitutes and characterizes the "invisible institution" that makes up the sense and sensibilities of the black church. Du Bois broaches this same subject in chapter ten of *The Souls of Black Folk* titled "Of

[128] Baldwin, James. *Going to Meet the Man*. Vintage International, 1995, pp. 29.
[129] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 100.

the Faith of the Fathers." In that chapter Du Bois contends that "The Music," and the "Frenzy," are important aspects of the forms of worship developed by black people in the US. Attending AME service demonstrates that both concepts significantly affect the corporal experience of worship at the AME church, including First church in Seattle.[130] Above I initiated the conversation around black Christianity and music by engaging Frazier's discussion of "Negro Spirituals." Here I seek to extend this conversation to other aspects of music in Black Christian worship.

Attending an AME I can always feel an energy approaching the sanctuary – to me it feels like a potential energy akin to a rubber band stretched taught. In recounting his first experiences with the forms of worship developed by Black people Du Bois's recollection demonstrates the importance of music:

> It was out in the country, far from home, far from my foster home, on a dark Sunday night. The road wandered from our rambling log-house up the stony bed of a creek, past wheat and corn, until we could hear dimly across the fields a rhythmic cadence of song, - soft, thrilling, powerful, that swelled and died sorrowfully in our ears. I was a country-school teacher then, fresh from the East, and had never seen a Southern Negro revival…And so most striking to me, as I approached the village and the little plain church perched aloft, was the air of tense excitement that possessed the mass of black folk. A sort of suppressed terror hung in the air and seemed to seize us, - a pythian madness, a demoniac possession, that lent terrible reality to song and word.[131]

The 'terrible reality to song and word' imposed by "The Frenzy," signals a break with mundane and quotidian forms of social interactions framed by (so-called) civil society (sociality). The experience is presented by Du Bois in an almost Fairytale-like fashion; far from home, in the deep, dark, secluded woods, Du Bois stumbles upon something

[130] Field notes recording "Bethel AME 24AUG14" that I recorded at Bethel AME in San Diego on August 24, 2014 provides an example of this phenomenon. First five minutes of recording.
[131] Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Signet Classics, 1969, pp. 210 – 211.

fantastic. This is expressly indicated by reference to Greek folklore of antiquity, evoked through reference to Pythia.[132] However, the mythic character runs far deeper; Greeting him at the threshold between the mundane and the mystical, and ushering him through the vestibule into the otherworld of Black religiosity are the "The Music," and "The Frenzy;" both of which structure the tangible feeling of "suppressed terror" – echoing across field, hanging suspended. In thusly characterizing his initial experience of Black worship Du Bois is referencing something that exceeds traditional, read European, forms of Christianity. Furthermore, in the almost gothic character ascribed by descriptions such as "demonic possession," Du Bois seems to be describing something ancient, tribal even, in contrast to the form(s) of modernity rolling through the US following Civil War and Emancipation. The setting of Southern backwoods/backwater – "the village and the plain church" – is significant. The contrasting characteristics – the provincial, ancient and tribal, the metropolitan, modern and National – function to situate the production of black culture both firmly within the prevailing social circumstances of the US and also in excess of them.

The place of the southern revival described by Du Bois is unique, far from the northern city that produced the AME church body and also the specificities of Seattle and First AME. But the mood that Du Bois captures is significant because it depicts the principles of religious formations that undergird the religious practices developed at First AME because religious worship had to have the functional quality of addressing the world confronted by black people living in Seattle at the end of the 20th century. Part of

[132] Pythia was a prominent oracle from the temple of Apollo at Delphi, known to Homer and gaining PanHellenic fame in 6th and 7th centuries BCE. (Encyclopedia Britannica).

that functional quality is serving as a form of survival and release. In recalling the power of music in his hometown James H. Cone explains,

> I grew up in a small black community in Bearden, Arkansas, where black music was essential for identity and survival. On Saturday nights the juke box was loud, and one could hear the sound and feel the rhythm of the blues even from a distance. The men and women gathered around the juke box had worked long hours during the week in saw mills and factories; by Saturday night they were tired and weary. They needed to express their moods and feelings, their joys and sorrows…But not every black person in Bearden responded spontaneously to Little Milton and his interpretation of the blues. These latter preferred the other musical expression of black people, called "church music" or the spirituals, and Sunday was their time to unleash the pent-up emotions of their being.[133]

In the following chapter I will explore the development of the jazz scene in Seattle which functioned in a similar fashion to the blues traditions described by Cone in this passage. But what is significant at the close of this chapter is the "music" and "frenzy" as key components release of pent up emotions, expressions of the joys and sorrows of life simultaneously. It is also significant that both sacred and secular forms of music spring from the same source because both forms are significant in processes of community building for black people in the US. Or as Cone puts it, "Black music is functional. Its purposes and aims are directly related to the consciousness of the black community. To be functional is to be useful in community definition, style, and movement."[134] Indeed, the AME church was a central institution in the elaboration of the black community of Seattle.

[133] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 1.
[134] Ibid, pp. 5.

Figures

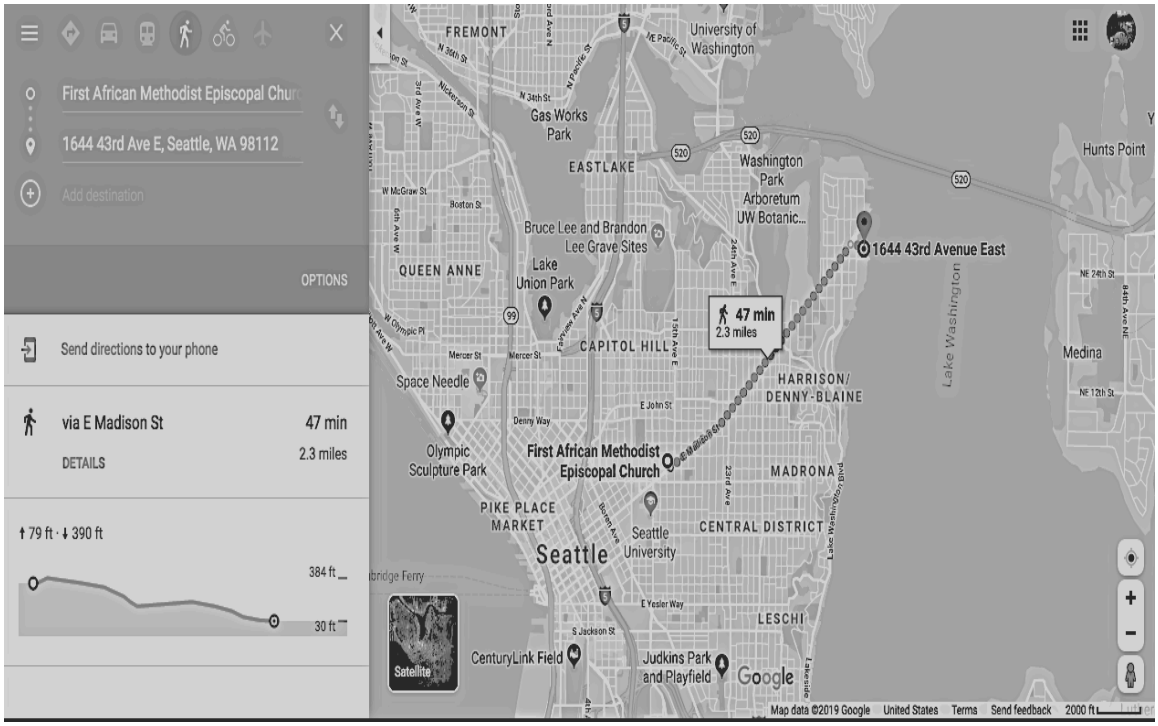

Figure 1 – The 2.3-mile Journey from First AME to Madison Park
Image courtesy of Google Maps – accessed November 18, 2019

Chapter 3 – That Jackson Street Swing: Jazz, Race, Segregation, and the Sonic Arrangements of Black Seattle

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Epigraph

The concept of art balks at being defined, for it is a historically changing constellation of moments.
– T.W. Adorno[135]

The end of the essential black subject also entails a recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender and ethnicity.
– Stuart Hall[136]

Because the Jackson Street clubs were the product of segregation, Prohibition, and corruption, they did not survive into the modern era.
– Paul De Barros[137]

Introduction

The historic development of Seattle's black club scene in the early 20th century offers a rich and significant source for engaging with the elaboration of jazz as a specific artistic practice, and an important way of looking at the ongoing efforts of black people across the PNW to produce community in the contexts of racial hierarchies and white supremacy. Traditional narrations of the history of Jazz music posit its beginning in New Orleans as an outgrowth from Dixieland ragtime music. However, the historical developments of West coast jazz seem to challenge the neatness of this narrative.[138] According to Eric Porter the first recorded usage of the term 'Jazz' is attributable to a San Francisco newspaper article in 1913, long before the music is though to have migrated

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[135] Adorno, Theodor, et al. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 3.
[136] Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, Routledge, 1996, pp. 444.
[137] Smith, Al. *Seattle on the Spot: the Photographs of Al Smith*. MOHAI, Museum of History & Industry, 2017, pp. 51.
[138] The Frankfurt School's historical materialist tradition of cultural analysis vigorously challenges the ways in which notions of 'origin' as a fixed location of purity from whence traditions emerge construct an artificial narrative. See T.W. Adorno (*Aesthetic and Culture*) and especially Walter Benjamin's first monograph *The Origin of German Trauerspiel*.

out of New Orleans, accompanying musicians in their journeys north, east, and/or west.[139] Identifying and engaging with the contributions of Seattle to the west coast jazz tradition offers the opportunity to engage with the differential development of jazz in the west. Furthermore, by contemplating black Seattle's vigorous engagement with the burgeoning jazz musical genre, we are also able to understand significant aspects of the ways in which black people and communities affected the development of the Seattle and the PNW more broadly by engaging with larger national processes in the early years of the 20th century.

The earliest example of Black music being performed publically in Seattle can be traced back to 1852, before the US Civil War and long before Washington statehood. In those days Seattle was a small resource extraction town with muddy streets and clapboard houses located on the periphery of US society; the deep-water harbor made the location a hub of shipping in the Pacific Northwest and figures prominently in the growth and development of the city.[140] According to jazz historian Paul De Barros in *Jackson Street After Hours* everyday at noon, a lone black man named Manuel Lopes would advertise his barbershop and sound the call for the noon time meal – the lunching hour – by beating out a tune on a military drum as he walked through the streets of 'downtown'. His procession would end at his barbershop, enticing potential customers with a lunch of gumbo (he always kept a warm pot for the patrons of his shop) and a subsequent shave.[141] Indeed, Lopes was an important part of the fabric of early Seattle. In fact, in a 'frontier

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[139] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002), pp. 19.
[140] Morgan, Murray. *Skid Road: an Informal Portrait of Seattle*. University of Washington Press, 1982.
[141] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 1.

town' without prominent public clocks or church bells, Lopes's music kept time and synchronized Seattle's nascent downtown community.

This brief tale is significant because it locates not only the long if unacknowledged history of black people and black music in the constitution of community life in Seattle. It also demonstrates a significant aspect of the roots of west coast jazz, thought to have grown out of the military bands, stationed along the West Coast during the build up to the Great War (WWI).[142] Long before the development of Seattle's black jazz club scene – the primary focus of this chapter – black musicians gathered in parks, like Madison Park and Leschi Park[143] (named for Chief Leschi) by the shores of Lake Washington, to play music on weekend afternoons.[144] It was in these groups that many of the elite among Seattle's local jazz talent began to cultivate their musical talents, and especially to experiment with group improvisational performances. Group improvisation is a significant marker of early Jazz in Seattle. Later, in the 1920s and especially the 1930s, improvisation would become individual and articulated in response to, and in tension with, the larger band/group. But whether individual or collective, improvisation is an important aspect of jazz, and therefore warrants a bit of an explication here.

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[142] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 5.

[143] The Leschi neighborhood is named after the Nisqually Chief Leschi who was hanged at Fort Stillacoom in the winter of 1858 for the "murder" of US soldier Colonel A. Benton Moses. See historylink.org essay number 5145 < https://www.historylink.org/File/5145>

[144] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 6.

Scholars have dealt with the presence and uses of improvisation within African American culture in varying ways.[145] Far from being limited to musical iterations, improvisation is itself a key maker of black culture in the US and indeed globally (though this is beyond the scope of this chapter). For example, in explaining how Christianity was used as a cultural phenomenon capable of preserving and transmitting West African cultural values by captive African peoples in the US Charles Long notes that, "The biblical imagery was used because it was at hand; it was adapted to and invested with the experience of the slave."[146] This quote outlines two significant aspects of improvisation germane to this dissertation: first, that improvisation as theory and praxis departs from a (historical) materialist orientation - working with that which exists within extant historic circumstances; second, and most importantly, rather than preserving either West African cultural practices or Western Christianity as wholly intact and unchanged, improvisation *dialectically* denatured and transformed both through *use* in order to produce new cultural sensibilities reflective of the experience of enslaved Africans in the US.[147] Here I am arguing that improvisation is significant as a marker of black culture in the PNW and moreover that improvisation remains useful as a tactic for black cultural producers precisely because of its proclivity toward the material and the dialectic.

In the article "Solo and Cycle in African-American Jazz," Thomas Brothers notes that "Two main musical features identify most styles of jazz solo improvisation…the melody is shaped by a harmonic underpinning, and it is rhythmically complex. Though it

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[145] Hortense J. Spillers, Hazel Carby, Angela Davis, Hernry Louis Gates, Jr., Leroi Jones, James Snead, Chester Himes.

[146] Long, Charles H. "Perspectives for a Study of African-American Religion in the United States." *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, by Timothy Earl. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, Routledge, 1997, pp. 29.

[147] Scholars of the Atlantic region such as Paul Gilroy challenge the idea fixed "pure" racial categories existed, even before the rise of the Transatlantic system of chattel slavery.

tells the story in a slightly misleading way, there is a core of truth to the familiar view that harmony in jazz signals European antecedents, while rhythmic style signals African Antecedents."[148] Here Brothers argues that the occurrence of improvisation in jazz indexes the meetings of both African and European cultures to produce a distinctive black cultural aesthetic and practice. Furthermore, the two significant analytic aspects of improvisation, melody and harmony and complex rhythmic layers, establish a means of responding to the relationship between European cultural constructions and the isometric power relationships established through coinciding categories of race, gender, and identity established by slavery and settler colonialism in the US.

Returning to the physical setting of early jazz in Seattle, the park site demonstrates one significant aspect of public places of performance for black music and cultural productions in Seattle. It bears noting that Seattle's parks also function prominently in the development of the Black church institutions in Seattle at the turn of the century, for example First AME's annual picnic discussed in the preceding chapter. These more idyllic park settings, while not free from the socio-political contexts of race, racism, and segregation nonetheless index a kind of black public performances that depart from the other prominent place for the public performance of "black" culture in Seattle; the minstrel stage.

Long before black soldiers would play 'jazzy' tunes on their instruments in the parks of Seattle, the burgeoning minstrel and vaudeville scene contributed to building much of the infrastructure of performance in Seattle, establishing both the theaters and performance halls themselves, as well as the creating the desire of public audiences for

[148] Brothers, Thomas. "Solo and Cycle in African-American Jazz." *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1994, pp. 479., doi:10.1093/mq/78.3.479.

racialized performance and/as entertainment (the construction of a mass public based on race and racism). The traveling circuits of minstrelsy and the concomitant construction and consumption of black stereotypes is the oldest form of popular culture developed in the US.[149] Seattle's desire for and engagement with this popular form at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century indexes the ways in which Seattle constructed itself in relation to the broader US nation. In chapters one and two of *Jackson Street After Hours* de Barros identifies the ways in which the construction of public venues for cultural performance is central to many 'frontier' towns and cities in the late 19th century. For example de Barros notes, "Seattle's wealth of theatres attracted a flood of vaudeville and minstrel shows, including the city's first visiting theatre company – Tom LaFont's Excelsior Minstrels. Between 1864 and 1912, no fewer than 156 touring minstrel troupes passed through Seattle."[150] Here de Barros indicates that it is precisely through theses venues that local publics in the margins of US national society, both politically as well as economically, begin to imagine themselves as part of that nation and materially connect with its circuits of culture and commerce. Furthermore, in constructing and consuming the racialized public performances of minstrelsy, these 'frontier' places also reproduce and extend the US national project of race and racial formation.

Seattle was exceptional, even when compared to other 'frontier' cities such as Portland, building multiple large-scale venues for public performance. Thus, even if one takes commonsense arguments about the *absence* of black people in significant numbers in the history of Seattle's development, we nonetheless see the ways in which blackness

[149] Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy."*Representations*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1992, pp. 23–50., doi:10.1525/rep.1992.39.1.99p0120h.
[150] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 8.

and discourses of race and purity are central to the construction of a public in the PNW. As we will see below, the "racial unconscious" – as Eric Lott calls it – that this processes indexes is central to the construction of US identities.[151] Furthermore, this dissertation vigorously disputes the *absence* argument identifying both black people and discourses of blackness as central to the development of the PNW as a particular kind of macro-scale 'racial project' on behalf of the US.[152]

In discussing the development of vaudeville performance Siobhan B. Somerville identifies the centrality of gender, race, and sexuality to public performance. In the monograph *Queering the Color Line* Somerville explains,

> In vaudeville, which developed rapidly in the 1890s and had reached its height of popularity by 1910, female performers regularly performed in transvestite or blackface acts but rarely, if ever, combined the two. White actresses Vesta Tilly and Kathleen Clifford appeared in top hat and tails and were well-known and popular male impersonators on the vaudeville stage. Likewise, white performers such as the Duncan Sisters, Sophie Tucker, and Eva Tanguay appeared in blackface on the vaudeville stage, but only in female parts. Vivian and Rosetta Duncan were famous for their depiction of "Topsy and Eva," based on the characters in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Tucker sang in blackface and was occasionally billed as "World-Renowned Coon Shouter," and Tanguay was billed as "The Sambo Girl."[153]

Thus early developments in vaudeville were founded upon staging racial and gendered difference as public spectacle. It was precisely through spectacle that humor and laughter were generated amongst public audiences during consumption. Therefore "blackface performances made a spectacle of racial difference: audiences and performers alike (who for the most part were white and male, though there were occasional exceptions) played

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[151] Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy."*Representations*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1992.
[152] "Racial Formation." *Racial Formation in the United States*, by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Routledge, 1994, pp. 55–58.
[153] Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Duke University Press, 2012.

out sexual, racial, and class anxieties through theatrical exaggeration."[154] Somerville's claim that anxieties are worked out in public through exaggeration and buffoonery points toward a further significance for US society that is broached by engagement with the material history of blackface. In the 1992 article "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy," Eric Lott limns the ways in which a study of minstrelsy demonstrates "a structured formation, combining thought and feeling, tone and impulse, and at the very edge of semantic availability, whose symptoms and anxieties make it just legible."[155] This "racial unconscious" provides the terrain and raw materials through which US society is produced collectively and individually; the interface through which the individual and collective constructions of race and power meet, mingle, and proceed. Thus while minstrelsy, a predominantly Northern occurrence, "was organized around the quite explicit 'borrowing' of black cultural materials for white dissemination (and profit), a borrowing that ultimately depended upon the material relations of slavery, the minstrel show obscured these relations by pretending that slavery was amusing, right, and natural."[156] To a substantial degree, black musicians' development of jazz in Seattle functioned as a response to and critique of both the systemic racism and hierarchy in cultural performance (and elsewhere), and of the ways in which this system was represented as natural (biological) and therefor appropriate.

Humor, laughter, and spectacle all place minstrel performances and the development of race and US national identities in the PNW contexts squarely within the realm of affection. Turning to Henri Bergson's work on laughter and the comedic in the

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[154] Somerville, Siobhan B. *Queering the Color Line Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Duke University Press, 2012, pp. 63.
[155] Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy."*Representations*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1992, pp. 23.
[156] Ibid.

essay "Laughter an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic," is instructive.[157] In the essay Bergson draws our attention to three significant aspects of the field in which the comic must be thought and situated. These aspects are germane to my discussion of race, affection, and minstrelsy here. Firstly that, "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly HUMAN…Laughter must answer to certain requirements of life in common. It must have a SOCIAL significance." Secondly that the comic is "brought about by an external circumstance. The comic is therefore accidental: it remains, so to speak, in superficial contact with the person." Laughter therefore is "a sort of SOCIAL GESTURE. By the fear which it inspires, it restrains eccentricity, keeps constantly awake and in mutual contact certain activities of a secondary order which might retire into their shell and go to sleep…" Thirdly and finally, "For exaggeration to be comic, it must not appear as an aim, but rather as a means that the artist is using in order to make manifest to our eyes the distortions which [s]he sees in embryo. It is this process of distortion that is of moment and interest…It [the comic] partakes rather of the unsprightly rather than the unsightly, of RIGIDNESS rather than UGLINESS." Far from being innocent or incidental, the humorous staging of racial difference on stage accomplished the serious business of constructing and demonstrating the traits of racial categories, as well as organizing and disciplining bodies within the imaginary boundaries of racialized identity categories.

PART I: The Alaska Pacific Yukon Exposition – Blackness, Gender, Cultural Production, and the Rising Prominence of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest

[157] Accessed online through gutenber.org < www.gutenberg.org/files/4352/4352-h/4352-h.htm > OCT 1, 2018.

The Alaska Pacific Yukon Exposition (APYE) that was held at the University of Washington in 1909 is a significant event in the history of Seattle and the PNW. Coming after the rise of the Klondike Gold Rush (1896 – 1899) that propelled Seattle into the national and international consciousness, the APYE as a World's Fair cemented Seattle's position in relation to both the larger US nation and the globe; giving the illusion of fixing, if only for the five-and-one-half months that the Exposition was staged at the University of Washington, Seattle's placement in the multi-scalar organization of the locale in relation to local, state, region, national, and transnational scales. In the article "The social construction of scale," Sallie A. Marston notes "scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents."[158] In this way the actions of black women and men as cultural producers in the greater Seattle area, their participation and even their preclusion, helped to organize Seattle within the boarder web of geographic production in the US. The Exposition exhibited many modern curios and technological advancements including an early prototype of an eclectic vehicle for individual/small scale transportation. In line with other World Fairs the Exposition also displayed racial and gendered difference as 'exotic' in ways that buttressed and reproduced US expansionism and imperialism at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

Local Black musicians attempted to play music at Seattle's Alaska Pacific Yukon Exposition in 1909 thereby taking advantage of the economic boon provided by the transnational event. However they were excluded, as the black music that was put on

[158] Marston, Sallie A. "The Social Construction of Scale." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 2, no. 24, 2000, pp. 220.

display was more "exotic" (read southern) in aesthetic composition. Despite being excluded, the impact of Seattle's black musicians' movement for inclusion was significant. After being barred from participation, Seattle's black musicians subsequently formed their own union, The Negro Musicians' Local 493 in 1913.[159] Seattle's musicians unions remained segregated until 1956 with everyone from Frank Waldron to Quincy Jones participating in its elaboration over time.[160] This resulted in the segregation of jazz performance in Seattle, with musical segregation following the contours of residential segregation in the city; Downtown was reserved for white musicians, while everything south of the main downtown area, Jackson, King, and Yesler streets were locations for Black musicians to work.[161] Seattle's Jazz scene that developed on Jackson Street was the result of this policy. Thus, while black musicians initiated the public performance of music in Downtown Seattle – the reader will recall the opening story of Manuel Lopes – black artists were subsequently barred from participation in the music performed in this area after the turn of century. In this way we can see that the color line is indeed the problem of the 20th Century, as sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois robustly demonstrated in 1903. While some black musicians found their way into performing downtown, across the color line in places like the Bon Marche or Nordstrom's, others refused to play in segregated venues. For example pianist Hazel Scott, a prominent and prolific performer

[159] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 7.

[160] "Every major player, from Frank Waldron in the twenties to Quincy Jones in the forties, would at some point become a member of the black local jamming on 493 sessions, studying with 493 teachers, and forming groups with 493 musicians," (de Barros 7).

[161] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 7.

during Seattle's Jazz era, is quoted saying, "Why would anyone come to hear me, a Negro, and refuse to sit beside someone just like me?"[162]

While local black musicians were wholly excluded from participation in the APYE, the works of other black cultural producers were featured prominently and given numerous accolades. Black women from the Seattle Tacoma area, organized by Nettie Asberry[163] put together a compilation of needlecraft, sewing, embroidery, and other artistic craftwork to be displayed at the Exposition. After learning of the AYPE in 1908, Asberry "organized the Clover Leaf Art Club to foster an interest in needlework and handicraft and also to bring about a closer relationship among members, give assistance to the unfortunate ones, and to bring about, ultimately, the formation of a state federation of colored women's clubs."[164] The exhibit put together by the Clover Leaf Art Club (CLAC) won a gold-medal overall, and individual artists took home multiple awards. The ceramics and paintings of Matilda Baker earned a bronze metal, and "a Battenberg lace opera coat made by Asberry's sister Martha Townsend won a silver medal."[165] This example of the CLAC is significant for numerous reasons: it locates and demonstrates black women's prominent place in the public production of both black culture and black communities in the PNW; the APYE and organization of the CLAC mark a transition in the prominent organization of various extant black women's clubs in the PNW; the club, while ostensibly organized around art and cultural production offered a complex site for the elaboration of mutual aid and community formation among black women facing racism, patriarchy, and exclusion in the social contexts of Washington in the early 20th

[162] Smith, Al. *Seattle on the Spot: the Photographs of Al Smith*. MOHAI, Museum of History & Industry, 2017, pp. 61.
[163] See historylink.org essay number 8632 < https://historylink.org/File/8632 >
[164] Henry, Mary T. "Asberry, Nettie Craig (1856 – 1968)." *Historylink.org*, 2008, historylink.org/File/8632
[165] Ibid. See figure 1 below.

century, thereby connecting the group to the larger national concerns faced by black communities across the US at the turn of the 20th century.

In the eighth chapter of *Women, Race, Class* Angela Y. Davis explains that the first national convention called by Black women was held in 1895 and that this national movement had its roots in the organizational work done by Black women during the Antebellum period.[166] According to Davis,

> Black women's organizational experiences could be traced back to the pre-Civil War era, and like their white sisters, they had participated in literary societies and benevolent organizations. Their main efforts during that period were associated with the anti-slavery cause. Unlike white women, however, who had also flocked into the abolitionist campaign, Black women had been motivated less by considerations of charity or by general moral principles than by the palpable demands of their people's survival.[167]

In this way the CLAC can be properly situated within the national growth of Black women's clubs at the turn of the 20th century thereby demonstrating the participation of the PNW's Black community engagement with larger national contexts. Moreover, the issues undergirding the formations of black women's clubs were the material concerns of racism, patriarchy, exclusion, and the survival of Black people; concerns which were particularly acute in the 1890s and early 1900s as an "unchecked wave of lynchings and the indiscriminant sexual abuse of Black women,"[168] created a situation where action and self-determination were imperative for black communities, and especially for Black women who were uniquely situated at the junction of racism, sexism, and capitalist exploitation following Emancipation. In this way, the focus on cultural production offered an important means for addressing the particular needs of black women in

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[166] Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race & Class*. Womens Press, 1986, pp. 128.
[167] Ibid.
[168] ibid.

Washington in the early 1900s by constructing a network of support and care similar to but different from that provided by the black churches in the region. While the public efforts of black women to elaborate black culture and construct black community are often downplayed or elided in scholarship and popular discourse on the topic, an engagement with the material archive demonstrates the prominent position held by black women in this endeavor. The CLAC is one example of this, displaying both the prominence of black women in the production of black culture and community and their strategic use of art and cultural – community formations – as tools for challenging the prevailing social hierarchy in the PNW founded on racism, violence, and the uneven distribution of resources along racial and gendered lines.

PART II: Seattle's Black Jazz Clubs, an Open Scene – Swinging Grooves, Improvisation, and the Arrangements of a Jazz Community

jazz was a community activity in the neighborhood of its cultural origin. – Paul De Barros[169]

Thomas Brothers notes that "Jazz, like many other 'popular' traditions from twentieth-century America, took root and flourished as an African-American *idiom*; this obvious fact provides the proper orientation for study of musical acculturation" – Thomas Brothers[170] [emphasis added][171].

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[169] Smith, Al. *Seattle on the Spot: the Photographs of Al Smith*. MOHAI, Museum of History & Industry, 2017, pp. 51.

[170] Brothers, Thomas. "Solo and Cycle in African-American Jazz." *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1994, pp. 479., doi:10.1093/mq/78.3.479.

[171] Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition for 'idiom': "**1** a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g. over the moon) – a form of expression natural to a language, person, or group of people – the dialect of a people or part of a country. **2** a characteristic mode of expression in music or art". The relationship between these two definitions is extremely interesting when applied to the development of West coast Jazz in Seattle's Black community. At once a language, that characterizes a group and produces meaning in the relationship between words/signs, that is also mode of expression (art). It seems that there is something with aesthetics here. If Gates, Jr. identifies signification as an important processes within African American vernacular culture, and Spillers elaborates the foundational (original) position of black women within the larger cultural processes of violence and the construction of the 'human' in the grammar of US culture, then jazz as an idiom has significant implications for thinking of jazz as an improvisational response to and resistance of white supremacy, especially in its articulation as part of a place making project (white supremacy, segregation, the construction of communities in the PNW).

In July of 1929 Jelly Roll Morton first recorded his track "Seattle Hunch," a light, jaunty, swinging, track that reflects his time in the Emerald City. And Morton's Hunch was no aberration; writing a tune to encompass his experiences with a locale was a hallmark of Morton's artistic practice.[172] Legend has it that in the days leading up to his composition of "Seattle Hunch," Morton had lost nearly all of his money (thousands of dollars) in an all-night dice game at one of Jackson street's many black-owned jazz clubs. This story is not as outlandish as it might appear at first blush; indeed dice games along Jackson street were sometimes known to be week-long affairs in the late 'teens and twenties,[173] a product of corruption and Seattle's open-ticket policy that viewed the presence of vice as a tolerable if necessary evil. According to de Barros, "Seattle's founders encouraged this underworld vice while maintaining an image of respectability. This contradiction in the city's psychology…would endure for many decades. Running a 'wide open' town was a profitable tradition that involved everyone from the cop on the beat to the mayor and chief of police."[174] Listening to "Seattle Hunch," then, indexes one of the many ways in which the (inter)national jazz scene plotted routes through Seattle as well as up and down the entire west coast in the early 20th century. This section focuses on the cultivation of a local jazz tradition in Seattle, which was always in conversation with the national, and the international. The invention of the phonograph and the

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[172] A casual internet search of Jelly Roll Morton songs will bring up a plethora of tracks with titles such as "Shreveport Stomp," "King Porter Stomp," "Kansas City Stomps," "Steamboat Stomp," "New Orleans Blues," and "London Blues." Here there seems to be some connection to the ways in which "groove" and locale are bound up with one another. By writing tunes that resonated with the local scene Morton demonstrates his prowess as a musician and composer through his ability to identify and arrange musical tunes in congruency with the expectations of local audience in the locale, as well as the ways in which national and international bodies imagine the specificity of each discrete locale vis-à-vis the inter/national scale.

[173] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 1.

[174] Ibid, pp. 2.

coinciding ability of music to circulate more freely are important markers of modernity and vital aspects of the Seattle music scene.

Jazz musicians such as Morton liked Seattle and frequented the locale because it was a good place to earn money. This was particularly true for black musicians who dealt with segregation, diminished wages, and exclusion in many other US cities. And while segregation and exclusion were still significant factors shaping music and life in general throughout the PNW, as demonstrated in the preceding section, Seattle nonetheless offered black musicians a potential to earn a reasonable living. With the preponderance of military bases, the city's position on the edge of international travel across the pacific, and the history of Seattle's governmental 'open policy' toward vice (including alcohol, opium, gambling, and prostitution) which undergirded the development of the black club scene, money flowed more readily through Seattle's black neighborhoods than other Black places in the US. In fact prominent Creole jazz musician Joe Darensbourg exclaimed (to the shock of many'a "refined" Seattleite) that during the 20s and early 30s Seattle was comparable to New Orleans in the sense that it had "legitimate red-light districts, which consisted of Jackson Street, King Street, and Yesler Way,"; indeed Seattle was a "money town," for black musicians and the classes of people associated with labor therein.[175] In this way, while vaudeville performance and minstrelsy had directly affected the production and organization of racial hierarchy and segregation in Seattle at the turn of the century, the city's history of black jazz performance and the Black owned jazz clubs challenges this history by reorganizing public spaces of performance to redirect the flow of capital partially through the cities

[175] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 20.

segregated and structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. If as Eric Porter posits, jazz is both a discrete musical formation with flexible if porous boundaries, and a discursive field through which African Americans work to produce meaning,[176] then black Seattle's particular enactments of jazz belay the black communal efforts to construct a community and a sociality in excess of the dehumanizing impositions of racism, segregation, and anti-blackness. Or as Porter explains "jazz played a socially and emotionally affirming role in the African American community, with the potential of transforming American society as a whole."[177]

In the years following the Great War (WWI) Seattle's infrastructure rapidly expanded and the city became more developed. According to Quintard Taylor, "The black community ethos was also fashioned by the way the city's African Americans entertained themselves. Although black Seattle numbered fewer than 4,000 people before World War II, its nightlife was remarkably vibrant."[178] In these contexts Seattle's vice district, the location of black jazz and social clubs, ran west to east from First to Fifteenth avenue, between East Yesler Way to the north and South King Street to the south. Within this area, the corner of 12th and Jackson was the heart of the black jazz district where "Seattle rocked with wine, women, whoopee – and jazz."[179] This area ran seamlessly into the Central District, Seattle's burgeoning black neighborhood in the first

[176] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002), pp. 25.
[177] Ibid., pp. 17.
[178] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994.
[179] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 2.

decades of 20th century. E. Russell "Noodles" Smith[180] and Burr "Blackie" Williams were two early prominent club owners and entrepreneurs in Seattle's black community. The legends of Seattle's black jazz scene such as Edythe Turnham (née Pane), Jelly Roll Morton, Oscar Holden, Palmer Johnson, and Evelyn Williamson would develop in clubs established and ran by Smith and Williams.

Drawn by the 1909 Alaska Pacific Yukon Exposition Smith came to Seattle form Denver. Smith arrived with $17,000, a sum that various people believe he won while gambling in Tonopah, Nevada while still "Others say he earned it pimping in a mining camp."[181] While speculations on how Smith obtained the money that he brought to Seattle remain unsubstantiated one way or the other, pimping, drugs, and gambling are fundamental elements of the black jazz clubs in Seattle where musicians rubbed shoulders with underworld figures in what Eric Porter identifies as "the sporting life." According to Porter, "Musicians encountered prostitutes, dancers, and other women whose vocations made them 'commodified sex objects' in an economy in which black men sought to reclaim their own sense of masculinity by partaking of the 'sporting life,'."[182] The key here is that "the sporting life" elevated black male status within the jazz milieu by degrading the creativity and artistic prowess of black women cultural producers[183] and limiting their participation to roles linked with sex.[184] However, this

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[180] According to Paul de Barros, "Smith was a gambler and a businessman who was nicknamed 'Noodles' because no matter how much he risked in a crap game, he always set aside enough cash to buy a bowl of noodles before he went to bed," (de Barros 2).

[181] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 2.

[182] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists*. UC Press, 2002, pp. 28.

[183] The 1929 short movie *St. Louis Blues* starring Bessie Smith demonstrates the tensions of gender and power within the black Jazz scene. < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6kbQmjD_Jk >

does not mean that black women were absent from the stages and prominent positions in jazz clubs along Jackson Avenue. In fact black female artists figure prominently in the foundation and elaboration of Seattle's black music scene. For example pianist and bandleader Edythe Turnham, who moved to Seattle in 1926, formed the *Knights of Syncopation* one of the best-known and most popular bands in the PNW through the 1930s.[185] Turnham's style of music was characterized as toeing the line between ragtime and Dixieland and upon hearing her play at the Jazzland Cafe in 1934 Duke Ellington purportedly told Turnham "Girl, you sure can play. You sure are heavy."[186]

The constructions of gender and power within Seattle's black jazz community arise from the internal group dynamics created by the subjugated position of black people in the PNW's social hierarchy as well as from myriad assumptions about gender and the supposedly different natures of men and women. Eric Porter explains

> Members of the American jazz community believed that women did not have the strength to excel on horns and drums or in certain styles (stride, for instance) on the often-feminized piano. They believed, too, that success in music depended on the ability to negotiate continued absence from home and family responsibilities and the means to survive dangerous performance spaces without damage to one's body or reputation…From the beginning, then, bands, musicians' organizations and unions, and the jazz education system were generally organized along the lines of patriarchal authority and "male fraternity."[187]

In this way, a combination of essentialist views on gender and ability more broadly along with the patriarchal organization of structures within the jazz world affected the situation of black women within Seattle's jazz movement. However, it would be a mistake to

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[184] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists.* UC Press, 2002, pp. 28.
[185] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 24.
[186] Ibid, pp. 25.
[187] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists.* UC Press, 2002, pp. 29.

conflate black men's articulation of an emergent modern identity in relation to forms of oppression and exclusion with the kind of patriarchal power articulated within the white supremacist culture of mainstream US. Originating from the impacts of anti-black racism and the coinciding denial of manhood, black men embraced differentiated performances of the "sporting life" as means of articulating a recognized and self-determined subject position in the public sphere of US culture. Again, Eric Porter is instructive as he writes

> In a world where most working-class black men had few opportunities to safely challenge existing social relations, verbal performances (urban toasts, the dozens, and so forth), sexual play, and 'spectacular' sartorial display composed a 'masculinist politics of style' that articulated a new urban identity, demanded respect, and critiqued race relations while affirming a gendered hierarchy.[188]

Furthermore, the "masculinist politics of style" functioned as means of obtaining the recognition of creative genius so often denied to black men who were assumed to be mentally inferior under the logics of white supremacy. Rather than excusing the articulation of a masculine centered gendered hierarchy or assuming an apologist position, understanding the impetus of a "masculinist politics of style" requires situating the gendered performativity of black masculinity within the prevailing contexts of black exclusion and repression. The strategy, while successful in some regards, ultimately is untenable as it reproduces patterns of gender and naturalization that fundamentally buttress white supremacist power and prevailing class structures in US society.

Returning to "Noddles" Smith and "Blackie" Williams, they opened their first social club – the *Dumas Club* located at 1040 Jackson Street – in 1917.[189] In 1920 Smith and partner Jimmy Woodland opened the *Entertainers Club* on 12th and Jackson Street

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[188] Porter, Eric C., *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists.* UC Press, 2002, pp. 28 – 29.

[189] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 3.

and two years later Smith and Williams rebranded the *Entertainers Club* dubbing it *The Black and Tan*.[190] *The Black and Tan*, a colloquial reference to a club that admitted both black and white patrons, would become Seattle's most prominent jazz club with everyone from Reb Spikes' So Different Orchestra to Eubie Blake, Louis Jordan, and Duke Ellington playing the venue between 1922 and the late 1940s.[191] By the end of the Roaring Twenties "Noodles" Smith was the premier businessman and club owner in Seattle's Central District neighborhood. Marshal Royal, the legendary alto saxophonist for Count Basie recalled, "Twelfth and Jackson *belonged* to Noodles Smith. He was the ward boss. He was the biggest dude in that part of town. You see, in those days you couldn't open up a nightclub unless you passed by Noodles Smith."[192]

The club scene elaborated by Smith, Williams, and others attracted numerous luminary jazz performers who contributed to the development of a distinct PNW jazz sound. Oscar Holden, often referred to as "the patriarch of Seattle jazz" is seen as one of the most influential performers and teachers in the region and it was Jelly Roll Morton who brought him to Seattle. According to de Barros the story goes that

> One night in August 1920, the great Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, who claimed to have "invented" jazz sat down at the piano at Seattle's Entertainers Club…and shook the house until the sun came up. Playing with Morton was Seattle clarinetist and pianist Oscar Holden, who had joined Jelly's band on a gig in Vancouver, British Columbia, and would later become the number one piano man in town.[193]

Holden was born in Nashville in 1887 and spent his early years playing on Fate Marable's Mississippi riverboat outings where New Orleans based musicians such as

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[190] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 3.
[191] Ibid.
[192] ibid.
[193] Ibid., pp. 1.

Louis Armstrong perfected their performance.[194] The reason that Holden is so significant is that his styles and sensibilities would go on to create groove that many'a black Seattleite came to admire. The following description of Holden encapsulates the desires and proclivities of black Seattle's music-literate jazz musicians scene, "Holden was a powerhouse player with a deep classical background and a stride style similar to Fats Waller's. He could transpose tunes into all twelve keys, accompany singers sensitively, and work with a band or play solo all night long and keep it interesting."[195] The focus on music literacy as opposed to playing by ear, an emphasis on classical training, and transposing tunes across key constitute core elements of the Seattle aesthetic sensibility. At this junction, a discussion of jazz, art, and aesthetic practices is warranted in order to frame the discussion of PNW region sound.

In *Aesthetic Theory* Frankfort School theorist T.W. Adorno asserts that modern artistic practices underwent a fundamental transformation at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. According to Adorno, "The great expanse of the unforeseen which revolutionary artistic movements began to explore in 1910 did not live up to the promise of happiness and adventure it had held out…To put it another way, the autonomy art gained after having freed itself from its earlier cult function and its derivatives depended on the idea of humanity. As society grew less humane, art became less autonomous."[196] While Adorno is not speaking specifically about jazz or music in general, we can nonetheless extend Adorno's claim to the contexts of Seattle's musical production, and thereby register the impacts of modern shifts in artistic production upon

[194] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 13
[195] Ibid.
[196] Adorno, Theodor, et al. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 1.

the west coast jazz productions. Furthermore as Adorno asserts, movement into modernity is one of diminishing humanity, a trajectory with particularly deleterious effects for black people who, given the histories of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, were always already position outside of the boundaries of humanity. Paradoxically, given this history of open negation of humanity, and the concomitant ways in which African Americans challenged these arrangements through religion and music, black jazz musicians were in a unique location to view the shifts of modernity, and to respond creatively to them especially through music and improvisation. In this way, jazz can be interpreted as a response to modern shifts, not only in terms of urbanization and industrialization, but also to the ways in which these processes tend to dehumanize people and communities through atomization, fragmentation, displacement, and migration.

However, I am anxious of any surface level reading of black jazz in Seattle (or any other black artist practices) wherein the music played by musicians in Seattle during the 1920s and 30s becomes about producing "happiness" in the contexts of the sorrows created by US society. While the moments of joy produced during performance, for both black musicians and their black audiences in the construction of community in Seattle are important acts and significant in and of themselves beyond academic 'analysis,' the desire to read art "as a dispenser of solace," is indeed a "perverse bourgeois" practice.[197] Proceeding through an historical materialist analytic Adorno explains that,

> Works of art, it is said, leave the real empirical world behind, producing a counter-realm of their own, a realm which is an existent like the empirical world. This claim is false; it implies an *a priori* affirmation of that which is, no matter how 'tragic' the content of the work of art may be. Those

[197] Adorno, Theodor, et al. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 2.

> clichés about art casting a glow of happiness and harmony over an unhappy and divided real world are loathsome because they make a mockery of any emphatic concept of art by looking only at perverse bourgeois practices such as the employment of art as dispenser of solace.[198]

The a priori affirmation of the material order of existence in this reading of art is significant point of analysis. Black jazz in Seattle was never outside of or beyond the material order of race, racism, segregation, and economy though neither did the artistic practice of black musicians and communities collapse under these prevailing arrangements. Rather, through improvisation, collective in the beginning (19-theens - 20s) and increasingly individual (1920s -30s)[199] black musicians seized that material which already existed, including racism, segregation, and oppression, and re-*arranged* and re-*composed* them; altering the relationships of space and place, currents of money, the positions of material flows in social commerce, reorienting rather than departing from them. Black Seattle's proclivity for 'swing' rather than 'Dixieland' sounds illustrates an example of this re-arrangement.

Descriptions of Seattle's black jazz scene emphasize the community's collective aversion to "Dixieland" sounds and sensibilities in jazz; instead Seattle's black jazz community favored a 'swinging' sound that privileges aspects such as composition, music literacy, and the swinging complexities of big band sounds, written by the likes of Duke Ellington.[200] Black Seattle favored the swing sound and played predominantly 4-beat arrangements, not the 2 beat stuff of Dixieland. Part of what makes the Seattle sound unique is precisely the eschewing of a "Dixieland" sound as something that calls

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[198] Adorno, Theodor, et al. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by C. Lenhardt, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 2.
[199] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 6 – 7.
[200] Ibid., pp. 22.

up Seattle's local history of minstrelsy and the kinds of anti-blackness that most of Seattle's black population had left the South to escape. Thus the southern roots of the black population in the PNW would not tolerate musical routes through 'Dixieland' in the PNW. Oscar Holden serves as a significant example of this kind of sentiment. On the other hand, given the specific histories of vaudeville and minstrel performances in the PNW, the decision to turn away from Dixieland sounds reminiscent of blackface stereotypes can also be read as a way in which Seattle's black jazz musicians were cognizant of the Seattle's specific racial history, and the impact of this history on public performances of music and blackness in Seattle. Furthermore, they sough to challenge and transform the impacts of this history through the form of music they performed in public spaces.

This discussion of region and style (West Coast Jazz, Seattle Jazz) broaches a conversation of style in jazz that necessitates an explication of "groove" and "sensibility," in music. Additionally, Seattle's incorporation into the national jazz scene – the local musicians' ability to listen to and pull apart compositions by the likes of Duke Ellington (a preferred favorite) – was dependent on the circulation the phonograph. Thus the grooves into which jazz music was encoded on the surface of records were decoded and reconstituted in motion by performers in Seattle jazz scenes.[201] Steve Feld's work around the concept of "Lift-up-over Sounding" is extremely useful here.[202]

Feld's conceptualization of the 'groove' is germane as it helps to analyze the uses of jazz amongst Seattle's black community. According to Feld "In vernacular a 'groove' refers to an intuitive sense of style as process, a perception of a cycle in motion, a form of

[201] Breaking down and rolling up.

[202] Feld, Steven. "Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style, or 'Lift-up-over Sounding': Getting into the Kaluli Groove." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 20, 1988, p. 74 - 113.

organizing pattern being revealed, a recurrent clustering of elements through time…Groove and style are distilled essences, crystallizations of collaborative expectancies in time."[203] Thus, through the jazz idiom black musicians and audiences produced a social fabric that, while composed of essential elements of US society such as racial formation, segregation, and isometric power relations along racial and gendered lines, was a musical formation in excess of the spatial and temporal boundaries set by racial capitalist patriarchy, by producing alternative presents and futures. Through the constitution of inter/multiracial listening communities within Seattle's black jazz clubs themselves, such as the *Black and Tan*, as well as by altering the flow of money across lines drawn by commercial and residential segregation, Seattle's black jazz groove was predicated on the alternatives to normative relationships established through settler colonial formations of private property, and articulated in part through improvisation.

Part of the productive potential of 'the groove,' is the capacity for community production as anticipation works to create a sense of belonging in listeners. Feld explains,

> Instantly perceived, and often attended by pleasurable sensations ranging from arousal to relaxation, "getting into the groove" describes how a socialized listener anticipates pattern in a style, momentarily able to track and appreciate subtleties vis-à-vis overt regularities… "Getting into the groove" also describes a feelingful participation, a positive physical and emotional attachment, a move from being "hip to it" to "getting down" and being "into it."[204]

This process of "getting down" and being "into it" is similar to black religious worship practiced in churches such as First AME (discussed in depth in chapter two). However, there is a key difference; while worship and musical traditions within the black church

[203] Feld, Steven. "Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style, or 'Lift-up-over Sounding': Getting into the Kaluli Groove." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 20, 1988, pp. 74.
[204] Ibid., pp. 75.

flow from the religious traditions and spirituals developed by enslaved African peoples in the US, jazz as an evolution of black blues traditions concerns itself with the secular and the material as opposed to the sacred and the otherworldly. Drawing a differentiation between "slave spirituals" and "slave seculars" theologian James Cone expounds the historic development of the blues in relation to the experiences of black people with slavery and violent oppression:

> While [slave] seculars were not strictly atheistic as defined by modern Western philosophy, they nonetheless uncover the difficulties black people encountered when they attempted to relate white Christian categories to their situation of oppression…The blues reflect the same existential tension. Taking form sometime after the Emancipation and Reconstruction, they invited black people to embrace the reality and truth of black experience…And implied in the blues is a stubborn refusal to go beyond the existential problem and substitute otherworldly answers. It is not that the blues reject God; rather they *ignore* God by embracing the joys and sorrows of life…[205]

Jazz, concerning itself with the body, playing, dancing, swinging ,and singing performed in spaces of vice which included drinking, drugs, and prostitution offers a material and embodied way of confronting the existential problem of violence, racism, and repression in US society. These corporal responses are often set at odds with the more respectable Victorian strategies employed in church and club settings leading many to draw a sharp distinction between blues and spirituals, evening going so far as to denounce the blues tradition as vulgar and licentious. However, Cone views the dichotomy between the blues and spirituals as specious preferring to call the blues "secular spirituals." Cone explains, "They are *secular* in the sense that they confine their attention solely to the immediate and affirm the bodily expression of black soul, including its sexual

[205] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 99.

manifestation. They are *spirituals* because they are impelled by the same search for the truth of black experience."[206]

Within Seattle's black community the tensions between the sporting life evinced in jazz clubs and middle-class Victorian sensibilities articulated through clubs and the AME church often took on elements of class dynamics. According to de Barros, "Residents of East Madison were not always sanguine about their less inhibited brethren on Jackson Street…the division between the two neighborhoods…[was apparent] one staid, quiet, and religious and the other noisy, illegal, and profane."[207] However, this dichotomy is again revealed to be porous if not artificial because,

> In spite of such class tensions, the two neighborhoods [the Central District and East Madison] enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. For while young black musicians may have learned to jam all night in "hot" swing bands on Jackson Street, it was within the secure and hopeful boundaries of East Madison, with its church socials and concert band picnics, that many of them acquired the technical skills – not to say the aspirations – that it took to become quality players.[208]

This robust black musical community in Seattle would have many impacts on the US music industry, both large and small with the likes of Ray Charles and Quincey Jones coming of age in Seattle's iconic jazz scene. The community would also produce a prolific guitarist, Jimi Hendrix, who would go on to revolutionize the Rock and Roll genre. Chapter four of *Didn't It Rain?* engages with Hendrix's prolific guitar and situates his performances in the early 1960's within the larger contexts of Seattle's black music scene limned above, as well as the musical tradition of electric guitar performances elaborated by Sister Rosetta Tharpe.

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[206] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 100.
[207] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 4 – 5.
[208] Ibid, pp. 5.

Figures

Figure 2 – Nettie Asberry in Battenburg Opera Coat
Nettie Asberry (1865-1968) showing her Battenburg opera coat made by her sister Martha Townsend. The opera coat won a silver medal at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. Picture taken in Tacoma, 1941. (HistoryLink.org Essay 8632)

Photo by Rhodes Bros., Courtesy UW Special Collections (PH Coll 663.2)

Chapter 4 – 'Oh my Lord, How it Rained!': Talking Guitars, Blues Epistemologies, and a 'Politics of Transfiguration'

Epigraph

Oh I love you so, my English friends! Forever and ever until I leave this world. But I kinda feel troubled. The train is gone! But I'm gonna catch the next one. Trouble in mind, I'm blue…
- Sister Rosetta Tharpe, concert. Manchester, England, 1964

…she said. Can you comb my hair? Nobody can comb my hair! I can't even comb my hair!
- Jimi Hendrix, Seville Theatre. London, 1967

Beyond its many pleasures, music allows us to do and imagine things that may otherwise be unimaginable or seem impossible. It is more than sound…Within the African diaspora, music functions as a method of rebellion, revolution, and future visions that disrupt and challenge the manufactured differences used to dismiss, detain, and destroy communities.
- Shana L. Redmond[209]

In the simplest possible terms, by posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated would like it to be, this musical culture supplies a great deal of the courage required to go on living in the present…It contains a theodicy but moves beyond it because the profane dimensions of…racial terror made theodicy impossible.
- Paul Gilroy[210]

Introduction

In the epigraphic quote attributed to Paul Gilroy above the author offers a reading of musical culture that highlights its role in sustaining black life in contexts of repression, subordination, and racial terror. Redmond locates this courage by identifying the ways in which imagination functions to intervene upon, and potentially disrupt, an extant system of race, difference, and inequality that is detrimental to black communities. In both of these quotes Redmond and Gilroy reference the excessive nature of music itself. Furthermore both quotes seem to juxtapose an extant reality of 'now' based on racial hierarchy and inequality, with a yet unrealized – perhaps utopian – future reality in which these systems have been transcended. In this way, the performative enactment of music

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[209] Redmond, Shana L. *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*. NYU Press, 2013, pp. 1.
[210] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 36.

itself contains the potential to reconfigure social realities – if only momentarily, ephemerally. It is from this angle that I will begin my approach to black popular culture and performance in this chapter. In order to ground my discussion I will listen the electric guitars of two world-renowned musicians, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Jimi Hendrix, as they perform in London during the 1960s. If music contains in its excesses the possibility for imagining a radical reformulation of social relationships, one that potentially transcends the boarders and boundaries produced by racial and gendered difference, then something of this potentiality must be accessible in moments of performative enactment.

This chapter weaves a tale, tracing developments within a 'blues epistemology' – following Clyde A. Woods I use this term to identify "the blues as a widely recognized aesthetic tradition and the blues as a theory of social and economic development and change,"[211] – by establishing a genealogical link between the guitars of Tharpe and Hendrix. Furthermore, this genealogical link is at once analytical, theoretical, and metaphoric; locating the development off aesthetic practices through which Rock and Roll articulates itself as a genre – practices such as using the electric guitar as a solo instrument, playing it loud, and the arrangement of song structures to focus on the electric guitar as a moment of ecstasy – in the performative practices developed by early-to-mid 20th century Black women blues and gospel performers in the US. In other words, this chapter gestures toward the ways in which "rock's gospel roots betray its feminine

[211] Woods, Clyde Adrian. *Development Arrested: the Cotton and Blues Empire of the Mississippi Delta*. Verso, 1998, pp. 20.

heritage – a heritage largely located in the [Black] Pentecostal Church," by engaging with Tharpe's role in the post WWII blues revival that swept the United Kingdom.[212]

Sister Rosetta Tharpe was born in Cotton Plant, Arkansas in 1915 and according to Gayle Wald is "gospel [music's] original crossover artist, its first nationally known star, and the most thrilling and celebrated guitarist of its Golden Age…".[213] Furthermore, Tharpe is recognized as introducing the electric guitar into secular music, which paves the way for Rock and Roll to develop as a genre. It is important to note the originary position of the black church, and the Church Of God In Christ (COGIC) in particular, [214] within the development of Tharpe's musical performances because the church provided the foundation, the original pattern, from whence she would draw throughout her career.

Rooted in practices designed to affirm black communities in place COGIC emerged as an institution that allows black women, men, and children to worship collectively in ways that connect them with the religious sensibilities developed by their enslaved ancestors, including communal singing and dancing as forms of praise. Indeed, music and its relationship to the body are significant defining aspects of black worship practices in the COGIC because,

> …whereas mainline Protestant denominations set strict limits on rhythmic music, or anything that might stir the body to movement, COGIC admitted into its musical repertory elements of blues, work songs, and ragtime, cross-fertilizing these in glorious hybrid with slave spirituals and traditional hymns. Like speaking in tongues, exuberant singing and 'holy dancing' affirmed the body, in its instinctive response to rhythm, as an

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[212] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 10.
[213] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. viii.
[214] The Church Of God In Christ is a Pentecostal denomination "that grew out of the Holiness movement of the mid-nineteenth century," (Wald 8).

> instrument as an instrument of God. Bodies, moreover, constituted a unique percussive instrument.[215]

In these contexts, which include the blues epistemology, Tharpe developed the electric guitar as a particular instrument of performance among many corporeal performing instruments. Importantly, the performative practices that associate the electric guitar with the rock and roll genre emerge from the material contexts of black praise practices that attend to the rupture produced by systems of chattel slavery.[216] Furthermore, as the COGIC prohibited women from ordination and lay preaching during the early 20th century, the guitar emerged as a significant avenue through which Tharpe could make herself heard, indeed through which she was able to lead group worship.

Long before Hendrix would play London's Seville Theatre in the summer of 1967, Tharpe was developing and deploying many of the techniques that would come to signify rock and roll as a specific genre including loud playing and scorching hot guitar solos. According to Wald, Chicago Gospel singer Geraldine Gay Hambric recalls that "When Chuck Berry came out, I had seen all that," because she had seen Tharpe play in the church.[217] Furthermore, Alfred Miller the musical director at the COGIC in Brooklyn said of Tharpe, "She could do runs, she could do sequences, she could do arpeggios, and she could play anything with the guitar. You could say something and she could make that guitar say it…Oh, she was an artist!"[218] That Tharpe's ability to make the guitar

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[215] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 10.
[216] According James H. Cone in *Black Theology & Black Power*, "The black church was born in slavery. Its existence symbomlizes a people who were completely stripped of their African heritage as they were enslaved by the 'Christian' white man. The white master forbade the slave from any remembrance of his home land," (91).
[217] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 71.
[218] Ibid., pp. 71 – 72.

speak emerges from the Black Pentecostal tradition in which worshipers often speak in tongues is no coincidence. Rather, it is precisely this form of talking that indexes alternative geographic possibilities represented by a 'politics of transfiguration,' explored below. Furthermore, the contexts of gender and the preclusion of black women from other forms of participatory leadership in worship service influenced Tharpe's approach to the guitar and developed her unique styles of performance.

In writing on "a black sense of place" Katherine McKittrick explains that black histories are difficult to locate and cartographically map. This is due to the ways in which "Transatlantic slavery, from the slave ship and beyond, was predicated on various practices of spatialized violence that targeted black bodies and profited from erasing a black sense of place."[219] According to McKittrick these arrangements produced a critical paradox,

> An economized and enforced placelessness that demanded the enslaved work and thus be chained to the land – normalized black dispossession, white supremacy, and other colonial – racial geographies, while naturalizing the racist underpinnings of land exploitation *as* accumulation *and* freedom.[220]

Within these prevailing geographic circumstances the blues epistemology grew in the US as a theory of development and change, because 'geographies of domination' do not foreclose upon but rather reroute black geographic formations.

This chapter engages with performances of "Didn't It Rain," (1964 Manchester) by Sister Rosetta Thapre and "Foxy Lady," (1967 London) by Jimi Hendrix during their tours through the United Kingdom in 1964 and 1967 respectively. I pair readings of these performances in order to engage with the complexities of black cultural production

[219] Mckittrick, Katherine. "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place." *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 12, no. 8, 2011, pp. 948.
[220] Ibid, pp. 949.

and consumption around the Transatlantic region, and speculate on the ways in which these performative enactments offer a glimpse into the ways black communities have used music to enact a culture in excess of the limitations imposed by repression and anti-black racism. Working through the concept of geographic scale and its social construction, as articulated by Sallie A. Marston,[221] I identify the competing tensions imposed by global circuits of capitalism in the Post War period, and black uses of the blues epistemology to challenge the foundational dependence of these circuits on racial hierarchies and segregation on the one hand, and the labors of black peoples themselves on the other. In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* Angel Y. Davis explains, "Music was central to the meaning of a culture of resistance during slavery. Likewise, the blues, the most important postslavery musical genre, encouraged forms of social consciousness that challenged the dominant ideology of racism."[222]

However, in drawing a genealogical link between the performances of Tharpe and Hendrix in these European contexts, I am more interested in focusing specifically on the ways in which black musical performances, and particularly the guitar itself, allow for the articulation of social relationships – and coinciding geographic possibilities – that exceed the limits imposed by the circulation of black music as a commodity for consumption and profit. In other words, while I acknowledge the importance and roll of emergent transnational capitalism, this chapter is less an analysis of capitalism itself, and more of an engagement with black cultural production as a site of performance and the possibility

[221] Marston, Sallie A. "The Social Construction of Scale." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 2, no. 24, 2000, pp. 220.
[222] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 120.

of something that exceeds extant hierarchies and spatial outcomes of systems of racial meaning.

Moreover, I seek to highlight the active participation of black peoples in their own lives. As Shana L. Redmond demonstrates in the introduction to the monograph *Anthem,*

> Beyond its many pleasures, music allows us to do and imagine things that may otherwise be unimaginable or seem impossible. It is more than sound…Within the African diaspora, music functions as a method of rebellion, revolution, and future visions that disrupt and challenge the manufactured differences used to dismiss, detain, and destroy communities.[223]

Redmond's crucial claim that music cannot be reduced purely sound stages the departure point for this chapter in which the black cultural productions, "Didn't It Rain?" by Tharpe and "Foxy Lady," by Hendrix, are approached as complex processes wherein culture is not something pure and fixed, but rather produced through the activities and actions of black people themselves; ways of playing, hearing, listening, moving, and knowing. Furthermore in staging the departure point in England, a place where the relative popular success of first Tharpe and later Hendrix, would serve to challenge the authenticity of each artists, I wish to think about the ways in which travel and movement across the Atlantic region, the experience of relative 'freedom of mobility' enables black artists to approach the production of space itself as a flexible and contested process that can be intervened upon. In this way, mobility functions as a key part of black performers' experiences with 'relative freedom.' Explaining the Atlantic regional formation Gilroy writes, "In opposition to both of these nationalist or ethnically absolute approaches, I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the

[223] Redmond, Shana L. *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora*. NYU Press, 2013, pp. 1.

Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective."[224]

Engaging with these concert events affords an opportunity to think about blackness, culture, geography, and musical performance in the contexts of what Paul Gilroy explains as the 'the Atlantic,' region above. Beginning with a moment in which Jimi Hendrix's popularity was growing tremendously in United Kingdom, predicated on the popular consumption of his sexualized blackness as demonstrated below, this chapter listens to and engages with the guitar performance of Hendrix in order to think about legacies of chattel slavery, racial formation and segregation, and ongoing practices of anti-blackness as they structure the places of London and Seattle and their relationship to one anther within the black Diaspora. This process of connecting the PNW with the boarder circuits of the Atlantic region expands and refocuses conversations of black diaspora and cultural production, stretching Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic" across the North American continent to the Pacific. While black feminist scholars such as Michelle Stephens have astutely critiqued the position and function of masculinity within black diasporic elaborations,[225] I deploy the concept herein because of the ways in which diaspora offers the possibility of conceiving of what Gilroy calls "a hemispheric order of racial domination," and resulting challenges to these arrangements.[226] By pairing readings of both Hendrix's and Tharpe's musical performances, I am also seeking to locate the ways in which music has functioned across space and over time as a particular sonic modality through which black women, men, and children, contest the spatial

[224] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 15.
[225] Stephens, Michelle. "What Is This Black in Black Diaspora?" *Small Axe*, vol. 13, no. 2, June 2009, pp. 26–38.
[226] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 27.

arrangements of racism as they flow from the structures and repetitive practices of anti-blackness, in particular segregation, the limitation of geographic mobility, and concomitant economic repression.

Among other significant aspects, the moments of these two songs allow me to look at the construction of a Black Atlantic diasporic musical culture that stretches from Seattle, to Arkansas, and across the Pond to the Britain, in order to say something about the world produced in the wake of the Transatlantic 'trade' in African peoples. While other works have situated this analysis of chattel slavery in relation to the development of capitalism as a world system of commerce, this chapter considers the attendant racialized (re)production of social relationships, and the consumption culture as focal points of analysis. The benefit of approaching cultural objects, indeed of (black) cultural studies as a loose constellation of practices, is partially in the approach to culture that locates it at the complex intersections of economy, politics, and social reproduction in a given moment. According to Stuart Hall, "the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender and ethnicity."[227] By listening to the guitars of both Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Jimi Henrix I observe a genealogy of cultural production that expresses black culture as a form of redress, in the material contexts of post slavery social systems of white supremacy and racism. This "politics of transfiguration" [228] as I elaborate further below, demonstrates the ways in which black culture following Emancipation in the US functioned as a means of constructing and passing on ways of being, knowing, and existing in order not just to resist but to exceed

[227] Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, Routledge, 1996, pp. 444.
[228] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 37.

the productions of US society that were fundamentally dependent on the subordination of black peoples, and the attempted reinscription of the social relationships established under slavery in the guise of 'freedom.' Furthermore, the guitar itself is an important formation because tracing the emergence of the instrument into popular music demonstrates the distinctly feminine roots of both rock and roll (as a genre), and also the 'Blues Tradition,' or Epistemology, as identified by Clyde Woods, Angela Y. Davis, Hazel Carby, and LeRoi Jones among others.

The concerns for this chapter are twofold: firstly, that black culture is itself a site to identify black efforts and actions –*improvisations*[229] – of redress to domination and white supremacy as they are structure by slavery and subsequent forms of segregation and violence following Emancipation. Secondly, this redress, this improvised movement toward the utopian, is articulated within explicitly gendered contexts of experience that impact black women and men's collective experiences with mobility. Noting the centrality of decision making and social relationships to the newly experienced freedom of emancipated African Americans Davis writes,

> The former slaves' status had not undergone a radical transformation – they were no less impoverished than they had been during slavery. It was the status of their personal relationships that was revolutionized. For the first time in the history of the African presence in North America, masses of black

[229] Here I would like to offer a tangential though on black improvisation by drawing attention to a key difference between improvising and planning. Planning deals with speculation and preparation based on a number of known and unknown variables. Planning in this sense is quite a bit more abstract than improvising. Improvising is more concrete in that it deals with the current existence of real things, objects, and circumstances. Rather than attempting to plan for future circumstances by preparing in the current, improvisation manipulates existing circumstances in order to attempt to affect future circumstances. Given the social relationships under slavery and proscription of African communities from participation in the normative means of "planning" in US society such as voting, land ownership, etcetera, improvisation becomes an essential means of black resistance that is indexed in Music among other places.

> women and men were in a position to make autonomous decisions regarding the sexual partnerships into which they entered.[230]

The blue epistemology explicitly registers this transformation and engages with these new forms of freedom not only in lyrical content, but also in style and approach to musical performance. Of note, and in contrast to the collective focus of previous forms of music produced by slaves such as spirituals and work songs, is the nascent expression of individual desires. "The blues…articulated a new form of valuation of individual emotional needs and desires."[231]

Listening to "Foxy Lady," and "Didn't It Rain?" respectively, and reading for the blues epistemology identifiable therein, is important because it locates gender and class lines of formation within black communities that develop in excess of the mechanisms of control imposed by mainstream US culture following Emancipation. Geographic scale is an important aspect of the ways in which Black musical productions engage with and challenge dominant spatial arrangements signaled by segregation, and the gendered productions of private and public spaces. According to Sallie A. Marston notes "scale is not necessarily a preordained hierarchical framework for ordering the world – local, regional, national and global. It is instead a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents."[232] Due to the relative freedom of mobility following Emancipation for at least a portion of the Black community indexed by the Great Migration, multiscalar experiences are embedded within blues traditions, thereby identifying scale as an important tool deployed by black

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[230] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 4.
[231] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 5.
[232] Marston, Sallie A. "The Social Construction of Scale." *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 2, no. 24, 2000, pp. 220.

communities challenging racism, segregation, and economic exploitation. Black people seized the musical scale in order manipulate and tentatively – that is partially and temporarily – reorganize scales of geographic production and reproduction.

In order to contextualize musical performance as a means of geographic contestation I root the development of the electric guitar in Sister Rosetta Tharpe's elaboration of the instrument in the black church, and the subsequent transatlantic Blues revival of the 1950s, thereby constructing an alternative genealogy for rock and roll performance – one situated within the blues epistemology – which partially dislocates normative understandings of rock as a white masculine heterosexist genre; a formation contingent upon coinciding 'geographies of domination.'[233] In the specific contexts of Seattle, listening to Hendrix disrupts the normative narrative of Seattle that erases the presence and contributions of the city's historic black community. In this way, this chapter partially rearticulates the geographic production of Seattle by imagining its black community as part of the 'Black Atlantic' region.

PART I – Sister Tharpe the 'Holly Roller,' and the post WWII Blues Revival in the UK

It is significant that Tharpe's music, indeed her entire performance, blended the sacred and the secular; at once religious and holy, secular and profane. Davis explains, "With the blues came the designations 'God's music' and 'the Devil's music.' The former was performed in church…the latter was performed in jook joints, circuses, and traveling shows."[234] But the division between the sacred and the secular was never as

[233] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. x.
[234] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 6.

final or complete as their Manichean pairing might seem. While sex and sexuality seemed to be one significant difference between music blues music and God's music, both the music of the church and the secular music of the party and vice were rooted in old traditions of black religion developed under slavery. According to James H. Cone in *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*, both forms of music are grounded in the bedrock of a search for truth in the black experience.[235] Sister Rosetta Tharpe's musical career reflects this complicated and interrelated nature between the sacred and the secular, as her music manifests this same search for truth and sense making in contexts of suffering and joy. In my analysis below the song "Didn't It Rain?," ostensibly religious in nature, is an example of the blurring of the lines between these two genres.

Dubbed the "Holy Roller," much of Tharpe's black (and blues) authenticity was also associated with her religiosity. Rather than resolving the tension between the sacred and the secular by presenting herself as either holy, or not, Tharpe's embodiment of both (or perhaps neither) is significant; the interstice. For the black women musicians who elaborated the blues tradition through popular recordings in the 1920s, and 1930s (including Tharpe), the imposition of normative gender in US society often forced them to occupy multiple locations simultaneously. As Hazel Carby puts it, "It is not that women exist either in a public or in a private or domesticated space, but rather that they exist in both, and it is the relation and interdependence between them that need to be explored."[236] In the space created by the multiple overlapping subject positions embodied by Tharpe, the blues epistemology emerged as way of making sense of the complicated triangulation of blackness, gender, and sexuality in the post-Reconstruction

[235] Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: an Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 1991, pp. 100.
[236] Carby, Hazel V. "In Body and Spirit: Representing Black Women Musicians." *Black Music Research Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1991, pp. 184.

elaboration of power and white supremacy in the US. This is why it is important to identify and follow the feminine roots (and routes) of blues traditions and subsequently rock and roll.

A decade before The Jimi Hendrix Experience would perform "Foxy Lady," in London Sister Rosetta Tharpe began a tour of the United Kingdom in 1957. Invited by Chris Barber, the Transatlantic tour offered Tharpe an opportunity to revitalize and extend her career, already spanning three decades. Tharpe's second international engagement was scheduled to be a "three week, twenty-city British tour, for which she was reputedly to be paid £10,000, or roughly $28,500."[237] Indeed, Tharpe's star burned bright in the UK where she was welcomed eagerly.

Tharpe's emergence onto the world stage as a star of the crossover Gospel/blues musical traditions coincided with a postwar blues revival across the UK. In the wake of Nazism and world war, a new generation white British public sought articulation in part through African American music. According to Wald "British blues and jazz fans not only listened to records, but formed their own bands and spent time studying the music, compiling discographies, and starting blues and jazz journals."[238] By consuming blackness for its proximity to suffering under racism in the US, the blues were approached as a raw material through which a new modern kind of white social consciousness could emerge following the horrors of war and Holocaust. In this way the blues undergirded the formation of *many* modern kinds of public identities. Or as "John Broven, an Englishman who later cofounded *Juke Blues* magazine" would reflect: "there was that kind of moralistic approach to it. We felt that by supporting the blues, we were

[237] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 157.
[238] Ibid, pp. 158.

supporting the civil rights movement."[239] Yet the blues formation as it came to be adopted across racial lines was not always (purely) an anti-racist articulation. For while Tharpe enjoyed relative fame, success, and money in the UK – Tharpe was paid on time, in cash, and welcome in hotels and restaurants in contrast to the US – her music and public performances were nonetheless consumed as popular encounters with authentic blackness produced by US structures of racism and black suffering, thereby buttressing racial formation undergirded by white supremacy and fallacious imaginations of racial purity.[240]

While Tharpe possessed many skills that made her a natural star in the UK, it was her groundbreaking use of the electric guitar as a solo instrument that left a tremendous impression on fans and the music scene more broadly. After seeing Tharpe at a venue in London Andy Hoogenboom reflected, "Not only were we not used to playing blistering guitar, but we weren't used to a woman playing blistering guitar…she was ripping the wallpaper off, you know. What you have to understand is that we were only just starting to play electric guitars."[241]

Many have asked, how did Tharpe learn to play in this fashion? Tharpe, describing herself as an autodidact, attributes her unique abilities to God.[242] But what is germane to this argument is that Tharpe's guitar emerges out of the black church in the blues tradition of explanation as a response to the realities and expectations that she faced as a black woman born in the early 1900s. In other words, we can hear Tharpe's

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[239] Ibid, pp. 161.
[240] "Racial Formation." *Racial Formation in the United States*, by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Routledge, 1994, pp. 55–58.
[241] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 174.
[242] Ibid, pp. 163.

development of the electric guitar as a solo instrument with a unique sound capable of capturing audiences as a response to the attempted imposition of normative gender logics that precluded black women from preaching in the COGIC, and sought to limit their horizons to spheres of domesticity. In this way, Hendrix follows feminine roots as he develops his electric guitar as an extension of the blues tradition of explanation in "Foxy Lady" read below. For the reader will recall that before Tharpe, there was Memphis Minnie.[243]

PART II – Hendrix, Hair, Segregation, and Foxy Ladies

Achieving notable circulation and lasting popularity, "Foxy Lady," has become one of Hendrix's most recognizable songs. Released in the spring of 1967, the song was still quite new when the Jimi Hendrix Experience performed it at the Seville Theatre in London during June of that same year.[244] I have selected this song in an early iteration primarily because the song reveals its blues and jazz roots (and routes) straight out of the gate. Furthermore, as I am expressly interested in listening to, and ruminating on, the performance of the electric guitar itself and establishing a genealogical connection between Tharpe's and Hendrix's performances in the UK, the blues sound of Hendrix's guitar in the opening portion of the song is a principle connection that I draw.

As Hendrix introduces the song "Foxy Lady," to the (mostly white) crowd on the night of June 4, he frames the song and its performance in the broader social dynamics of

[243] Early practitioners of this loud aggressive approach to the guitar include Memphis Minnie, whose guitar performances lead some critics to the conclusion that she played the guitar "like a man." In reality, this proclamation is flipped on its head (how Hegelian) as it was men in subsequent genres such as Rock n' Roll who would play like the early blues women in order to affect a genre and style.

[244] More information, including the set list can be found through *set list wiki* online at <https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/the-jimi-hendrix-experience/1967/saville-theatre-london-england-3ddcda7.html> accessed November 18, 2019.

race, racial formation, intimate contact, and the quotidian as he exclaims, "…she said. Can't nobody comb my hair! I can even comb my hair." And while neither the specific content nor contexts of what "she said" are available to me – indeed who was speaking with Hendrix? On what grounds did they engage? – Hendrix nonetheless connects the song itself to his daily experiences navigating the social contexts in which he found himself. In speaking about racism, blackness, and hair Kobena Mercer posits, "Although dominant ideologies of race (and the way they dominate) have changed, the legacy of this biologizing and totalizing racism is traced as a presence in everyday comments made about our hair."[245] In this way, Hendrix's use of this anecdote to frame the performance of his new song "Foxy Lady," is not incidental, but rather instructive. This sets up the introductory guitar riff as a response to the lived experiences produced under transnational structures racial formation, blackness, and racism. Indeed, the use of the blues as a means of theorizing and navigating the world is a key aspect of the 'blue epistemology' as posited by Clyde A. Woods and Angela Y. Davis engaged in this chapter.

In response this story/occurrence Hendrix makes his guitar talk to the audience. During the progression of the intro to "Foxy Lady," and indeed throughout the entire concert, the sound levels on Hendrix's guitar are elevated high enough above the accompanying instrumentation so as to drown out lyrics and even submerge the foundational rhythms set by the drum beat. This LOUD approach to guitar playing, which would come to define the emergent Rock 'n Roll genre that developed during the 1960s, is demonstrative of aesthetic sensibilities elaborated by Sister Rosetta Tharpe. In this

[245] Mercer, Kobena. "Black Hair/Style Politics." *New Formations*, no. 3, 1987, pp. 33.

way, the guitar not only talks to but shouts at the audience; impressing its message as imperative, impending, and immediate. Unfolding in layers, the introduction has three notable aspects that are of interest to my ear while listening: (1) a fingered note, stretched out and oscillated to strike adjacent notes; (2) feedback building in the amplifier – this is an effect of the oscillation which produces 'overlapping notes'; and (3) Hendrix initiating the main chord progression of the song by sliding into a sharpened ninth chord, the so called "Hendrix Chord."[246] Various scholars have commented on the blues and jazz roots and routes of this Hendrix Chord. For example, while speaking of the opening solo to "Foxy Lady," Keith Shadwick notes that Hendrix "casts the whole solo in the blues vernacular, using bent notes and glisses, or slides, between the notes primarily within the blues or pentatonic scales."[247] I would like to expand upon an understanding of the blues as merely a bundle of aesthetic and performative practices by framing my engagement with Hendrix's deployment of blues routes in the context of what Clyde Adrian Woods has identified as 'The Blues Tradition of Explanation.'

For scholars such as Woods the blues are more than a simple musical genre. Rather, the blues represent a way to make sense of and engage with a world that is profoundly shaped by anti-blackness, exclusion, gendered violence, change, and transformation. Woods elaborates that,

> The blues epistemology is a longstanding African American tradition of explaining reality and change. This form of explanation finds its origins in the processes of African American cultural construction within, and resistance to, the antebellum plantation regime. It crystallized during Reconstruction and its subsequent violent overthrow. After two hundred years of censorship and ten short years of open communication, the resurrected plantation bloc thoroughly demonized all autonomous forms of

[246] Shapiro, Harry, and Caesar Glebbeek. *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy*. Mandarin, 1995, pp. 144.
[247] Shadwick, Keith. *Jimi Hendrix: the Musician*. Backbeat, 2003, pp. 95.

> thought and action for another century. The blues become the channel through which the Reconstruction generation grasped reality in the midst of disbelief, critiqued the plantation regime, and organized against it.[248]

Importantly, the structural contexts of slavery, Reconstruction, and the violent re-imposition of the social, spatial, and economic arrangements of slavery under 'Jim Crow' affect the form of African American theorization rather than wholly arresting it. Furthermore, the worldview and theory of change expressed by blues formations is an explicitly class based consciousness that challenge circuits of capital and accumulation as they flow from the plantation as an economic system of extreme exploitation. Worded differently, the blues as a theoretical formation grounds its challenges to segregation and the violent imposition of 'place' that form specific aspects of spatialized expressions of anti-blackness by connecting these practices to their material economic arrangement – especially economic repression. Finally, rather than being a form that seeks to fix or arrest (flow), the blues epistemology is fundamentally about theorizing change – for example the changing same of economic exploitation and violent political repression before and after Emancipation, up North down South and out West. In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* Angela Y. Davis demonstrates that the politics of gender and sexuality undergird the Black worldview expressed through the blues.

According to Davis Emancipation had three important impacts on black communities in the US that frame the Blues Epistemology and register in the formations of blues musical traditions. Davis posits that for Black people in the postbellum US "(1) there was no longer a proscription on free individual travel; (2) education was now a realizable goal for individual men and women; (3) sexuality could be explored freely by

[248] Woods, Clyde Adrian. *Development Arrested: the Cotton and Blues Empire of the Mississippi Delta*. Verso, 1998, pp. 25.

individuals who could now enter into autonomously chosen personal relationships."[249] Relative mobility, education, and the development of individual sexuality comprise the changes and perhaps relative freedoms brought with emancipation.

Noting that black women were the first artists to record the blues, Davis demonstrates the ways in which the blues form pivots around sexuality as a significant moment structuring formations of blackness before and after the demise of Reconstruction. As Davis explains,

> What is distinctive about the blues, however, particularly in relation to other American popular musical forms of the 1920s and 1930s is their intellectual independence and representational freedom. One of the most obvious ways in which blues lyrics deviated from that era's established popular musical culture was their provocative and pervasive sexual – including homosexual – imagery.[250]

If the blues emerge as worldview that theorizes change and challenges structures of anti-blackness such as segregation, then gender and sexuality form key aspects ('Moments' in the Hegelian sense)[251] of both that anti-blackness and the ways in which black women and men challenge these arrangements. Continuing on Davis delineates specific aspects of the ways in which gender and sexuality figure into the blues epistemology as a theory of change:

> The historical contexts within which the blues developed a tradition of openly addressing both female and male sexuality reveals an ideological framework that was specifically African-American. Emerging during the decades following the abolition of slavery, the blues gave musical expression to the new social and sexual realities encountered by African Americans as free women and men. The former slaves' economic status

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[249] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 8.

[250] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 3.

[251] Following Robert C. Tucker in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, "Moment is a technical term in Hegelian philosophy meaning a vital element of thought. The term is used to stress that thought is a process, and thus that elements in a system of thought are also phases in a movement." (69).

> had not undergone a radical transformation – they were no less impoverished than they had been during slavery. It was the status of their personal relationships that was revolutionized.[252]

Sexuality and new forms of spatial mobility were important aspects the nominal/partial freedom enacted by black people in their post emancipation lives. Whereas the economic and spatial arrangements of slavery predicated on segregation and repression remained stubbornly rigid, Davis posits that a new form of autonomy emerges for black women and men in relation to personal relationships.

Sexuality, then is never incidental to blues epistemologies or the development of blackness and the politics of black identities in place. Turning to the contexts surrounding Hendrix's performance in the summer of 1967, sexuality functions as a key component of Hendrix's reception and popular success. In a quote attributed to Eric Clapton, the rock and roll artist highlights the roles of gender, sexuality, and blackness as significant aspects of Hendrix's success when he exclaims, "You know English people have a very big thing towards a spade. They really love that magic thing. They all fall for that kind of thing. Everybody and his brother in England still thinks spades have big dicks. And Jimi came over and exploited that to the limit…and everybody fell for it."[253] Clapton asserts that Hendrix's popular reception and success are contingent upon conceptions of and contacts with the authenticity of his blackness. Importantly, this discourse demonstrates the centrality of desire and consumptions of blackness that locate authenticity in places like Hendrix's genitals and hair, but also in the blues as a performative enactment. Commenting on this, Paul Gilroy posits "The overt sexuality of Hendrix's neo-minstrel buffoonery seems to have been received as a sign of his authentic

[252] Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. Pantheon Books, 1998, pp. 4.
[253] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 93.

blackness by the white audiences upon which his burgeoning career was so solidly based."[254] I would like to extend this understanding of Hendrix's reception and performance by contextualizing it within the blues epistemology limned above. For Hendrix's performance should not *only* be understood within the limits of anti-blackness expressed by minstrelsy but also within the contexts of the response, as redress, to these structures enacted sonically by black performers across time and over space. Furthermore, collapsing Hendrix's performance beneath the weight of overlapping 'geographies of domination' (Seattle and London, the US and the UK) functions to erase both the blues epistemology and Seattle's black community, but also Hendrix's engagements with the cultural productions of black diasporic peoples in the United Kingdom. Hendrix's deployment of the blues epistemology is a particularly significant aspect of his improvised engagements with the musical performances of diasporic black populations in the United Kingdom during the late 1960s.

Deploying Roshanak Kheshti's theorization of 'musical miscegenation' as developed in the article "Musical Miscegenation and the Logic of Rock and Roll," helps to bridge the gap between, slavery, emancipation and the blues epistemology and the specific contexts of rock and roll in which Hendrix found himself enmeshed in 1967. Kheshti's use of 'miscegenation' as a metaphor for musical collaboration, with the attendant emphasis placed on race, sexuality, desire, and crisis, demonstrates the centrality of blackness and slavery to the musical performances, as well as the productive and consumptive practices, associated with rock and roll. Kheshti explains,

> Miscegenation…takes place between men through an idealized homosocial reproductivity that enables the proliferation of the institution

[254] Ibid.

> of rock and roll. This form of miscegenation describes the process by which white musicians 'sound black'; it is a performative miscegenation in which white bodies cite black performativity.[255]

Returning the quote attributed to Eric Clapton above it becomes apparent that Hendrix's performance is pinned between the authenticity of his blackness as it stems from segregation and 'geographies of domination,' in Seattle *and* the ways in which rock and roll as a genre comes to be defined by white performers (such as Clapton) demonstrating musical prowess by *mastering* the reproduction of aestheticized black sounds (both lyrical and instrumental performances). In fact a meaningful aspect of white musical genius, such as that attributed to Clapton, is the process of mastering the art of 'sounding black' while subsequently obfuscating black women and men as the creative sources for the development of the sound.

While Kheshti's elaboration of musical miscegenation in her reading gives a complex genealogy for the term 'miscegenation,' tracing it from its first emergence in the US in 1864 as a manifestation of the anxieties of white communities regarding the abolition of slavery, through the development of 'indie' rock as a sub-genre (for which Seattle is ground zero), I would like to focus on the ways residential, economic, and educational segregation in Seattle occur in part as a spatialized response to the anxieties expressed by white communities in discourses of miscegenation. Worded differently, while Kheshti's theorizations of miscegenation are *implicit* in my understandings of rock and roll as a genre and my specific engagements with both Hendrix (above) and Tharpe (below), I would like to *explicitly* identify the ways in which segregation in Seattle emerges in large part as a response to the shifting structures of blackness and racial

[255] Kheshti, Roshanak. "Musical Miscegenation and the Logic of Rock and Roll: Homosocial Desire and Racial Productivity in 'A Paler Shade of White.'" *American Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2008, pp. 1041.

formation following the abolition of slavery in 1865; of particular significance is the ongoing imagination of sexual threat posed by black people mapped onto the new spatial mobility of emancipated black people. These developments are discussed in depth in chapters two and three of this dissertation. This framing is significant because it reformulates discussions of blues epistemologies that register Seattle as a meaningful place within the development blues, rather than banishing it to the periphery as a place that lacks black people or a substantial black musical culture.

Hendrix improvises upon blues methods of performance developed in Seattle and across the US South by incorporating the cultural productions of diasporic black people in the UK; the blues epistemology, as a theory of change, frames the ways in which Hendrix approaches and deploys this improvisation. In this vein Shadwick notes, "To that [blues vernacular] he adds the new melodicism he had been hearing on recent British rock records, a style that helped to give him a complete and mature approach to improvisation."[256] Importantly, the 'melodicism of British rock,' to which Hendrix was exposed as he moved through the UK was itself produced not only by the influence of polyphonic rhythmic practices that emerge from various diasporic African traditions more broadly, but also by the improvisations upon these rhythmic formations undertaken by disaporic black communities living in the UK in the late 50s and 60s. According to Gilroy, "Britain's black settler communities have forged a compound culture from disparate sources. Elements of political sensibility and cultural expression transmitted from black America over a long period of time have been reaccentuated in Britain."[257] Importantly, cultural productions of black Britain are "not content to be either dependent

[256] Shadwick, Keith. *Jimi Hendrix: the Musician*. Backbeat, 2003, pp. 95.
[257] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 15.

upon or simply imitative of the African diaspora cultures of America and the Caribbean."[258] Rather, performance is deployed in order to rearticulate cultural expressions in ways that resonate with the experiences of black Diasporic peoples in Britain. In this way, Hendrix's guitar playing, in my restaging here, allows for the identification of not only racial 'geographies of domination' in both the UK and the US, and the geographies of redress deployed by black diasporic peoples across space and over time, but also the dynamic interplay between these geographies; caught in between the local, the national, and the transnational Hendrix's performance demonstrates the contested nature of geography itself.

For many, Seattle is an odd place to ground a conversation regarding segregation, community formation, and a history of black music in the US. This stems in large part from the ways in which the normative narrative of Seattle imagines it as a place without a significant black community. However, chapters two and three of *Didn't It Rain?* traced an alternative history highlighting the development of Seattle's black population from 1880s forward, and the prominent roles played by both the AME church and the jazz music scene. In chapter three specifically, I identified Seattle's black jazz culture as something that developed in part through the histories of vaudeville and minstrelsy in the PNW. It was these same circuits of racialized performance that brought Jimi Henrix's grandparents to Seattle. According to Paul de Barrows, in 1911 "a black vaudeville troupe broke up while in Seattle, stranding Nora and Ross Hendrix."[259] In this way we see that Hendrix was not the first member of his family to interact with, and help constitute, Seattle's rich black music tradition.

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[258] Ibid.

[259] de Barrows, Paul, *Jackson Street After Hours: The Roots of Jazz in Seattle.* Seattle, Sasquatch Books, 1993, pp. 9.

Indeed, by the time of Jimi Hendrix's birth in November of 1942 Seattle's Central District (CD) was established as *the* Black neighborhood in the city with the majority of black Seattleites residing within its boarders.[260] World War II created a labor demand that helped Seattle's black community grow exponentially from 3,789 in 1940 to 26,901 in 1960.[261] Black women, men, and children migrating from various locations across the US south, Midwest, and northeast found themselves living next to one another in the CD, bringing with them various blues traditions. And while the move to Seattle represented a meaningful shift for many black people who came to the Northwest looking for an opportunity to improve their economic condition, they nonetheless found themselves negotiating a familiar structure of segregation and oppression[262] that is embedded within 'geographies of domination' in the US. As demonstrated in chapters two and three of *Didn't It Rain*, the process of black people migrating to Seattle from across the South is a reoccurring pattern following the Civil War, and especially in the years following the Hayes Compromise of 1877 and the 1883 *Civil Rights Cases* herd by the U.S. Supreme Court in which the court ruled 8-1 that neither the Thirteenth nor Fourteenth Amendments were infringed upon by discrimination and segregation, thereby rendering null the Civil Rights Act of 1875.[263]

Following Katherine McKittrick in the monograph *Demonic Grounds*, 'geographies of domination,' is a concept that helps to locate and identify the ways

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[260] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 128.
[261] Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. University of Washington Press, 1994, pp. 160.
[262] Taylor, *Forging a Black Community*. Also, Esther Hall Mumford *Seattle's Black Victorians*.
[263] *Encyclopedia Birtanica*, online. Accessed Nov. 20 , 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Civil-Rights-Act-United-States-1875>

physical place and social place are co-constitutive in the racial hierarchy of Seattle's segregated communities. According to McKittrick,

> The production of space is caught up in, but does not guarantee, long-standing geographic frameworks that materially and philosophically arrange the planet according to a seemingly stable white, heterosexual, classed vantage point. If prevailing geographic distributions and interactions are racially, sexually and economically hierarchical, these hierarchies are naturalized by repetitively spatializing "difference." That is, "*plac[ing]* the world within an ideological order," unevenly. Practices of domination…naturalize both identity and place, repetitively spatializing where nondominant groups "naturally" belong…[264]

In this way, 'geographies of domination' function in part to naturalize the relationship between black identities and places – thereby concealing the systemic production of difference and inequality predicated on the ideology of white supremacy. However, by condensing migratory black peoples from various locations across the US South (places in the black Diaspora) into a confined location in Seattle's Central District, segregation also created the conditions of possibility for a vibrant blues tradition to thrive along Jackson Street; an occurrence that challenged the very arrangements of segregation in Seattle and across the US more broadly. As music historian Charles R. Cross explains "Seattle's black community…was so vibrant that one newspaper editor compared it [Jackson Street] to Chicago's State Street or Memphis's Beal Street."[265] In this way, 'geographies of domination' create the possibilities for their own undoing. Extending the concept of the 'blues epistemology' developed through Woods and Davis above, Hendrix's engagement with blues traditions in Seattle encouraged an approach to music as a modality of spatial contestation; working through sound in order to take advantage of

[264] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. xv.
[265] Cross, Charles R. *Room Full of Mirrors: a Biography of Jimi Hendrix*. Hyperion, 2005, pp. 13.

the contested nature of space, using the electric guitar's unique voice to capture and engage with multiracial and transnational listening communities.

It was in these historical contexts that Hendrix was introduced to and experimented with the blues more broadly and the set of performative practices associated with the guitar in particular. The "dank Seattle basements where a teenage Jimi Hendrix practiced guitar with neighborhood boys,"[266] identified by Cross were the complex outcomes of black migrations to the Northwest and the 'geographies of domination' that informed Hendrix's development of the blues long before his tour of duty on the US's so-called 'Chitlin Circuit.' What I am attempting to index here are the spatial realities that informed Hendrix's early development. And while various biographies have sited the ways in which as a youth Hendrix habitually carried his guitar, pathologizing it a kind of security blanket for an unspecified social awkwardness,[267] I would instead read Hendrix's attachment to the guitar and his musical performances as a response to the geographic specifies of segregation that I have identified throughout *Didn't It Rain?*, and the tradition of musical response developed by Seattle's black community over time.

Indeed Hendrix's popularity and success in the UK was partially dependent on the realities of US segregation as European fans associated the authenticity of Hendrix's performance with the suffering caused by US practices based on white supremacy. As Gayle Wald notes, "Although they stood in awe of African American performers, British and European fans tended to perceive them through what W. E. B. Du Bois called the 'veil' of race, looking upon black music as an index of black suffering as well as

[266] Cross, Charles R. *Room Full of Mirrors: a Biography of Jimi Hendrix*. Hyperion, 2005, pp. 13.
[267] Shapiro, Harry, and Caesar Glebbeek. *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Gypsy*. Mandarin, 1995.

innocence."[268] Whereas European desire for authentic blackness produces Hendrix's (and Tharpe's) popularity in the UK insofar as his performances are popularly consumed as contact with the realities of suffering and segregation in the US, Hendrix himself uses the electric guitar to enact a kind of *sonic legerdemain*, based in the blues epistemology and following Sister Rosetta Tharpe among others, which alters 'geographies of domination' in part by rendering the histories of slavery and racial segregation as core elements influencing the production of space and place during the moment of performance (concerts). I use the term *sonic legerdemain* to allude to the ways in which both Hendrix's and Tharpe's prowess with the guitar might be understood as a form of conjuring with the hands wherein alternative possible realities can be imagined, if not ephemerally constituted.

Conclusion – Towards a "Politics of Transfiguration," and the Excessive Potential in Music (Full Circle)

In order to support and extend the heretofore developed claims regarding the blues epistemology I will return to Sister Rosetta Tharpe and engage her performance of the song "Didn't It Rain?" in Manchester in 1964. Up to this point I have been forwarding an alternative genealogy for the guitar itself that identifies the ways in which "rock's gospel roots betray its feminine heritage" located in the black church.[269] Importantly, this is not a recuperative move wherein we simply identify black women who were prolific guitar players and induct them into the Rock and Roll hall of fame,

[268] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 161.
[269] Wald, Gayle. *Shout, Sister, Shout!: the Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Beacon, 2008, pp. 10.

thereby "fixing" the problem of exclusion of black people broadly, and black women specifically, within the genre. Rather, to locate the ways in which black women and the church play a fundamental role in the development of rock and roll means understanding the ways in which the specific positioning of the racialized and sexualized body of black women under the logics of slavery, white supremacy, and 'geographies of domination' influences the ways music is used by black women during praise practices to manifest alternative geographies.

Part of the outcome of Tharpe's success is a large archive of recorded performances available across many platforms. For example Tharpe's 1964 performance of "Didn't It Rain?" in Manchester as recorded by Grenada television production is publically available on YouTube.[270] Engaging with this performance brings into relief a few processes that help to frame my engagement with the electric guitar and the 'politics of transfiguration' here. "Didn't It Rain?" was one of Tharpe's most popular songs, and the Manchester crowd's robust cheer in response to the opening query of the song, "Didn't it rain?," demonstrate that they had been anticipating Tharpe's performance of it. After an opening guitar riff to entice the crowd and build anticipation Tharpe opens the song singing,

> Didn't it rain, chil'ren? Rain, ohh yes!
> Didn't? Yes! Didn't it? You know it did! Didn't' it?
> Oh, oh, ye-us how it rained!
>
> I said it rained children! Rained oh, yes!
> Didn't? Yes! Didn't it? You know it did! Didn't' it?
> Oh my Lord, how it rained!

[270] See video titled "Rosetta Tharpe..1964..Didnt it Rain..Blue and Gospel Train, uploaded June 8, 2017. Accessed Nov. 20, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SoZG4yDaJA>

As Tharpe works the stage from right to left, her guitar invites the crowd to participate by clapping along with the rhythm. The lyrics and rhythmic structure of the song, through call and response, also invite the crowd's participation. In this way Tharpe and the crowd begin to constitute a community, children of God as the song formulates it, through the rhythm and musical structure of the song. Continuing into the first verse Tharpe strums and sings,

> You know it rained forty days, rained forty nights
> …when I get to Heaven, gonna put on my robe
> Walk around in glory, tell the Good News
> Look up David, in the heat of the day
> Tune up the harp, I begin to play
> [Repeat chorus]

The song, based on the story of Noah's Ark in the Old Testament, is ostensibly religious in nature; but that's not *all* that it is. Deploying exegesis and reading the story in relation to contemporary historical contexts we can also understand the story of the great flood as an interpretation of black experiences with slavery and segregation in the US, as well as racism more broadly. As Tharpe launches into the second chorus the crowd, worked into enthusiastic participation, sings along in call in response fashion. As Tharpe asks, "didn't it rain?" the crowd responds, "Yes!" While the levels of consciousness may differ for each individual listener, and it could be rightly stated that many people maybe simply singing along with the music, the contexts of the song and Tharpe's performance of it nonetheless provide the possibility for reformulating singers and listeners around the historic reality of violence and enslavement, and black relationships to these circumstances. In this way, when Tharpe queries, "didn't it rain?" an affirmative reaction might also acknowledge and validate the histories of slavery, violence, and racism that

hegemonic western History attempts to quiet and erase. After this second chorus, Tharpe launces into a blistering guitar solo, underscoring her deployment of blues epistemologies toward a 'politics of transfiguration.'

According to Michele-Rolph Trouillot "Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments. The moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives)*; the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives)*; and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance)."[271] In Tharpe's deployment of the blues epistemology located through her guitar playing above, she challenges these silences that function to exclude the experiences and contributions of black communities around the Atlantic, undergirding the production of 'geographies of domination.' This is what I mean when I reference the *sonic legerdemain* of Tharpe's and Hendrix's musical practices. Furthermore, I read this legerdemain as an example "of what [Sylvia] Wynter calls 'a third perspective,' those new forms of life that assert new geographic formulations."[272] Finally, I am arguing that as both Tharpe and Hendrix deploy a blues epistemology in the musical performances identified above, they are extending this project of manifesting new forms of life across space, and over time.

As demonstrated in the epigraphic quote attributed to Shana L. Redmond at the beginning of this chapter, music cannot be reduced to sound; rather music functions as a "complex system of mean(ing)s and ends that mediate our relationships to one another, to space, to our histories and historical moment," (Redmond 1). Both Tharpe's and

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[271] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 2008, pp. 26.

[272] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. 143.

Hendrix's performances of the electric guitar routed through a blues epistemology seize upon this excessive property of music in order to reconfigure 'geographies of domination,' predicated on segregation, repression, and the elision of black historic experiences by elaborating a theory of change that centers the histories and experiences of diasporic black women and men across space and over time. Helping to contextualize the ways in which music 'mediate(s) our relationships to space' Katherine McKittrick notes that, "Music, as a geographic act, is an available space through which blackness can be read as an integral and meaningful part of the landscape. This identifies the soundscape as a contestation, which publicly and privately communicates geographic possibilities."[273]

Taken together, the quotes from Redmond and McKittrick limn the ways that I understand both Tharpe's and Hendrix's guitar performances to gesture toward what Paul Gilroy calls "the politics of transfiguration."[274] Framing the concept of 'the politics of transfiguration' within a discussion of the utopian and the 'profane dimensions of...racial terror,' Gilroy explains,

> This [politics of transfiguration] emphasizes the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance *and* between that group and its erstwhile oppressors. It points specifically to the formation of a community of needs and solidarity which is magically made audible in the music itself and palpable in the social relations of its cultural utility and reproduction.[275]

The capacity for the blues epistemology to 'magically' manifest an alternative community based around different desirers, social relations, and modes of associating as

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[273] McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006, pp. 138.
[274] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2007, pp. 37.
[275] Ibid.

historical actors stems from the excesses of music limned by Redmond above. Therefore, Hendrix's performance in the opening portions of "foxy lady," as well as Tharpe's in "Didn't It Rain?" enact a kind of *sonic legerdemain* by simultaneously engaging the desires and social relations that structure the popular consumption of their performance as authentically 'black' – relations initiated by and reproduced through histories of chattel slavery, segregation, repression – *and* the desires of black Atlantic diasporic peoples to enact 'social relations and modes of associating,' that exceed the logics anti-blackness called into being by slavery and the dominant hemispheric "political ontology of violence."[276]

Hendrix's performance as an (re)enactment of the blues epistemology only makes sense when situated within the broader contexts of black communities', especially black Seattle's, resistance to anti-blackness in place. Furthermore, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's music, hear, constitutes a genealogy for guitar playing that identifies the ways in which black women and men, in this case Tharpe and Hendrix, have used performance to communicate alternative geographic possibilities that transcend the limits imposed by race, segregation, and manifold practices of anti-black racism; that is, to enact a 'politics of transfiguration.'

[276] Sexton, Jared. *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008, pp. 4.

Conclusion – Twenty-Frist Century Afterthoughts and New Beginnings in the Pacific Northwest

Epigraph

The history of Oregon is filled with stories of violent and racist groups. Communes, cults, alternative religious communities, militias: the state has been home to nearly 300 of them since 1856, including the Christian Identity movement, Posse Comitatus, Aryan Nations and the Roy Masters' Foundation of Human Understanding. African-Americans were legally barred from residence in Oregon until 1926; the state, according to some historians, was essentially founded as a kind of white utopia. No one in my family, three generations of Oregonians, had ever heard about that. – Jennifer Percy[277]

The death of *the* black church as we have known it occasions an opportunity to breathe new life into what it means to be black and Christian. Black churches and preachers must find their prophetic voices in this momentous present. And in doing so, black churches will rise again and insist that we all assert ourselves on the national stage not as sycophants to a glorious past, but as witnesses to the ongoing revelation of God's love in the here and now as we work on behalf of those who suffer most. – Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.[278]

But the Negro church can no longer serve as a refuge as it did in the past when the majority of Negroes lived in the South under a system of racial segregation and the majority of the Negroes in the South lived in rural areas. Willy-nilly, Negroes are drawn into the complex social organization of the American community. This is necessary for mere survival…the Negro church could not perform the functions of the new types of associations necessary to life in the city.
- E. Franklin Frazier[279]

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) continues to be an important part of national life in the United States in various ways well into the twenty-first century. In 2016, Oregon was on center stage as the nation watched the cowboy-style occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge unfold. On January 26, 2016 LaVoy Finicum, one of the leaders of the Malheur occupation, was shot three times at an FBI roadblock while returning to the Wildlife Refuge from a public speaking engagement.[280] Supporters of the occupation claim that federal agents murdered the Arizona rancher because he was a leading figure in the larger movement to protect (white) property rights in the west. Stemming from a dispute over the right to use and manage federal lands, and articulated

[277] Percy, Jennifer. "They Want to Destroy Us." *The New York Times Magazine*, 21 Jan. 2018, pp. 47.
[278] Glaude, Eddie. "The Black Church Is Dead." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 23 Aug. 2012.
[279] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 76.
[280] Percy, Jennifer. "They Want to Destroy Us." *The New York Times Magazine*, 21 Jan. 2018, pp. 44.

along lines of white identity-based movements of the 21st century, the 41-day stand off highlighted historic tensions around race, American identity, individual freedom, and rights to property in the PNW that I address in the first chapter of this dissertation. Yet in the volumes of media coverage very little connections between the events of Malheur and Oregon's specific racial histories of settler colonialism and black exclusion were made. As Percy reveals in the epigraph above, there continues to be a lack of awareness of Oregon's violent history of race and racial formation based on the logics of property and white supremacy, especially for those living in the state. And even when Oregon's history of black codes and race-based exclusion was acknowledged and explored in popular discourses, rarely if ever was the racialized history of private property itself acknowledged. Extending discussions of race, empire, and capitalist market expansion in the PNW to contemporary issues surrounding private property in Oregon is one of the significant avenues for further research prompted by my endeavors in *Didn't It Rain?*

The other line of ongoing research initiated by my dissertation follows the black church in Seattle. In chapters two through four I demonstrate that black people are not simply passive recipients of blackness as a stigma formed by violence, slavery, segregation, and inequality in the white supremacist culture of the US. Rather, through cultural formations such as religion and popular music, black people also elaborate definitions of blackness that challenge the anti-black social structures and cultural representations that produce inequality. In chapter two specifically, I demonstrate the ways that the elaboration of First AME indexes the efforts of black people in Seattle to construct community in part by giving religious meanings to blackness and land in the PNW.

However, the place of the black church in the black communities of the north and west has shifted through processes of urbanization in the twentieth century. In *The Negro Church in America* E. Franklin Frazier writes, "It was inevitable that the Negro should be drawn into the organized forms of social life in the urban environment."[281] International businesses interests play an increasingly important role in structuring social life in Seattle's urban environment. With businesses such as Boeing, Starbucks, Microsoft, Amazon, and Costco headquartered in the greater Seattle region, the Northwest's position in the national economy is prominent. The region's stratospheric economic development in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has created intense gentrification in Seattle's urban core, displacing black people in the Central District (CD) and other historically black communities. As property values have risen, Seattle's black people have moved farther from the once traditional neighborhoods like the CD. And as black people move further south and east in search of a lower cost of living, the precipitous drop in Seattle's black population is registered on Sunday mornings at First African Methodist Episcopal church (AME). Where once thirty years ago I might have been hard-pressed to find an empty seat some Sunday mornings, now it is rare to find an entire row occupied (save Easter and Christmas). In addition to the specific pressures created by gentrification in Seattle, part of the situation at First AME has to do with the larger national circumstances that prompted black religious scholar Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. to declare *the* black church dead in 2012.

In the 2012 article "The Black Church is Dead," Glaude explains that while black people in the US continue to attend church, "the idea of this venerable institution as

[281] Frazier, E. Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Negro Church in America. The Black Church since Frazier*. Schocken Books, 1974, pp. 76.

central to black life and as a repository for the social and moral conscience of the nation has all but disappeared."[282] Glaude enumerates three factors affecting the national situation of the black church; first, "black churches have always been complicated spaces" including strong conservative proclivities which potentially prevent black churches from addressing vital issues facing the black communities in place, such as health care and incarceration. Second, "African American communities are much more differentiated" with more avenues of organizing and self-expression available to black people than in decades past. And finally, there has been a "routinization of black prophetic witness."[283] This process where "the prophetic energies of black churches are represented as something inherent to the institution," is the most significant factor influencing the contemporary black church and leads to a backward looking orientation that longs for the halcyon days of black church past.[284] However, as Glaude indicates in the epigraph, the death of *the* black church in its fabled monolithic history is also an opportunity for transition, growth, and development in the longest standing institution of black life in the US. This is an area where a sustained ethnographic and archival-based research project grounded at First AME in Seattle could be extremely fruitful by helping to situate the contemporary place of First church and identifying ways that the church could best serve the specific needs of the Seattle-area's black community two decades into the twenty-first century. *Didn't It Rain?* labors to produce an alternative reading of the histories of the PNW in order structure alternative solutions to the looming problems

[282] Glaude, Eddie. "The Black Church Is Dead." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 23 Aug. 2012.
[283] Ibid.
[284] ibid.

of race, repression, and inequality in the Wilderness of the contemporary Pacific Northwest.

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