

***Kind of Blue* and the
Signifyin(g) Voice of Miles Davis**

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Abstract

Kind of Blue remains one of the most influential and successful jazz albums ever recorded, yet we know surprisingly few details concerning how it was written and the creative roles played by its participants. Previous studies in the literature emphasise modal and blues content within the album, overlooking the creative principle that underpins *Kind of Blue* – repetition and variation. Davis composed his album by Signifyin(g), transforming and recombining musical items of interest adopted from recent recordings of the period.

This thesis employs an interdisciplinary framework that combines note-based observations with intertextual theory. It maps out the intertextual associations of each piece on *Kind of Blue*, illuminating Davis's creative practice and more generally, Signifyin(g) in jazz. The study presents a more rounded account of the trumpeter, identifying Significations that possess a transformative power indicative of his idiosyncratic voice. This derives from the trumpeter's skill in recognising the musical potential implicit in each borrowed item. Davis employed varied modes of revision in response to each insight, which nevertheless exhibit common traits – simplicity/neatness of approach, economical use of materials and revisional instinct.

The study catches Davis in the act of revising musical tradition, as the trumpeter renegotiates African-American traditional forms using contemporary jazz devices. Some tracks exhibit "indirection" by saying one thing but meaning another. Thus, while the bluesy vamps of "All Blues" appear to affirm the blues tradition, a series of intertextual readings reveal a hidden dialogue concerning the mutability of style, as musical items traverse stylistic boundaries with ease courtesy of Davis's Signifyin(g) voice.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Jamie Fyffe

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that combines information gathering tools from musicology (transcription and musical analysis) with the intertextual concepts of black literary theory – i.e. Signifyin(g). Its aim is to illuminate the creative process behind the composition of *Kind of Blue*, by detailing varied examples of Signifyin(g) across the album. It builds on work by Barry Kernfeld¹ investigating improvisatory language within *Kind of Blue* as well as studies by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.² and Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.³ that relate Signifyin(g) to jazz. The thesis may be situated in the literature alongside recent studies by Walter van de Leur⁴ and Keith Waters⁵ that engage with compositional process in jazz and work by Robert Walser⁶ and Adam Fairhall,⁷ exploring dialogical aspects of jazz improvisation.

Kind of Blue is a seminal album, filled with highly influential pieces that remain uninvestigated from the perspective of note-based intertextual observation, perhaps (in part) because of a shift in emphasis away from “the musical notes” that occurred as New Jazz Studies became established. Likewise, Gates’s theory has seldom been exemplified in jazz at the same level of detail (i.e. note-based observations) or intertextual breadth as in black literary studies with its close comparison of textual passages. Given its status as the

¹ Barry Kernfeld, “Adderley, Coltrane and Davis at the Twilight of Bebop: The Search for Melodic Coherence” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1981).

² Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

³ Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴ Walter van de Leur, *Something to Love For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵ Keith Waters, *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Robert Walser, “Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation and the Problem of Miles Davis,” *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (1993): 343-365.

⁷ Adam Fairhall, “Intertextuality and the Dialogic Principle in Jazz” (PhD diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2008).

“trope-of-tropes” – i.e. a term that encompasses varied rhetorical modes of revision – our understanding of Signifyin(g) in jazz would be enriched by an infusion of musically detailed exemplars forming diverse points of reference.

Miles Davis, Signifyin(g) and *Kind of Blue*

Considering the important place that Miles Davis and *Kind of Blue*⁸ occupy within the history of jazz, for both academics and musicians alike, we know remarkably little about the creative process through which the album’s five pieces were composed. This is in contrast to highly informative work by Kernfeld into the album’s improvisational language and the concept of modality. Despite his persuasive argument that the historical significance of *Kind of Blue* lies in its “composition of accompaniments,”⁹ a comprehensive investigation into this topic remains absent from the literature.

Books about *Kind of Blue*¹⁰ are problematic, due to their over-reliance on the testimony of participants and observers. For instance, contradictory accounts that inform who (co)composed “Blue in Green” and “Flamenco Sketches” (i.e. Davis or Evans) are typically presented in a non-critical manner, leaving myths unchallenged and ideologies unexamined (see Chapter Two). These testimonies combine to form a narrow body of evidence that invites criticism of the trumpeter’s character and actions, rather than inform about the creative process.

⁸ Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Columbia CL 1355, 1959, LP.

⁹ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 174.

¹⁰ Ashley Kahn, *Kind of Blue – The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece* (London: Granta Books, 2000); Eric Nisenson, *The Making of Kind of Blue: Miles Davis and his Masterpiece* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2000).

Samuel Barrett's¹¹ investigation into "transformed blues language that lies at the heart of the album"¹² does examine the composed elements of *Kind of Blue*. However, his musical analysis assumes a textual approach (see Chapter Two) which excludes broader influences on the album and as a result overemphasises its blues content. In contrast, this thesis presents a much needed intertextual reading of *Kind of Blue*, in order to explore the creative process behind the album's compositions. It combines the intertextual theory of Gates – which describes the process he terms Signifyin(g) – with transcription and musical analysis, to form an interdisciplinary approach that marries the breadth of intertextuality with the informative power of musical detail.

Situating the Study within Recent Literature

Having identified the gap in the literature that this thesis investigates, it is useful to situate the study alongside other work that illuminates creative process in jazz composition. One example is Walter van de Leur's book challenging longstanding myths surrounding Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (i.e. that their work was indistinguishable and that their relationship was hierarchical). Van de Leur examines scores and parts written for the Duke Ellington Orchestra (now housed at the Smithsonian) to redefine both their musical collaboration and Strayhorn as a distinctive composer. The study employs note-based observations to detail the creative process of the Ellington organisation (e.g. how work was divided up between the two men, their differing approaches to compositional form, musical elements that defined the Strayhorn sound, etc.). It is precisely this sort of demystification through "analysis of the notes" that this thesis sets out to accomplish for *Kind of Blue*.

¹¹ Samuel Barrett, "Kind of Blue and the Economy of Modal Jazz," *Popular Music* 25, no. 2 (2006): 185-200.

¹² *Ibid.*, 185.

Another recent study to explore jazz compositional process is Keith Waters' examination of the studio recordings of Davis's 1960s Quintet, in particular his investigation into the "working studio processes of the quintet."¹³ Waters compares lead sheets of compositions handwritten by saxophonist Wayne Shorter (deposited at the Library of Congress) against his own transcriptions of the recordings, to reveal "changes to form, melody, or harmony."¹⁴ Thus, Waters employs a comparative approach to musical analysis, generating valuable insights into creative practice within the Quintet, an aim and approach similar to this thesis.

Clearly, there are also differences in emphasis between our studies. While, van de Leur "untangles Strayhorn from Ellington's shadow,"¹⁵ Waters explores "analytical avenues" such as "modal jazz, motivic organisation, phrase overlap, meter and hypermeter, group interactions, circular tunes, and form in improvisation."¹⁶ Although the creative roles Davis (and Evans) played in writing *Kind of Blue* become more clearly defined through this thesis, and some "analytical avenues" apply equally well to *Kind of Blue* (e.g. the circular form of "Blue in Green") the central focus of this study is intertextuality – i.e. Davis's use of Signifyin(g) to generate the album's accompaniments. Before discussing Gates's theory in greater detail, the following section outlines where this thesis is situated within New Jazz Studies, particularly with respect to an ongoing debate about transcription and musical analysis within the field.

¹³ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, xii.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn (Abstract)* (New York, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2008).

¹⁶ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, xiv.

Musical Analysis and New Jazz Studies

Key foundations for New Jazz Studies were laid in 1995 through two edited volumes (by Krin Gabbard)¹⁷ that employ critical traditions and theoretical strategies underived from musical scholarship.¹⁸ Topics addressed in these volumes include jazz on film, music and politics, canon formation and gender coding. Prior to these anthologies jazz scholarship was referred to as Jazz Studies, a field developed in the 1930s that focussed on analysis, biography, discography and historical work. Crucially, in his review of *New Jazz Studies*, Mark Tucker¹⁹ notes an important shift in emphasis within Gabbard's anthologies.

The results form what Gabbard calls the "other history" of jazz, an enquiry aimed not so much at describing and understanding the music itself but at interpreting "jazz myth and jazz culture" (p. 2).²⁰

Van de Leur's note-based examination of handwritten autograph scores challenges jazz myth, which is one reason his work resonates with musicologists and colleagues from other disciplines, facilitated in part by the consideration he shows towards non-musicologists.

While the discussion of the musical examples is geared to readers who can follow a jazz-theoretical discussion, my aim has been to accommodate those who do not have these skills...Even the most technical chapters, 4 and 9, contain discussion that should be accessible to the lay reader.²¹

However, Waters' study is concerned with "understanding the music," necessitating several paragraphs in the introduction of his book dedicated to positioning his work in relation to *New Jazz Studies*. This is not an easy task given the "low profile"²² of musicology Tucker observes within Gabbard's highly influential anthologies and misgivings expressed by some of its contributors concerning musical analysis. According to Tucker:

¹⁷ Krin Gabbard (ed.), *Jazz Among the Discourses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995); Krin Gabbard (ed.), *Representing Jazz* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ An influential article by Scott Deveaux was published while Gabbard's anthology was being compiled. See Scott Deveaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 525-560.

¹⁹ Mark Tucker, "Musicology and the New Jazz Studies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 1 (1998): 131-148.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

²¹ Van de Leur, *Billy Strayhorn*, xxiii.

²² Tucker, *New Jazz Studies*, 134.

Some authors express reservations about attempts to analyse jazz using conventional Western notation. Walser has the only essay with musical examples...At the same time, however, the authors of these essays drop few hints about how musicologists might contribute to the interdisciplinary agenda of the new jazz studies.²³

More recently, Travis Jackson²⁴ includes a useful categorisation of analytical approaches used in jazz (in the form of a table) within the introduction to his book, followed by a summary seeped in caution.

To some degree, the analytical projects outlined above have been important in convincing an older generation of scholars that jazz was indeed worthy of study. But because of their intentions or target audiences, many of those researchers privileged (and privilege) categories, concepts, and methodologies drawn from the study of Western concert music and derive their research questions from them. One might gain useful knowledge from such strategies, but it is clear that they might fail to engage other important issues.²⁵

While it is clear that the imposition of methodologies belonging to Western classical music should be critically challenged, this issue was more common within musical analyses of the past. Current musicologists appear as well informed as Jackson, including Waters who provides a useful summary of criticisms directed at the work of Jazz Studies analysts André Hodeir and Gunther Schuller.

The criticisms flow from several sources: that these analyses valorise the music by calling attention to features shared with Western classical music repertory (particularly features of coherence, continuity, or organicism), that they ignore larger collaborative processes and therefore favour “product” over “process,” or that they represent dominant academic institutional ideologies.²⁶

While Jackson alludes to “useful knowledge” Waters presents a much clearer argument, pointing out that jazz musicians require “details of musical organisation and structure...to facilitate musical development and growth” and that transcription and musical analysis “answer questions asked by communities of listeners, musicians, analysts, and writers.”²⁷

As a performing musician who has benefitted greatly from the musicological tools Waters defends, it is difficult to disagree with the sentiment of his comments.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Travis Jackson, *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

²⁵ Ibid., 12.

²⁶ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, x.

²⁷ Ibid.

However, what is most informative is to place Waters' final remarks on the subject alongside those of Tucker (in concluding his review of *New Jazz Studies*). The latter describes Gabbard's anthologies as "a lively, open-ended, interdisciplinary jam session" and encourages musicologists to "start improvising alongside colleagues from other wings of the academy."²⁸ However, although Waters is informed by *New Jazz Studies* his work is not interdisciplinary, leading him to call for plurality rather than interactivity.

It may be that those interested in jazz as seen through a cultural lens are interested in asking questions different from those with a more analytical focus. However, it seems that allowing for a plurality of views about music acknowledges more richly the breadth of its traditions.²⁹

This response may be contrasted with Gabriel Solis, who is critical of "musical analysis as an end in itself" and disassociates his interdisciplinary blend of close analysis of the music, cultural theory and biography, from music theory.³⁰ However, Solis does clearly envisage a positive role for transcription and musical analysis within *New Jazz Studies*.

I have included a number of transcriptions and extended analyses of particular recordings. These may appear forbidding to readers unfamiliar with the technical language of music theory. Nonetheless, it is indispensable to engage in close analysis of music's sonic forms if a case is to be made that music really matters.³¹

Although my study is closely aligned with the work of Waters – in particular his attempt to elucidate creative process through a comparative style of musical analysis – it also possesses interdisciplinary dimensions. In other words, it combines tools from multiple disciplines – musicology and black literary studies – theorising note-based observations through Gates's concept of Signifyin(g). The primary contribution of the thesis is musicological, yet it also informs about Signifyin(g) in jazz, by illuminating the varied strategies Davis employed to generate the accompaniments of *Kind of Blue*. This broader context will be discussed in

²⁸ Tucker, *New Jazz Studies*, 148.

²⁹ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, x.

³⁰ Gabriel Solis, *Monk's Music: Thelonious Monk and Jazz History in the Making* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

more detail shortly, after a brief account describing how the interdisciplinary approach of this study developed from an earlier piece of post-graduate work.

Antecedent of the Study

This thesis builds on an MA dissertation – “The Authorship of *Kind of Blue* – Who Composed “Flamenco Sketches” and “Blue in Green?”³² – inspired by the conflicting testimonies of Miles Davis and Bill Evans concerning who was author of these pieces. The central approach of that dissertation was to transcribe and compare the compositions written by both men prior to *Kind of Blue* with the contested pieces, in order to ascertain if either man had been writing in a similar style. This resulted in the study being notation-based and intertextual. One conclusion was that the melody to “Blue in Green” had been written in a compositional style that Davis (and not Evans) had widely used the previous year.

Its findings inspired a broader interest in the compositional approach Davis had employed throughout *Kind of Blue*. As a development of the previous study, groundwork for this new research took the form of comparing the album with other key works of the period (i.e. retaining a note-based/intertextual approach). The pattern that emerged from these investigations was of Davis reemploying items from recent recordings of the period, which were transformed and/or recombined to form the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*. These observations, some of which have been published as an article – “Uniqueness, Signifyin(g) and Compositional Process in “Blue in Green”³³ – formed the basis of this PhD.

³² Jamie Fyffe, “The Authorship of *Kind of Blue* – Who Composed “Flamenco Sketches” and “Blue in Green?” (Master’s Diss., University of Salford, 2011).

³³ Jamie Fyffe, “Uniqueness, Signifyin(g) and Compositional Process in “Blue in Green,” *Jazz Perspectives* 8, no. 2 (2014): 185-208.

Signifyin(g) in Jazz

The creative process evident within these note-based observations led to the adoption of Signifyin(g) as the theoretical element of this study, since what was observed in the music closely reflected the descriptions of Gates. In one sense, it is unsurprising that Davis Signified in designing his accompaniments given that (according to Gates) there are “so many examples of Signifyin(g) in jazz that one could write a formal history of its development on this basis alone.”³⁴ However, what should be emphasised at this point is the importance of investigating *how* Signification occurs, because without specific examples in jazz we are left with a broadly encompassing term often lacking in musical context.

Gates dedicates an entire section of his book to reviewing definitions of Signifyin(g), concluding “it is difficult to arrive at a consensus.”³⁵ His own description is of a rhetorical strategy that “entails formal revision and an intertextual relation...in which texts seem concerned to address their antecedents. Repetition, with a signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g).”³⁶ Crucially, Gates criticises linguists for failing to recognise Signifyin(g) as “the black trope for all other tropes, the trope of tropes, the figure of figures.”³⁷ In other words, for Gates Signifyin(g) is a term that encompasses varied African-American rhetorical modes of revision.

Adam Fairhall relates this to jazz, arguing that “rather than applying only to particular instances of, for example, parody and explicit quotation, signifyin’ may be seen in African-

³⁴ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

American jazz as a pervasive rhetorical mode.”³⁸ He criticises commentators who ignore the “multiplicity of vernacular practices that are termed signifyin’ by their practitioners,” stating his central objective “to reach a fuller understanding of *how* musicians signify.”³⁹ However, as was the case with Kernfeld at the beginning of this introduction, Fairhall’s analytical focus is largely on improvisatory language. Returning to Gates, although jazz is mentioned periodically throughout his book (see Chapter Two) he does not possess the expertise to talk about music in the same detail as his comparisons of literary passages. If Signifyin(g) encompasses varied rhetorical modes of revision, then to unravel further meaning we must ascertain (in any given situation) what musical item is repeated, how it is transformed and the rhetorical strategy discernable therein. This requires the type of detail transcription and musical analysis can provide, delivered in this thesis through an intertextual reading of the pieces on *Kind of Blue*.

Repetition-with-Difference and Predecessors

As previously noted, Davis’s reworking of materials from previous recordings to form *Kind of Blue* – observable within the groundwork for this thesis – closely resembles the “repetition-with-a-signal-difference” as described by Gates. For the remainder of thesis, I will refer to earlier recordings of influence as “predecessors” and contract Gates’s description to “repetition-with-difference” to make it less unwieldy. An important point to underscore here is how the comparative style of musical analysis adopted by this study complements the revisional aspect of Gates’s theory. More specifically, the identification of musical materials repeated-with-difference – originating in a predecessor and reemployed within a track on *Kind of Blue* – creates separate points of reference, musical passages that may be

³⁸ Fairhall, *Dialogic Principle*, 8. Please note that Fairhall employs the same spelling as Robert Walser (see Chapter Two) using lowercase “s” and ending with an apostrophe – i.e. signifyin’ rather than Signifyin(g).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

compared against one another in order to ascertain in what way they are different. This will be discussed in greater detail within Chapter Three.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is seven chapters in length. Chapter Two reviews existing literature, critiquing previous analyses of *Kind of Blue* and writings that apply the intertextual theory of Gates to the music of Davis, before constructing a theoretical foundation for the study through Gates's work and its application in jazz. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, setting out clear research questions before describing how particular predecessors became earmarked for investigation. This is followed by a detailed discussion concerning the transcription and comparison of musical passages, placing particular emphasis on the avoidance of issues encountered by previous analyses and how note-based observations might best interact with the theory of Gates.

Chapters Four to Six document five "transcription-comparisons" that fit into three themes. Chapter Four focuses on the blues, primarily through an investigation into the jazz-waltz "All Blues" (Transcription-Comparison 2) the most involved blues-based setting on *Kind of Blue*. Although the other blues track on the album – "Freddie Freeloader" – receives some mention, its settings are far simpler in design and so offer less tangible evidence of Signification. "Milestones" (Transcription-Comparison 1) is included within the debate in Chapter Four, which despite being a modal composition from Davis's album of the previous year (*Milestones*)⁴⁰ proves an integral part of the blues-based Significations on *Kind of Blue*.

⁴⁰ Miles Davis, *Milestones*, Columbia CL 1193, 1958, LP.

Chapter Five examines the modal compositions of *Kind of Blue* – “So What” (Transcription-Comparison 3) and “Flamenco Sketches” (Transcription-Comparison 4). It attempts to move beyond the often discussed topic of modality, to engage with the comparatively neglected non-modal features of “So What” as Signified by Davis. The introduction to this piece contains an additional level of Signification courtesy of pianist Bill Evans and his knowledge of European piano literature. Evans’s influence on *Kind of Blue* is a theme that develops throughout the remainder of the thesis, initially through a discussion of “Flamenco Sketches,” which appears to Signify on one of the pianist’s solo piano improvisations.

This theme is followed up in greater detail in Chapter Six, which focuses on one track – “Blue in Green” (Transcription-Comparison 5) another apparent Signification by Davis on a Bill Evans recording. As the most substantial compositional work on *Kind of Blue*, this piece requires the attention of a complete chapter. The study focuses on circular form and extended tones, the most characteristic musical features of “Blue in Green.” This facilitates an assessment of which part of the Signification – i.e. materials repeated (Evans) or the means by which they are made different (Davis) – these key traits derive from, thus indicating which man was the creative force behind the piece.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis, drawing together its main observations in order to readdress the research questions outlined in the methodology. Findings previously discussed separately are examined collectively to form broader themes that reach across the album. These conclusions are then assessed in relation to Chapter Two (Literature Review) in order to ascertain the main contributions this study makes to the literature and outline possible directions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Introduction

The approach of this PhD is to examine the compositions of *Kind of Blue* through a combination of note-based observation and intertextual theory. Thus, two essential bodies of literature to review are studies that investigate the album through musical analysis and work that applies the concept of Signifyin(g) to the music of Davis. In addition, books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants, which largely rely on alternative forms of evidence (e.g. testimony, recording outtakes and sketches) are critically evaluated. Finally, Gates's theory will be employed to construct a theoretical basis for the thesis, alongside subsequent work that investigates Signifyin(g) in jazz.¹

¹ It is important to acknowledge that other theories of intertextuality and influence exist beyond Gates's theory of Signifyin(g), which might also be applied to the music of Davis. Many of these writings place less emphasis upon those musical characteristics that distinguish particular works than this thesis (see Chapter Six).

David Cope employs a computer program named "Sorcerer" to identify musical allusions, one which associates patterns in a particular piece with other works pre-identified as possible influences. The program merely presents those patterns identified within the parameters of its settings, leaving users to interpret whether each is allusion or coincidence (e.g. by assessing whether the composer in question might have known an earlier work). In contrast with Gates's emphasis on parody and pastiche, Cope classifies allusions under five different categories to cover examples spanning from near-exact quotation to the use of common conventions: i.e. *Quotations* (exact notes and/or rhythms); *Paraphrases* (similar intervals with rhythmic freedom); *Likenesses* (differing pitches, intervals and rhythms); *Frameworks* (similarities that surface after some notes are removed); and *Commonalities* (simple patterns common to music). See David Cope, "Computer Analysis of Musical Allusions," *Computer Music Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003): 11-28.

T.S. Elliot criticises the tendency of praising authors for individuality (i.e. that which is different from predecessors). Without this prejudice, he argues, we would find the most unique aspects of each work to be those in which previous authors "assert their immortality most vigorously." For Elliot, tradition involves "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence," within which an individual work derives significance from its place within the whole. Each poet must procure the "consciousness of the past" to develop throughout his career, surrendering himself in a "continual extinction of personality" to become a "transforming catalyst." Thus, for Elliot poetry is an escape from emotion and personality, not an expression of those qualities. See T.S. Elliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 42-53.

Robert O. Gjerdingen argues that eighteenth-century courtly listening habits provided an opportunity for the "public exercise of discernment and taste." A hallmark of the Gallant Style was a "repertory of stock musical

Overall, while studies incorporating musical analysis struggle to maintain intertextual perspective, intertextual readings that do not utilise a note-based approach are limited to broader stylistic comparisons. This state of affairs underscores the need for a more effective way to combine musical analysis and intertextual theory within an interdisciplinary framework. Regarding other forms of evidence, while sketches relating to *Kind of Blue* prove useful, outtakes from the studio sessions are of limited value (i.e. novel rather than informative). Anecdotes by participants and observers combine to form a narrow view of Davis as composer and are perilous to employ, unless approached critically to identify jazz myths and underlying ideologies. Repetition-with-difference is fundamental to Signifyin(g) and this concept neatly describes the note-based intertextual observations of this thesis.

However, it seems less clear whether the tracks on *Kind of Blue* comment on (or direct

phrases employed in conventional sequences" with listeners of the period attuned to minute variations between established models, recognising a gracefulness which is less obvious to our ears. Such schemata were a core part of an eighteenth-century musician's "musical business" and at court functioned as an "aural medium of exchange between aristocratic patrons and their musical artisans." Gjerdingen's aim is to inform his readers about the schemata of gallant music – schema being "shorthand for a packet of knowledge" – to facilitate awareness of subtle differences in the music, thus rendering it more meaningful. See Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Steven Jan applies the concept of memetics to music, the idea that culture is made up of memes, multitudinous units analogous to genes within biology. These act as cultural replicators, transmitting information (e.g. musical ideas) between individuals through imitation (deliberate or unconscious). Memes are subject to mutational-evolutionary pressures since copying is not always accurate (due to the limitations of human cognition) causing musical styles to change over time. Also drawing from current music theory (e.g. Schenkerism and Narmour's implication-realisation model) Jan discusses the evolution of large-scale design in music (structural memes) in addition to melodic, harmonic and rhythmic surface details. He offers a third perspective – that of the (selfish) replicated musical pattern – to add to the more typical viewpoints of composer and listener. See Steven Jan, *The Memetics of Music: A Neo-Darwinian View of Musical Structure and Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

Leonard B. Meyer argues that musical style results from human choices formed within sets of constraints. Rather than focusing on musical innovation, his style analyses examine why composers chose to replicate some patterns and not others, in particular by examining the beliefs and attitudes of Romanticism and explicating how this ideology influenced the choices of composers writing in the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. For Meyer, musical style is characterised by how it conforms, rather than through deviation from norms. In explaining style change (in particular Classicism to Romanticism) Meyer relates stylistic traits to the reasons why these were chosen by composers relative to the ideological goals they proposed to advance. Thus, he explicates stylistic innovation/replication through the musical choices of composers immersed within particular social and historical contexts. See Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

listeners towards) predecessors in the same rhetorical manner as Gates describes in African-American verbal games and literature.

Part One: Musical Analysis and *Kind of Blue*

This section reviews literature that examines *Kind of Blue* through the lens of musical analysis. The first study is a PhD by Barry Kernfeld² that focuses on “melodic coherence” in the improvisational language of Davis’s Sextet, placing particular emphasis on the concept of modality. Written before the interdisciplinary approach now referred to as New Jazz Studies, this remains the most substantial analytical writing about *Kind of Blue*. Crucially, while concluding his central themes, Kernfeld identifies Davis’s “composition of accompaniments”³ as an area he considers worthy of further investigation. Since this topic is the focus of my research, his work forms a useful start-point in framing its subject matter.

The second study is a journal article by Samuel Barrett,⁴ which argues that the musical language of the album is not genuinely integrated, resulting in blues materials being transformed to align with multiple styles, thus receding from view. While there are interesting socio-historical aspects to this argument (see Chapter Seven) Barrett abandons intertextuality in favour of a textual analysis that produces challengeable findings. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Barrett’s work helps to refine the methodology of this PhD, in particular the role of musical analysis within an interdisciplinary setting.

² Barry Kernfeld, “Adderley, Coltrane and Davis at the Twilight of Bebop: The Search for Melodic Coherence” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1981).

³ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁴ Samuel Barrett, “*Kind of Blue* and the Economy of Modal Jazz,” *Popular Music* 25, no.2 (2006): 185-200.

Melodic Coherence and Modality

Kernfeld is primarily interested in the improvisatory language of the Sextet frontline – Miles Davis, Julian “Cannonball” Adderley and John Coltrane – addressing “the question of melodic coherence...and how it reveals itself in the three men’s recordings.”⁵ He argues that the late 1950s was a period that saw the emergence of artists whose music expressed dissatisfaction with the conventions of previous eras. These musicians felt that the formal, rhythmic and harmonic inflexibility of the Bebop style suppressed inspiration, triggering a reaction against this tradition through the exploration of new approaches. By the time Davis formed his Sextet in 1957, “many musicians had become bored with the now established predictability of a bebop performance,”⁶ particularly soloists who “generated complicated melodic lines through formulaic responses to recycled chord progressions.”⁷

Kernfeld’s central objective is to explore some of these changing musical trends through a detailed examination of the individual approaches Adderley, Coltrane and Davis took to the construction of coherent improvised lines. Employing transcription and musical analysis as his primary tools, this is not an interdisciplinary study having been written before the emergence of New Jazz Studies. Therefore, although Kernfeld successfully places the Sextet within the musical forces of its period, the powerful racial and political issues that gripped the USA at this time (e.g. the Civil Rights Movement) are not central to his argument.

Kernfeld draws a valuable distinction between Coltrane and Davis, arguing that for the tenor saxophonist melodic coherence was an improvisational issue.⁸ His analyses suggest that Coltrane’s lines are much less formulaic throughout *Kind of Blue* than on previous

⁵ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 6-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

⁸ See also Barry Kernfeld, “Two Coltranes,” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 2 (1983): 7-66.

recordings, since the album's repertoire liberated the saxophonist from fast tempos and rapidly changing harmonies, permitting him to avoid formulas of the past in favour of "new, unique, coherent, logical melodies."⁹ In contrast, Davis's search for melodic coherence was a compositional issue. Kernfeld's analyses suggest that Davis had abandoned the formulaic improvisational approach long before *Kind of Blue*, by incorporating "paraphrase technique" to construct improvised lines from tuneful melodies often 4-bars or longer.¹⁰ Therefore, unlike Coltrane, there was no need for Davis to restyle his improvisational language. Rather, Kernfeld argues, the trumpeter focused on composing accompaniments for his Sextet (and later for his 1960s Quintet) that facilitated melodic coherence.

Davis showed the way. Substituting simple bass or parallel chordal ostinati for the walking bass lines and complex chord progressions of Bebop, he introduced an accompanimental style that was better suited to his widely-spaced melodic lines...By expanding the duration of vamps from measures to minutes in "Teo" (March 21, 1961) and, at the end of the 1960s, to entire tunes, Davis also created an accompanimental framework for extended melodic unity and continuity.¹¹

Crucially, this argument sets a trend that runs throughout the remainder of Kernfeld's study – that although his work focuses on the improvisatory language of the Sextet frontline, ultimately its conclusions highlight the importance of Davis's compositional work.

Another subject Kernfeld investigates thoroughly is "modal playing." In contrast to the complicated harmonic progressions of bebop, Davis compositions such as "Milestones,"¹² "Flamenco Sketches" and "So What"¹³ are built from long sections that utilise a single chord commonly associated with a particular mode. However, analysis of the music leads Kernfeld to conclude that "modal playing" is a very obscure notion, since members of the Sextet commonly play notes from outside these modes. For example, although "So What" is often

⁹ Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 67.

¹⁰ Kernfeld also refers to this as "paraphrase improvisation" during which "a pre-existent melody recognizably shapes pitch selection, rhythm and contour." See Kernfeld, "Two Coltranes," 12.

¹¹ Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 177-178.

¹² Miles Davis, *Milestones*, Columbia CL 1193, 1958, LP.

¹³ Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Columbia CL 1355, 1959, LP.

considered to be in the Dorian mode, detailed transcriptions indicate that this label “applies hardly at all to Chambers’ pitch selection, only partially to Coltrane’s, somewhat figuratively to Adderley’s, almost literally to Davis’s and exactly to Evans’s.”¹⁴

Importantly, Kernfeld argues that the most innovative elements of Davis’s recordings are “compositional, harmonic and structural, rather than improvisational, melodic or modal.”¹⁵

He abandons the term “modal playing,” coining a new phrase to encapsulate the “slow harmonic rhythms, chordal parallelism or bass ostinati, sectional diatonic or “Flamenco” structures, and weakened large-scale functional relationships”¹⁶ of Davis’s post-bop music. For Kernfeld, the Sextet recordings are important because of their “vamp-style” settings, a term describing a style of accompaniment that he argues would eventually merge with Free Jazz, Rock, and Soul Jazz¹⁷ through the music of Coltrane, Davis and Adderley respectively.

The historical significance of “Milestones”, *Kind of Blue* and, of equal import, *Porgy and Bess* is found not in “modal playing,” but in the composition of accompaniments incorporating simple chordal or bass ostinati, and it is for this essential stylistic change that I propose the label “Davis’s vamp-style.”¹⁸

This is a remarkable statement given the stated aims of Kernfeld’s study, leaving the reader wondering how his PhD might have unfolded if “Davis’s vamp-style” had been its central theme from the outset. Kernfeld’s conclusion implies the need for a further study that focuses exclusively on compositions written for the Sextet, which constitute an accompanimental style he deems significant for both future Davis groups and broader developments in jazz.

¹⁴ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 149.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., 161-162.

¹⁷ Kernfeld seems less convinced about his final example, the closing words of his PhD being “and perhaps, through Adderley, with “Soul Jazz.” Ibid., 179.

¹⁸ Ibid., 174.

Compositional Settings

Kernfeld's term "vamp-style" is adopted throughout this thesis, yet it is important to note that the five pieces on *Kind of Blue* vary in their "volume" of composed materials. For example, while "Flamenco Sketches" is extemporised from five modes/scales, "Blue in Green" possesses a composed melody, harmonic progression and 10-bar form. Thus, the terms "vamp-style" and "accompaniments" are appropriate for the former piece, but do not aptly describe the latter. However, even the composed materials of "Blue in Green" are not set in stone – as this thesis will argue, its melody is freely interpreted by Davis with notes omitted (see Chapter Three) and transformed (see Chapter Six) in the recording studio.

Within his liner notes to *Kind of Blue* (critically examined below) pianist Bill Evans collectively refers to the five pieces as "settings"¹⁹ (possibly a literary reference inferring the creation of a context within which narrative may unfold). This thesis resituates his term more firmly within music, by employing the term "compositional settings." Through this term, composed elements of the pieces on *Kind of Blue* are represented as frameworks at varied stages of formation – musical locations where dialog may take place and works (i.e. recorded tracks) unfold.

"Flamenco Sketches"

Although compositional settings are not Kernfeld's central theme, he does discuss those of "Flamenco Sketches" since these have an impact on its modality. In his liner notes to the album, pianist Bill Evans describes the piece as "a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series." Kerschbaumer²⁰ identifies these as the modes of C Ionian, A \flat Mixolydian, B \flat Ionian, D Phrygian and G Dorian.

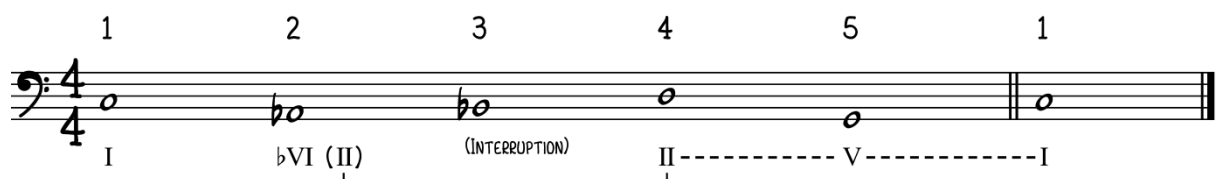
¹⁹ Evans also employs the term "frameworks."

²⁰ Franz Kerschbaumer, *Miles Davis* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1978), 93.

However, Kernfeld renames D Phrygian as “D (unnamed)” despite Davis’s clear use of the Phrygian mode, on the grounds that Evans’s piano accompaniment consistently oscillates between D and E \flat major triads. He contends that these two triads reordered into a scale “do not correspond to Phrygian or, for that matter, to any other Western church mode”²¹ and that Evans’s accompaniment is just as representative of Flamenco music as Davis’s notes. We will return to this subject later, since a handwritten sketch notating the modes of “Flamenco Sketches” has since been published, a resource Kernfeld did not possess.

The weakest aspect of Kernfeld’s discussion is his decision to impose functional harmony on “Flamenco Sketches.” He attempts to map out the piece’s design by analysing the notes of Paul Chambers’ ostinato, claiming “the bass line supports an overall tonal centre, C.”²² Not only does Kernfeld’s discussion about functional bass movement seem out of context in a vamp-style setting, but his analytical results are unconvincing due to loose-ends that he works hard to rationalise away. For example, in order to fit the cycle-of-fifths bass movement he identifies from Segment 4 onwards, Kernfeld reinterprets the A \flat of Segment 2 as a tritone substitution for D and the B \flat of Segment 3 is an “interruption” (see **Fig. 1**).²³

Fig. 1: Tritone Substitution and Interruption



²¹ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 138.

²² Ibid., 143.

²³ Please note that this is my own notated figure, representing one-half of Kernfeld’s argument for the sake of brevity. His broader argument, which is equally as dependent on functional harmony, calls for us to discard modal labels in favour of “major, minor, or dominant sonorities, in which roots or chords more closely related to G minor weaken the large-scale movement to C.” Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 144.

At this point, Kernfeld is forcing the settings of “Flamenco Sketches” to accord with functional harmony (in “square-peg round-hole” fashion) by justifying those corners that do not fit. Chapter Three will argue that the rationalisation of loose-ends (i.e. explaining them away) can function as a warning indicator that the analyst is working too hard to prove a preconceived point.

Another concern is that Kernfeld’s analysis is textual – i.e. it examines “Flamenco Sketches” in isolation without reference to other works. Although he does reiterate Mark Gridley’s observation that Segment 1 of “Flamenco Sketches” shares a near-identical opening vamp with the Bill Evans improvisation “Peace Piece,”²⁴ Kernfeld neither investigates this relationship, nor incorporates it into his analysis. As this thesis illustrates in Chapter Five, viewing “Flamenco Sketches” intertextually reveals a very different account of how the piece was designed.

Transformed Blues Language

In a more recent attempt to examine *Kind of Blue* using musical analysis, Barrett contends that the blues roots of the album “have repeatedly been obscured in favour of modal features.”²⁵ He argues that the musical language of *Kind of Blue* offers consumers a utopian vision – “a moment of hope in the possibility of integration of traditions of high and low, classical and vernacular, black and white”²⁶ – yet in reality, is more a coexistence of styles.

“As applied to *Kind of Blue*, what can be heard on the album is less an integration of musical styles than a *bricolage* of elements drawn from various musical styles...Rather than serving as a symbol of concrete integrations, the musical language of the album would seem to provide an image of co-existence whose only shared point of reference is the blues.”²⁷

²⁴ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 140.

²⁵ Barrett, “Economy of Modal Jazz,” 185.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Rather than genuinely integrated, Barrett argues, *Kind of Blue* represents a shift in the status of the blues into “a soft hued modal blues”²⁸ for all of America.

Yet the more the blues language is transformed so that it can align multiple musical styles, the more it recedes from view to be sensed without being explicitly recognised. The dangers inherent in this approach are readily apparent: the blues becomes, as in rock and roll, a property to be enjoyed by European-Americans, whilst simultaneously concealing African-American identity from view.²⁹

Barrett concludes that the very success of the album is in how it transforms the blues from “musical outsider to invisible insider.”³⁰ He calls on listeners to reassess the blues content of the album, in order to reflect on our failure to remove the need for an “other-worldly image of harmonious integration.”³¹ Unfortunately, Barrett’s note-based observations prove problematic, largely because he abandons intertextuality to embrace a textual style of analysis that is driven by his idea about transformed blues language in *Kind of Blue*.

Predecessors of Kind of Blue

Barrett begins his investigation from an intertextual perspective, by comparing *Kind of Blue* with *Milestones* (Davis’s album of the previous year). He emphasises that four out of six tracks on *Milestones* and two out of five tracks on *Kind of Blue* are blues numbers, an observation that forms part of his argument that the album title *Kind of Blue* “points away”³² from modal jazz towards the rising popularity of blues idioms in the 1950s. Barrett argues that the harmonised A-Section melody of “Milestones” is derived from the blues and that this theme was reused by Davis for the accompaniment of “All Blues.”

The extent to which modal jazz is rooted in the blues is underlined by the fact that the title track of *Milestones*, the often hailed “first example of modal jazz,” is characterised by its blues figuration, with its rising and falling between chordal tones over a static harmony. This same figuration was then used as the groove on “All Blues” on *Kind of Blue*.³³

²⁸ Ibid., 197.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 186.

³³ Ibid.

This observation is challengeable, on the grounds that Barrett's attempt to establish the blues credentials of "Milestones" rests wholly on its association with "All Blues" forming an intertextually narrow argument based on only two recordings. Chapter Four will re-examine the relationship between "Milestones" and "All Blues" from a broader perspective, arguing that their similarity is due to the fact that both share a common predecessor, a non-blues recording that Davis Signifies on (in contrasting ways) to generate materials for both pieces.

Barrett also draws a parallel between the bluesy track "Moanin'"³⁴ and "So What," highlighting shared features such as "Amen" cadences and call-and-response. Although essentially correct in this comparison, Barrett fails to observe that similar characteristics occur across other jazz recordings of the period, only some of which are blues-based (see Chapter Five). Moreover, other key features of "So What" are not examined intertextually, in particular its distinctive two-handed piano chord and use of double bass as a melodic instrument, resulting in a narrower blues-based focus that excludes some predecessors. Chapter Five discusses the intertextuality of "So What" more broadly, investigating how Davis recombined a wide variety of musical devices (only some of which are blues-based) derived from recordings by the trumpeter and his contemporaries prior to *Kind of Blue*.

"Flamenco Sketches," "Blue in Green" and "So What"

Barrett's article moves on to discuss the three tracks from *Kind of Blue* that are not typically associated with the blues. He begins by encouraging us to hear "Flamenco Sketches" as a "single and static blues sonority"³⁵ based on his interpretation that the roots of its five segments are drawn from the mode of C Aeolian (C, D, E \flat , F, G, A \flat , B \flat).

³⁴ Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, *Moanin'*, Blue Note BST 84003, 1958, LP.

³⁵ Barrett, "Economy of Modal Jazz," 190.

That the harmonies of “Flamenco Sketches” can be associated through a C Aeolian scale is not as arbitrary as it might first appear, for the practice became a common procedure in rock music. The principle is that of building harmonies on a scale over which the blues can be played, and it is this exploration of local colours within an overall blues sonority that binds together “Flamenco Sketches.”³⁶

Barrett then contends that following “an initial white-note chord-scale of C major, all subsequent chord-scales lie on the flat side.”³⁷ For example, whereas Segment 1 is in C Ionian (no sharps or flats) Segment 2 is in A \flat Mixolydian (five flats). In his view, “the entire sound world is derived from the principle explored in much blues of introducing flattened alterations or “blue notes” against a diatonic major scale.”³⁸

These are highly disputable contentions. One weakness in his argument is that these relationships only exist “on paper” – for example, the ostinatos played by double bassist Paul Chambers do not collectively sound like an Aeolian modal statement, whereas movement to Segment 2 is marked by the colourful and unresolved quality of *sus* chords (not blue notes).³⁹ Another concern is that his analysis is textual rather than intertextual, thus viewing the piece in isolation. In contrast, Chapter Five will illustrate how valuable clues to understanding the way “Flamenco Sketches” was designed lies in other recordings, note-based comparisons that only make complete sense when combined with intertextual theory.

Barrett continues his analysis by mapping out the harmonic/scalar 10-bar form of “Blue in Green” using Roman numerals, observing that “dominant scales...precede main points of rest that outline a simple frame of I- \flat VI-I-V-I” (see **Fig. 2**).⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., 190-191.

³⁷ Ibid., 191.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For an explanation of *sus* chords see Mark Levine, *The Jazz Piano Book* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1989), 23.

⁴⁰ Barrett, “Economy of Modal Jazz,” 192.

Fig. 2: I- \flat VI-I-V-I

He argues that this pattern outlines a “three-chord” blues (I-IV-I-V-I)⁴¹ “with a substitution of \flat VI instead of IV that is easily understood since they are equivalent scales.”⁴² At this point, it is hard to escape from the feeling that Barrett is fudging the results of his analysis, substituting the IV chord that fits his blues-based interpretation of “Blue in Green” for the \flat VI that does not. Moreover, jazz musicians would interpret each of the chords he identifies as part of II-V-I and V-I progressions, meaning that all of the chords Barrett identifies would be chord I (creating the nonsensical progression I-I-I-I-I). Finally, once again my central concern is that Barrett’s analysis is overly textual. In contrast, Chapter Six employs an intertextual approach with very different results, identifying a strong musical relationship between “Blue in Green” and a non-blues predecessor written by pianist Bill Evans.

Barrett also discusses how the chord-scales of “So What” relate to one another, arguing that there is “movement from a scale of no flats to one of five flats”⁴³ since the A-Section in D Dorian (C major) moves to a Bridge in $E\flat$ Dorian ($D\flat$ major). He describes this as a “white note scale with the most possible flats introduced”⁴⁴ arguing that it represents “the introduction of flattened or “blue” notes against major scale harmony.”⁴⁵ This is identical to

⁴¹ See Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1995), 220.

⁴² Barrett, “Economy of Modal Jazz,” 192.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴⁴ Barrett means before the introduction of enharmonic “white notes” such as $C\flat$.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

the argument employed for “Flamenco Sketches” and open to similar criticisms. Barrett appears to be theorising on paper, since it would be difficult to sustain the argument that flats introduced during the bridge sound like “blue notes” rather than a semitone shift upwards in modality. His textual approach is particularly unfortunate here, because of the three pieces discussed in this section of the article, “So What” does appear to contain an example of a blues item receded from view, in support of Barrett’s wider argument (see Chapter Four). Yet he overlooks this finding, because it can only be identified through an intertextual approach.

Barrett gives the overall impression that he is forcing the issue with his analysis. He appears to permit his ideas about transformed blues language to lead the note-based observations. There is a danger for all analysts that if we look hard enough at the musical notes the desired outcome will present itself. Barrett’s blues-based argument drives his analysis from start to finish and since he is searching for instances of the blues, those are the patterns ultimately identified. These important concerns will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Part Two: Alternative Forms of Evidence

Books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants tend to assume a non-critical approach when dealing with the testimonies of those involved with the album, which can prove problematic. One issue is that anecdotes concerning Davis and/or *Kind of Blue* combine to form a narrow base of evidence, which inevitably portrays the trumpeter in a negative manner. Moreover, utilising testimony as “evidence” can be perilous, as illustrated by Ashley Kahn’s investigation into “Blue in Green” and “the question of the composition’s

creation.”⁴⁶ Built on comments made by pianist Bill Evans, Kahn makes a series of challengeable assumptions that disintegrate under closer examination. In contrast, *New Jazz Studies* critically employs anecdotal evidence to reveal jazz myths and underlying ideologies. The thesis explores this approach (see Chapter Five) but also returns to testimonies post-analysis (see Chapter Seven) to observe elements of truth buried within anecdotal extemporisations, constructed in response to social forces of the period.

Non-critical Use of Testimony

Although anecdotal evidence should be critically appraised rather than accepted as fact, in reality testimony is the common currency of books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants. This has an unfortunate impact on how Davis is portrayed in the literature, since these accounts tend to emphasise Davis’s questionable track record and inconsistent testimony. Eric Nisenson offers an example:

I once asked him [Davis] who wrote the tunes “Four” and “Tune Up.” He replied, “Eddie Vinson.” So I asked him why, then, the tunes listed Miles as sole composer. “Because I wrote them,” he replied. “But you just told me that Eddie Vinson wrote them.” “What difference does it make?” he asked with mock exasperation.⁴⁷

Similarly, although Davis is adamant in his autobiography that he composed all of *Kind of Blue*, Kahn informs us that Davis acknowledged co-authorship of “Blue in Green” (with Bill Evans) during private interviews with Quincy Troupe who co-wrote the autobiography.⁴⁸

Davis’s autobiography is problematic, not merely because it was mediated by Troupe, but also for its alleged plagiarism.⁴⁹ Miles Davis biographer Jack Chambers argues that his book *Milestones* was used by the trumpeter in order to fill gaps in his memory while collaborating

⁴⁶ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 118.

⁴⁷ Eric Nisenson, *The Making of Kind of Blue – Miles Davis and his Masterpiece* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2000), 148-149.

⁴⁸ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 98.

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion see Ken Prouty, “Plagiarising Your Own Autobiography, and Other Strange Tales: Miles Davis, Jazz Discourse and the Aesthetic of Silence,” *Jazz Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2010): 15-41.

with Troupe. Chambers supports this claim by pointing out similarities of language between the texts and citing witnesses who observed Davis with the book on repeated occasions.⁵⁰

Clearly, testimony does not reflect well on Davis. However, I would argue that biographies and books about *Kind of Blue* not only show a lack of critical awareness, but are over-reliant on anecdotes at the expense of other available tools (e.g. note-based observations and intertextual theory). As a result they construct a narrower body of evidence, one that invites criticism of Davis's character and actions. Davis biographer Ian Carr does briefly attempt to move the debate forwards by acknowledging the complexity of jazz authorship, which he describes as the "vexed problem of composition, by composing improvisers and improvising composers."⁵¹ However, this welcome discussion is rapidly drawn towards the topic of royalties, perhaps encouraged by the success of *Kind of Blue* as an album and the enormous sums of revenue it has generated.

There is, of course, money in composing: composers get a royalty every time their music is played, and if it is recorded, they can expect a steady income so long as the records either sell or get played in public on radio or television. Because of the financial advantages, some bandleaders throughout the history of jazz have exercised what might be called a sort of *droit du seigneur* so far as their sidemen's compositions were concerned, either taking over the rights completely or at least sharing them.⁵²

The morbid fascination that surrounds *Kind of Blue* royalty payments seems difficult to resist. Evans biographer Peter Pettinger touches upon a similar theme when he describes the alleged response of Davis to Evans's concern about royalties. According to a colleague of Evans⁵³ the pianist received a single check for twenty-five dollars,⁵⁴ clearly a staggering difference in financial return when compared with the rewards received by Davis.

⁵⁰ Jack Chambers, *Milestones: The Music and Times of Miles Davis*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), xxiv-xxv.

⁵¹ Ian Carr, *Miles Davis – The Definitive Biography* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), 151.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁵³ Herb Wong.

⁵⁴ Pettinger, *Bill Evans*, 83.

Recording Outtakes and Sketches

In addition to forming a one-dimensional image of Davis, anecdotes can prove unsound if they are treated as “evidence”. For example, Kahn offers an alternative reading of “Blue in Green” to Barrett’s blues-based analysis, by drawing together three forms of evidence – testimony, aural comparison and recording outtakes. He begins with an anecdote Evans related concerning an exercise Davis once set him.

One day at Miles’s apartment, he wrote on some manuscript paper the symbols for G-minor and A-augmented. And he said, “What would you do with that?” I didn’t really know, but I went home and wrote “Blue in Green.”⁵⁵

Kahn argues that Evans developed these two chords into a 4-bar idea, first used by the pianist on a Chet Baker recording session during the introduction to “Alone Together.”⁵⁶ He recommends that we aurally compare this introduction with the beginning of “Blue in Green,” quoting Evans biographer Peter Pettinger that we will hear “exactly those chords.”⁵⁷ Kahn then turns to the *Kind of Blue* recording outtakes, to contend that this four-bar idea was “developed further with Miles’s active involvement” in the recording studio, claiming that in between Takes 1 and 2 (both incomplete) “Evans queries Davis on the length of the introduction, Miles decides to double its duration, and ultimately a co-composer credit seems due to both musicians.”⁵⁸

Unfortunately, a simple harmonic examination of the introduction to “Alone Together” indicates that the chords Gm and A+ are not present.⁵⁹ This leaves little alternative but to suppose Kahn has made a false assumption, an error that reflects his failure to investigate

⁵⁵ Ibid., 118. Original quotation from the liner notes to Bill Evans, *Spring Leaves*, Milestone M-47034, 1976, LP.

⁵⁶ Chet Baker, *Chet*, Riverside RLP 12-299, 1958, LP. Evans had left the Sextet the previous month, but would return for the *Kind of Blue* recording sessions.

⁵⁷ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 119. Quoted from Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 82.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁹ Neither is it present in the introduction to “Blue in Green.” However, bars 1-2 of the 10-bar form of “Blue in Green” (i.e. the main body of the composition) do begin with these chords – Gm7 and A7alt.

musical evidence on the recordings. Moreover, Kahn's award of a co-composer credit to Davis hangs on the trumpeter's decision to double the length of the introduction to "Blue in Green." Yet, this interpretation does not match what occurs in the music, because in Take 2 Davis does not repeat the introduction – he begins the head of "Blue in Green."⁶⁰ At the root of both misassumptions is Kahn's unquestioning acceptance of Evans's story.

Three Sketches

The strength of Kahn's work, in addition to providing a useful historical account of *Kind of Blue*, is that his book introduces new resources to studies of the album. Although the recording outtakes he employs prove more of a curiosity than genuinely informative, he includes three useful sketches. First, Kahn (like Gridley) proposes "Peace Piece" as a musical predecessor of "Flamenco Sketches" accompanying his argument with a useful handwritten sketch by Bill Evans, which notates the opening vamp to his solo piano improvisation.⁶¹ Secondly, his book includes a photograph of Adderley's music stand from the second *Kind of Blue* recording session, revealing the handwritten modes of "Flamenco Sketches."⁶² Taken by sound engineer Fred Plaut, the photo reveals Segment 4 as a G harmonic minor scale beginning on its 5th degree,⁶³ with D and E \flat major triads played by Bill Evans on the piano clearly outlined through two sets of slurs (see **Fig. 3**).⁶⁴ This clearly supports the emphasis Kernfeld places on Evans's triadic accompaniment (see before) a topic this thesis will return to in Chapter Five.

⁶⁰ In Take 1 Davis says "Last four bars, but then you repeated it" but his voice cracks, making it sound to Kahn like "Last four bars, but then you repeat it." This croak reverses the meaning of his words for Kahn from a critique (you got it wrong by repeating it) to a request (repeat the last four bars).

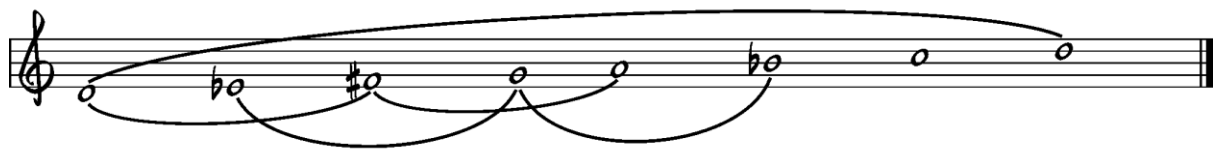
⁶¹ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 134.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 70 and 132.

⁶³ This collection of notes is often referred to as the Phrygian Dominant.

⁶⁴ Please note that Adderley's version is in a different key, transposed to accommodate his alto sax.

Fig. 3: Facsimile of Segment 4



Finally, Kahn publishes a photo of the score to “So What” that captures its introduction as arranged by Gil Evans for a 1962 Carnegie Hall performance by Davis,⁶⁵ discussed in Chapter Three. The thesis now returns to testimony, describing how this is critically employed within New Jazz Studies and suggesting how anecdotes might function “post-analysis” within this thesis.

Jazz Myth and New Jazz Studies

Jazz myths surrounding *Kind of Blue* are straightforward to identify, because they are comparable to observations made about other seminal albums. For example, Tony Whyton’s re-examination of the John Coltrane album *A Love Supreme*⁶⁶ critically examines the testimonies of participants and observers. He notes that while on some occasions the album is depicted as a composed suite notated by Coltrane the divinely-inspired author, at other times it is described as a more spontaneous work typifying jazz as a form of unmediated expression.⁶⁷

It is possible to build a similar argument based on comments Davis makes in his autobiography. On one hand, the trumpeter describes how his sidemen developed the music of *Kind of Blue* beyond its original conception, taking it “someplace else through their

⁶⁵ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 171.

⁶⁶ Tony Whyton, *A Love Supreme – John Coltrane and the Legacy of an Album* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

creativity and imagination.”⁶⁸ This complements Whyton’s observation that jazz mythmaking often foregrounds spontaneity at the expense of other aspects of the creative process “in order to subvert the edited, engineered, mediated, or produced nature of recordings themselves.”⁶⁹ However, in the following paragraph while discussing the authorship of *Kind of Blue*, Davis presents another version of events claiming “it’s all mine and the concept was mine.”⁷⁰ This statement draws on Romantic ideals such as the artist as genius, supporting his status as sole recipient of royalties from the album.

Both examples illustrate how accounts alter in response to the values of the moment, a phenomenon that helps to explain the inconsistent testimony of Evans. Within the liner note to *Kind of Blue*, Evans claims Davis “conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates,” thus emphasising the spontaneity of the process at a point in time when *Kind of Blue* was one in a series of recording sessions with the Sextet and its members.⁷¹ He discreetly avoids his own role within the process (see Chapter Six) most likely because this would conflict with a clear responsibility to praise Davis and his album.⁷² By the time Evans was interviewed on the subject (as a participant on the album) *Kind of Blue* had become a seminal jazz album, and there were no constraints in force to prevent a broader account incorporating his involvement, complete with its own forms of mythmaking (see Chapter Seven).

⁶⁸ Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles the Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 234.

⁶⁹ Whyton, *Love Supreme*, 21.

⁷⁰ Davis and Troupe, *Autobiography*, 21.

⁷¹ Evans is quoted as stating: “I suppose that *Kind of Blue* has been a far-reaching influence. But when we did the album we had no idea it would become that important.” See Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans – How My Heart Sings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 85.

⁷² George Avakian had written the notes for *Miles Ahead*, whereas Nat Hentoff would be present for *Sketches of Spain*. As Kahn argues, for *Kind of Blue* a similar figure was not present (i.e. a critic or producer intimately familiar with Davis’s work) and so the task fell to Evans. See Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 153.

In addition to approaching testimony critically to identify jazz myths, this thesis re-examines the anecdotes of Davis and Evans post-analysis – i.e. after clarifying their Signifyin(g) roles. As shall be revealed, elements of truth stand out in both men’s statements, whereas the creative process revealed by note-based intertextual observation is clearly too unwieldy (and seemingly unorthodox) to relate within an interview. In this light, the Evans version of events employed by Kahn may be reinterpreted as a more digestible mentor-protégé narrative, of the type commonly ascribed to Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.

Part 3: Intertextual Theory and Davis

This final section of the literature review begins by framing two key aspects of Signifyin(g) – its repetition-with-difference and double-voicedness – by describing an African-American oral canon known as Signifying Monkey tales. With this basis in place, the thesis is better positioned to examine a series of articles that intertextually investigate Davis’s music of the 1960s and ‘70s. These inform about how Signifyin(g) has been applied to Davis’s music, highlighting the challenges inherent in combining the breadth of intertextual theory with the detail of note-based observations.

Part 3 then returns to Gates’s theory, illuminating important aspects in greater detail. In particular, the thesis describes Signifyin(g) as a multifaceted concept (encompassing diverse strategies of rhetorical revision) while noting a shortage of close readings of Signifyin(g) in jazz, thus highlighting the need for more note-based intertextual examinations. The literature review closes by examining the rhetorical element of revision, focusing on Gates’s distinction between motivated Signifyin(g) – i.e. parody – and unmotivated Signifyin(g) – i.e. pastiche – and how he describes them in jazz.

The Monkey Tales

The most direct route to understanding Gates's theory is through the canon of Signifying Monkey poems (or Monkey Tales) described in his book. These are a group of orally narrated stories belonging to the African-American community, in which "each poem refers to other poems of the genre...Accordingly, all sorts of formulaic phrases recur across these poems."⁷³ One example Gates gives of such a phrase is the theme "forty-four," which repeats throughout the canon "with differences that suggest familiarity with other texts of the Monkey."⁷⁴ Gates illustrates this by quoting from a collection of Monkey Tales published by Bruce Jackson,⁷⁵ pointing out that while the lines in one poem are written:

The Lion jumped back with a mighty roar,
His tail stuck out like a forty-four,

In another, they are refigured:

So he went through the jungle with a might roar,
Poppin' his tail like a forty-four,

And yet again as:

He went on down the jungle way a jumpin' and a pawin'
Poppin' his tail worse in' a forty-four,⁷⁶

Thus, intertextuality is an essential part of Signifyin(g) due to "the formal manner in which texts seem concerned to address their antecedents."⁷⁷ As Gates also remarks, "repetition with a signal difference is fundamental to the idea of Signifyin(g)"⁷⁸ a comment that neatly sums up how the theme "forty-four" reoccurs in varied forms throughout each narrative.

⁷³ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 66.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Bruce Jackson, *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me: African American Narrative Poetry from Oral Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1974), 162-166.

⁷⁶ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 66-67.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Rather than creating a brand new story each time complete with fresh characters and events, the Monkey Tales feature three figures common to all of the poems who maintain fixed identities and relationships to one another – the Elephant, the Monkey and the Lion. Therefore, each narrator’s craft is the “creative (re)placement of these expected or anticipated formulaic phrases and formulaic events, rendered anew in unexpected ways.”⁷⁹ According to Gates, all of the structural elements common to the canon of Monkey Tales are repeated with variations, meaning that “there is no fixed text of these poems; they exist as a play of differences.”⁸⁰

A crucial part of the poems’ shared plot concerns the Monkey repeating to the Lion an insult purportedly generated by the Elephant. The Monkey is speaking figuratively, yet the Lion takes him literally and demands an apology from the Elephant, who refuses before trouncing him. The Lion then realises he was mistaken in taking the Monkey’s comments literally, finding that “his status has been deflated, not because of the Elephant’s brutal self-defence but because he fundamentally misunderstood the status of the Monkey’s statements.”⁸¹ In this way, the Monkey is often viewed as a trickster figure whose “anti-mediation” derives from play on language, whereas the Lion misunderstood because of his failure to mediate between two poles of meaning – figurative and literal.

Gates distinguishes between Standard English *signifying* and its African-American homonym through capitalisation and a bracketed final G – *Signifyin(g)*. His description of the term reflects the fate of the Lion.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

Signifyin(g), in other words, is the figurative difference between the literal and the metaphorical, between surface and latent meaning...Signifyin(g) presupposes an "encoded" intention to say one thing but to mean quite another.⁸²

According to Gates, "Signifyin(g) is black double-voicedness,"⁸³ a description that draws from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his term "double-voiced word." Gates quotes Gary Saul Morson's description of the double-voiced word "as a special sort of palimpsest in which the uppermost inscription is a commentary on the one beneath it"⁸⁴ (in reference to a manuscript with later writing superimposed over earlier effaced writing).

A related term Gates introduces is "indirection," described by Claudia Mitchell-Kernan⁸⁵ as a statement that cannot be interpreted by its dictionary meaning since apparent significance differs from real significance. She adds afterwards that the "apparent meaning of the sentence signifies its actual meaning,"⁸⁶ a description that reflects Morson's metaphor of superimposed writing describing effaced writing underneath. According to Mitchell-Kernan, "apparent meaning serves as a key which directs hearers to some shared knowledge."⁸⁷ The thesis will return to the concept of shared knowledge shortly, as part of a broader discussion of Gates's theory towards the end of Part Three. In the meantime, the following section critiques how the concept of Signifyin(g) has been applied to Davis's post-Sextet music through the aforementioned articles.

⁸² Ibid., 89.

⁸³ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁴ Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 108.

⁸⁵ Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, "Signifying as a Form of Verbal Art," in *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel*, ed. Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972).

⁸⁶ Quoted in Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 93.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Signifyin(g) and the Music of Davis

Gary Tomlinson⁸⁸ challenges those critics who hear betrayal in Davis's jazz-rock fusion of the late 1960s and early 1970s, due to its departure from the jazz canonised tradition. He advocates an alternative interpretation, one which recognises "the marginal status white America accorded him [Davis] because of his skin colour on the one hand and the middle-class or upper-middle-class affluence in which he was raised on the other...a disenfranchised ethnic one and an empowered economic one."⁸⁹ In short, Tomlinson argues that rather than being a sell-out, Davis's social background drove the mixing of styles within his music.

And for Davis, I think, this kind of ambivalence quickly grew to be a defining trait of his musical personality. It was an uneasiness at sitting on the fence, between worlds, that impelled him always to seek out distinctive middle voices, stylistic mediations, and compromises between differing idioms.⁹⁰

In Tomlinson's view, Davis's Signifyin(g) arose from this ambivalence and his fusion music was simply the logical outcome of mediating concerns expressed in earlier work with the Sextet and Gil Evans. He concludes that critical intolerance of Davis's fusion music reflects the discomfort critics feel about this stylistic mix, which he argues amounts to a "dismissal of Davis's complex and eloquent Signifyin(g) on the many musical idioms around him."⁹¹

One interesting aspect of Tomlinson's article is the intimation that there is something idiosyncratic about Davis's Signifyin(g), implied in his contention that social ambivalence was "refracted through the unique lens of Davis's psyche" to create "a powerfully synthetic Signifyin(g) voice."⁹² Tomlinson also places particular emphasis on the dialogical aspects of both Gates's theory and Davis's fusion music.

⁸⁸ Gary Tomlinson, "Cultural Dialogics and Jazz – A White Historian Signifies," *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991), 229-264.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 256-257.

This music opened lines of communication between traditional jazz, with its blues background and improvisational impetus, on the one hand, and rhythm and blues, funk, and white acid rock on the other; these communicative channels are enriched all the more since the nonjazz musics involved in them were ultimately blues-based as well.⁹³

From a critical perspective, one weakness of the article is that it fails to map out specific details concerning the intertextual examples Tomlinson identifies. For example, while he informs us that Sly Stone and Jimi Hendix were influences on Davis's fusion music, we do not find out if particular recordings were important and if so why. One of the tools capable of revealing such details – musical analysis – is absent from Tomlinson's argument.

In his article, Robert Walser⁹⁴ focuses on the critical problem of dealing with apparent defects in Davis's trumpet technique (e.g. split notes) by attempting to apply Gates's theory "at a finer level of musical analysis to illuminate the significance of specific musical details."⁹⁵ In the process, he strongly criticises the classical formalism of Gunther Schuller's analytical style (see Chapter One) which strips away the historical and social to focus exclusively on musical details. In Walser's opinion, Davis deliberately used risky techniques on his trumpet that are "antithetical to "classicism" and cannot be explained by formalism,"⁹⁶ hence the puzzlement, hostility and/or silence of critics when faced with Davis's "mistakes."

Walser argues that the rhetorical power of Davis's performances often escapes conventional notation and music theory, due to a failure to connect "the impressions of listeners, the

⁹³ Ibid., 261.

⁹⁴ Robert Walser, "Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation and the Problem of Miles Davis," *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (1993): 343-365.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 345.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 349-350.

techniques of musicians, and the actual sounds that result.”⁹⁷ The nub of his application of Gates’s theory lies in the dialogue between musician and audience. According to Gates:

Because the form is self-evident to the musician, both he and his well-trained audience are playing and listening with expectation. Signifyin(g) disappoints these expectations; caesuras, or breaks, achieve the same function. This form of disappointment creates a dialogue between what the listener expects and what the artist plays.⁹⁸

Walser acknowledges Davis’s attempt to exploit a wider range of timbre and articulation from his trumpet than standard orchestral technique, changing notes by bending into them with his lips or using half-valves. Rather than a polished product, he delivers a “dramatic process of creation” and as listeners we may “experience these feelings of playfulness, complexity, struggle, and competence as our own.”⁹⁹ For Walser, traditional methods of musical analysis render this Signifyin(g) invisible and so fail to explain the workings of Davis’s music, “for it is fundamentally dialogic and depends upon the interaction among musicians, their audiences, and the experiences and texts they exchange.”¹⁰⁰ Walser concludes by calling on “analysts to confront the challenges of signifyin’, the real life dialogic flux of meaning”¹⁰¹ in order to grasp the power of Davis’s performances.

Although Walser’s article is successful on many levels, he does become mired in the details of his own analytical work, thus detracting from the intertextual potential of the recording he selects for examination – Davis’s 1964 live version of “My Funny Valentine.”¹⁰² Nowhere is this more evident than in a subsequent article by Alan Stanbridge,¹⁰³ who criticises

⁹⁷ Ibid., 358.

⁹⁸ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 134.

⁹⁹ Walser, “Out of Notes,” 358.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 359-360.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 360. Please note that Walser opts to drop Gates’s capitalisation and bracketed G, by writing Signifyin(g) as signifyin’.

¹⁰² Miles Davis, *My Funny Valentine*, Columbia CL 2306, 1964, LP.

¹⁰³ Alan Stanbridge, “A Question of Standards: “My Funny Valentine” and Musical Intertextuality,” *Popular Music History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 83-108.

Walser's "narrowly textualist interpretation of intertextuality" and study that "seldom moves beyond the analytical and critical verities of traditional musicology."¹⁰⁴

Hence, in the course of his article – in which a transcription of Davis's solo is subjected to five pages of rigorous textual analysis – the discourse of intertextuality slips quietly into the background, and the technical aspects of Davis's playing are described in the familiar language of musical analysis.¹⁰⁵

For Stanbridge, despite Walser's claims of attending to the issues of Signifyin(g) and intertextuality, his discourse "remains narrowly – and paradoxically – focused on the text."¹⁰⁶ His critique foregrounds the problems inherent in combining intertextual theory with note-based observations, an issue discussed further in Chapter Three. Stanbridge also reiterates Tomlinson's concern that Gates's theory might act to sustain canonical thinking, since it is Gates's intention "to define an indigenous black metaphor for intertextuality."¹⁰⁷

Tomlinson also queries the implicit essentialism of the concept, suggesting that a narrow focus on the notion of a black canon – whether that of music or literature – runs the risk of "impoverishing...interethnic dialogues" (1992:79), and arguing that the movement within African-American studies to institute a canon of black literature runs the risk of "reinscribing the same monological, hegemonic premises that have for so long supported the white, male, European canon to which they would offer an alternative" (1992:75).¹⁰⁸

The "cautiously critical perspective"¹⁰⁹ Stanbridge identifies as present in Tomlinson's article is the stance adopted by more recent studies that combine musical analysis with Signifyin(g). For example, Fairhall acknowledges the "risk of reinforcing canonical or essentialist thinking" yet argues that to avoid the theory "would be to ignore a wealth of shared cultural meaning in jazz,"¹¹⁰ a position shared by this thesis.

At this point, it is worthwhile comparing how these applications of Gates's theory to the music of Davis sit with our understanding of the *Monkey Tales* described thus far. While

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 89

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Fairhall, "Dialogic Principle," 18.

Tomlinson uses the term Signifyin(g) to account for Davis's ability to find "compromises between different idioms,"¹¹¹ Walser employs it to describe the trumpeter's invitation for listeners to experience his "dramatic process of creation."¹¹² Both comments appear a world away from the Monkey, who in the words of Gates "wreaks havoc on the signified."¹¹³ The following section resolves this apparent discrepancy by emphasising the multi-faceted nature of Signifyin(g), described by Gates as his "trope-of tropes."

The Intertextual Theory of Gates

This section of the Literature Review began with a description of the Monkey Tales in order to introduce the concept of Signifyin(g). In particular, these aural narratives illustrate how African-American texts repeat one another's materials with difference and how figurative and literal meanings may coexist within a single statement. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that the Monkey Tales foreground the Monkey as a trickster figure who uses language to dupe the physically superior Lion. Although at times Gates discusses jazz in similar terms,¹¹⁴ he also takes great care to emphasise that Signifyin(g) is a multifaceted concept, repeatedly referring to it as his trope-of-tropes by which he means "a trope in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes."¹¹⁵ Therefore, Signifyin(g) does not necessarily revolve around trickery or insults.

¹¹¹ Tomlinson, "Cultural Dialogics," 256.

¹¹² Walser, "Out of Notes," 358.

¹¹³ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 58.

¹¹⁴ For example, in reiterating musician Mezz Mezzrow's opinion that "cutting contests" – in which musicians attempt to outplay one another – "are just a musical version of the verbal duels...staged to see which performer can snag and cap all the others *musically*" (Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 76). At this point, Mezzrow is comparing cutting contests to verbal insult rituals such as "the dozens" during which participants bait each other by insulting one another's relatives, most commonly their mothers.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

While the insult of the Monkey's discourse is important to the tales, linguists have often failed to recognize that insult is not at all central to the nature of Signifyin(g); it is merely one mode of a rhetorical strategy that has several other modes, all of which share the use of troping. They have, in other words, mistaken the trees for the forest.¹¹⁶

Gates argues that scholars have misunderstood Signifyin(g) in the past because they have mistakenly "taken the part – one of its several tropes – as its whole."¹¹⁷ In reality, there are other less aggressive facets to the concept, several of which he proceeds to outline. One example concerns an anecdote novelist Ralph Ellison recounts from his time as a music student. Following a failed attempt to adopt a virtuosic performance style in order to compensate for his lack of piano practice, Ellison sought solace in his mentor Hazel Harrison. Harrison responded by challenging Ellison to always play at his best, even if only in the waiting room at Chehaw Station, since there would always be a little man hidden behind the stove. This "Little Man at Chehaw Station"¹¹⁸ who is unexpected yet ever present, knows the music, tradition and the required standard of musicianship. According to Gates, Harrison is Signifyin(g) upon her protégé through allegory, intended to teach Ellison that he should not skip the necessary challenges placed in an apprentice's path.

In another example, Gates discusses how Jelly Roll Morton's 1938 version of "Maple Leaf Rag" Signifies on Scott Joplin's 1916 recording through two-handed piano embellishments. Crucially, rather than surpass or destroy Joplin's original, Morton "extends and tropes figures present in the original" and his "Signification is a gesture of admiration and respect."¹¹⁹ This complements the "subtle and loving"¹²⁰ methods of Harrison, illustrating

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 78.

¹¹⁸ The title of one of Ellison's essays.

¹¹⁹ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 69.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 71.

how in the words of Gates, despite its “often phallogentric orientation, then, Signifyin(g), it is clear, can mean any number of modes of rhetorical play.”¹²¹

Signifyin(g) and Tradition

One of Gates’s most thought-provoking references to jazz is his account of Count Basie’s recapitulation of the “pre-1945” jazz piano tradition within a single recording.

Throughout his piece, Basie alludes to styles of playing that predominated in black music between 1920 and 1940. These styles include ragtime, stride, barrelhouse, boogie-woogie, and the Kansas City “walking bass” so central to swing in the thirties. Through these allusions, Basie has created a composition characterised by pastiche. He has recapitulated the very tradition out of which he grew and from which he descended. Basie, in other words, is repeating the formal history of his tradition within his composition entitled “Signify.” It is this definition of *Signify* that allows for its use as a metaphor of Afro-American formal revision.¹²²

Gates’s description is reminiscent of the work of Tomlinson in that both men use aural comparison to identify Signification on a broader stylistic level. It is important to note that without the “finer level of musical analysis”¹²³ to which Walser aspires, neither man possesses the type of information required to compare specific passages of music. While Tomlinson fails to identify those Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix tracks that influenced Davis’s fusion, Gates neglects to mention whether Basie is referring to particular recordings in his Significations. This is in direct contrast to his description of the *Monkey Tales*, in which he traces the word “forty-four” through poems published by Bruce Jackson. Without the aid of note-based observations, Gates does not replicate the same insightful detail within his description of Basie’s recording.¹²⁴ This illustrates the important role note-based observations can play in Signifyin(g) and suggests a possible way to maintain intertextual

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 134.

¹²³ Walser, “Out of Notes,” 345.

¹²⁴ Clearly, Gates is not a musicologist, relying on Dwight Andrews, Anthony Davis and Frank Tirro “as interpreters of the wonders of nonverbal black music, especially jazz” (Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, xxii).

breadth – i.e. Gates focuses on a single item (the word “forty-four”) quoting short passages of text, and so (unlike Walser) does not become mired.

Basie’s recapitulation raises another very important theme – the role tradition may play in Signifyin(g). Gates re-focuses on black literature to argue that the way black authors revise one another’s tropes, defines the position of a new text in relation to the tradition preceding it, and alters our view of the tradition from which materials are revised.

Writers Signify upon each other’s texts by the revision of tropes. This sort of Signifyin(g) revision serves, if successful, to create a space for the revising text. It also alters fundamentally the way we read the tradition, by defining the relation of the text at hand to the tradition. The revising text is written in the language of the tradition, employing its tropes, its rhetorical strategies, and its ostensible subject matter.¹²⁵

One example Gates provides concerns the rearrangement of Broadway and movie songs by jazz musicians, a mode of formal parody that “suggests a given structure precisely by failing to coincide with it – that is, suggests it by dissemblance.”¹²⁶ For Gates, the “more mundane the fixed text...the more dramatic is the Signifyin(g) revision”¹²⁷ (e.g. Charlie Parker’s recording of “April in Paris”). This raises an important discussion point for the thesis – i.e. whether identifying Davis’s Significations might serve to redefine the position of *Kind of Blue* in relation to musical tradition. For example, a predecessor belonging to an unexpected musical tradition of which we were previously unaware, could well encourage us to regard the album differently.

Decoding the Figurative

Walser adds an extra dimension to the notion of revision when discussing Davis’s 1964 live version of “My Funny Valentine,” by introducing the idea that the trumpeter might Signify on his own past performances of the piece, recorded in 1956 and 1958.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 135.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 113.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 70.

Davis is signifyin' on all of the versions of the song he has heard, but for his audience, Davis is signifyin' on all the versions each listener has heard. What is played is played up against Davis's intertextual experience, and what is heard is heard up against the listeners' experiences. Moreover, Davis is no doubt engaging the many Bennett like performances of "My Funny Valentine" he must have heard, but he is also signifyin' on many jazz versions, including his own past performance.¹²⁸

It seems possible to extend the idea that Davis Signifies on his own previous solos when improvising to include previous compositions, given Gates's clarification that Signifyin(g) does not necessarily involve trickery or insult. This draws Davis's own recordings prior to *Kind of Blue* into the intertextual debate, which he may have repeated-with-difference to generate the album's vamp-style settings. Moreover, Walser's comments introduce the idea that each listener may perceive the same Signification differently depending on their own experiences. This is analogous to the Monkey Tales in that a wiser animal than the Lion, perhaps drawing on a previous encounter with the Monkey, might have taken the latter's comments less literally.

This is an appropriate moment to return to the work of Mitchell-Kernan, whose description of "indirection" reflected Morson's metaphor for the "double-voiced word" (see p. 45). She argues that apparent meaning directs listeners to shared knowledge, upon which decoding the figurative depends. Shared knowledge operates on two levels: (1) that the speaker and his audience realise Signifyin(g) is occurring; and (2) a silent second text corresponding to shared knowledge must be utilised to reinterpret the utterance. Thus, in the words of Gates, Signifyin(g) "depends on the success of the signifier at invoking an absent meaning ambiguously "present" in a carefully wrought statement."¹²⁹

Gates also introduces the idea that a speaker may not desire all listeners to partake of this shared knowledge, preferring instead to Signify protectively. He offers historical examples

¹²⁸ Walser, "Out of Notes," 351.

¹²⁹ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 94.

of this process in action, including an account provided by ex-slave Wash Wilson, interviewed by the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s. According to Wilson, singing “Steal Away to Jesus” was a code to inform slaves an illicit religious meeting was to take place that night, under the noses of their disapproving masters. Gates also refers to Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative* (written in 1845) as another example of how black people Signified protectively within the lyrics of black songs.

[The slaves] would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many seem *unmeaning jargon*, but which, nevertheless, were *full of meaning* to themselves.¹³⁰

According to Douglass, slaves “would sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone.”¹³¹ In this manner, Gates argues, “blacks were using antiphonal structures to reverse their apparent meaning, as a mode of encoding for self-preservation.”¹³²

These ideas present a very different type of Signifyin(g) than the open invitation to experience Davis’s dramatic trumpet articulations as described by Walser. John P. Murphy¹³³ also investigates the dialogue between artist and audience in jazz, asking “how does an individual deal with the influence of his or her precursors, and how are the transformations he or she makes of the precursor’s work meaningful for audiences?”¹³⁴ Having analysed transformed Charlie Parker themes within the improvised lines of saxophonist Joe Henderson, Murphy observes that Henderson “emphasises his knowledge of, and admiration for, Parker’s work.”¹³⁵ Thus, in contrast to the protective Signifyin(g) described by Wash Wilson and Frederick Douglass, Murphy argues that jazz improvisers

¹³⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹³² It should also be noted that Douglass also provides examples of slaves Signifyin(g) more directly. See *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³³ John P. Murphy, “Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence,” *Black Perspective in Music* 18, no.1 (1990): 7-19.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

often “celebrate their debt to their predecessors...invoking and reworking music that is familiar to the audience.”¹³⁶

It seems uncertain to what degree tracks on *Kind of Blue* might comment upon or direct listeners towards predecessors. This thesis suggests that if Davis did rework ideas from a series of earlier musical texts in order to shape the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*, then this process would not have fitted neatly alongside the copyright laws and recording contracts that formed part of his everyday world as a recording artist. There is perhaps an additional insight into the role of testimony here, which may have served Davis and other jazz musicians in the fabrication of useful smokescreens to avoid discussing Significations that were difficult processes to articulate and to justify legally (see Chapter Five). As is the case for repetition-with-difference, double-voicedness and indirection in *Kind of Blue* will be examined through a research question (see Chapter Three).

Rhetorical Strategies

Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., lends extra dimension to the debate by emphasising that Signifyin(g) is more than simply the variation of pre-existent material – “what makes it different from simple borrowing, varying, or reworking is its transformation of such material by using it rhetorically or figuratively – through troping, in other words.”¹³⁷ He argues that the key to aesthetically evaluating Signifyin(g) works lies in understanding that “such practices *are* criticism – perceptive and evaluative acts and expressions of approval and disapproval,

¹³⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁷ Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., “Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies and Black Music Enquiry,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 271.

validation and invalidation.”¹³⁸ Floyd’s definition of musical Signifyin(g) presents a list of troping mechanisms that are non music-specific.

In other words, musical Signifyin(g) is troping: the transformation of pre-existing musical material by trifling with it, teasing it, or censoring it. Musical Signifyin(g) is the rhetorical use of pre-existing material as a means of demonstrating respect for or poking fun at a musical style, process, or practice through parody, pastiche, implication, indirection, humour, tone play or word play, the illusion of speech or narration, or other troping mechanisms.¹³⁹

Gates discusses the varied rhetorical strategies of Signifyin(g) by describing African-American rhetorical games and comparing them with standard figures of speech.¹⁴⁰

It is a fairly straightforward exercise to compare the black slave tropes to the master tropes identified by Vico, Nietzsche, Burke, and Bloom, and to map a black speech act, such as Signifyin(g), into its component Western tropes.¹⁴¹

However, despite these descriptions and comparisons, Gates consistently gravitates back towards his central argument of Signifyin(g) as a trope-of-tropes, since “all of the rhetorical figures [are] subsumed in the term *Signify*.”¹⁴² For Gates, this is why Signifyin(g) is so challenging to define:

“Because to Signify is to be figurative, to define it in practice is to define it through any number of its embedded tropes.”¹⁴³

This sentence sums up the broader contribution of this thesis, since in identifying the process Davis followed to create his compositional settings, the study teases out Signifyin(g) strands, identifying and describing new facets that enrich our understanding of this concept and how it functions within jazz. Gates does identify some rhetorical strategies within jazz:

¹³⁸ Floyd, “Ring Shout,” 275. See also Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., “Troping the Blues: From Spirituals to the Concert Hall,” *Black Music Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (1993): 31; and Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995), 96.

¹³⁹ Floyd, *Power of Black Music*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ According to Gates, subdivisions of Signifyin(g) belonging to the black tradition include “marking, loud talking, testifying, calling out (of one’s name), sounding, rapping, playing the dozens, and so on.” Rhetorical tropes subsumed within Signifyin(g) include “metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (the master tropes), and also hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis...aporia, chiasmus and catachresis.” Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 57.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 88.

Signifyin(g) in jazz performances and in the play of black language games is a mode of formal revision, it depends for its effects on troping, it is often characterised by pastiche, and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences.¹⁴⁴

He associates pastiche with his term “unmotivated” Signifyin(g), whereas “motivated” revisions involve parody.¹⁴⁵ Gates compares these terms with the distinction Ellison draws, in acknowledging his own literary antecedents, between “relatives” and “ancestors.”

Ellison relates to Wright as the Signifying Monkey relates to the Signified Lion. He parodies Wright, as a mode of critical Signification...Ellison’s well-defined practice of pastiche, corresponding to unmotivated Signifyin(g), is what he seems to imply in the term *ancestor*.¹⁴⁶

With respect to jazz, Gates offers Count Basie’s composition “Signifyin’” as an example, in which the pianist creates a piece “characterised by pastiche...[by] repeating the formal history of his tradition.”¹⁴⁷ Gates equates Basie’s piece (alongside “Signify” by Oscar Peterson) with the “admiration and respect” of Jelly Roll Morton’s Signification upon “Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin (see before).

In these compositions, the formal history of solo piano styles in jazz is recapitulated, delightfully, whereby one piano style follows its chronological predecessor in the composition itself, so that boogie-woogie, stride, and blues piano styles – and so on – are represented in one composition as histories of the solo jazz piano, histories of its internal repetition and revision process.¹⁴⁸

Once again, this illustrates a bigger picture, because illuminating intertextuality and its role in the generation of compositional settings foregrounds the jazz tradition and Davis’s place within it – i.e. what it means to work within a musical tradition. Gates turns back to literature to make a similar point and in doing so, further distinguishes between pastiche and parody.

Pastiche only renders explicit that which any literary history implies: that tradition is the process of formal revision. Pastiche is literary history naming itself, pronouncing its surface content to be the displaced content of intertextual relations themselves, the announcement of ostensibly concealed revision. Pastiche is an act of literary “Naming”; parody is an act of “Calling out of one’s name.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 134.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 69-70.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 134.

To “call out of name” is an African-American rhetorical device whereby an insult is substituted in place of a person name (often the word “bitch”). Here, Gates is indulging in his own wordplay and quickly broadens his definition of motivated Signifyin(g), turning once again to the Monkey Tales.

Signifyin(g) revision is a rhetorical transfer that can be motivated or unmotivated. Motivated Signifyin(g) is the sort in which the Monkey delights; it functions to redress an imbalance of power, to clear a space, rhetorically. To achieve occupancy in this desired space, the Monkey rewrites the received order by exploiting the Lion’s hubris and his inability to read the figurative other than as the literal.¹⁵⁰

One example he provides of parody in jazz, concerns a running joke in the Oklahoma City Blue Devils of quoting the tune “They Picked Poor Robin” in order to satirise (in the words of Ellison) “some betrayal of faith or loss of love observed from the bandstand.”¹⁵¹ As Gates explains:

Here again the parody is twofold, involving a formal parody of the melody of “They Picked Poor Robin” as well as a ritual naming, and therefore a troping, of an action “observed from the bandstand.”¹⁵²

Gates also describes John Coltrane’s rearrangement of “My Favourite Things” as a “formal parody” on the Julie Andrews version, remarking that “repetition of a form and then inversion of the same through a process of variation is central to jazz.”¹⁵³

It is important to note that in describing Signifyin(g) in jazz, Gates does not draw from his comparative list of African-American rhetorical games and standard figures of speech. Rather, in a general sense he emphasises Signifyin(g) as a trope-of-tropes, whereas jazz-specific comments focus on pastiche and parody, which he associates with motivated and unmotivated Signifyin(g). In comparison, Floyd’s list is a compilation of troping mechanisms he identifies with jazz.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 134-135.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Ibid., 114.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 113.

This final section has provided the thesis with useful points of reference, which a discussion concerning rhetorical strategies evident in the Significations of *Kind of Blue* might refer to. However, one possible outcome is that transcription and musical analysis will reveal compositional techniques Davis employed to revise musical items, which are not analogous with the rhetorical games and figures of speech Gates compares. Crucially, what note-based intertextual observations do provide is a perspective from which to observe Significations in their decoded state. To reemploy Morson's metaphor (see p. 45) analysis can render superimposed and effaced writing on a palimpsest simultaneously visible – i.e. the study may directly compare each track on *Kind of Blue* with its predecessors. In that eventuality, it seems likely to be the ensuing intertextual dialogue that offers Davis's revisions rhetorical dimensions.

Summary

Kernfeld's unexpected conclusion that the Sextet recordings were innovative because of their vamp-style accompaniments implies the need for a further study focused exclusively on those settings. Although Barrett addresses the composed elements of *Kind of Blue*, he presents intertextually narrow "two-text" analyses in support of his theory concerning transformed blues language in the album, before adopting a textual approach. In contrast, this thesis re-explores the album's compositional settings by retaining the detail of note-based examinations while embracing a much broader intertextual perspective.

Although Kahn provides useful resources in the form of sketches, the recording outtakes he presents prove novel rather than informative. Overall, books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants display a non-critical approach to testimony, which

inevitably invites criticism of Davis's character and actions. In contrast, Tomlinson characterises Davis's Signifyin(g) as both unique and powerful, implying the notion of a distinctive creative voice. However, his broad stylistic comparisons are unsuitable to detail its qualities – i.e. specify Davis's selection and variation of predecessors. Conversely, Walser's attempt to provide analytical detail mires his intertextual intentions, yet Gates's comparative description of the word "forty-four" demonstrates that his theory is capable of handling literary detail.

The dialogue Walser and Murphy identify between artist and audience (in jazz improvisation) contrasts sharply with accounts of protective Signification by ex-slaves Wash Wilson and Frederick Douglass. Gates's introduction of the terms "double-voicedness" and "indirection" permits the study to situate *Kind of Blue* within this disparity, by investigating to what degree tracks on the album comment on or direct listeners to shared knowledge.

Floyd emphasises the rhetorical aspects of Signifyin(g), providing a list of troping mechanisms intended to contextualise Gates's theory more firmly within music. In contrast, Gates focuses on distinguishing between motivated (parody) and unmotivated (pastiche) exemplars in jazz, emphasising how the latter foregrounds tradition in the process of revision. His definition of Signifyin(g) as a trope-of-tropes, in which all rhetorical modes of revision are subsumed, underscores the need for a reappraisal of *Kind of Blue* and the Signifyin(g) voice of Miles Davis. Identifying new strands of Signification will enrich our understanding of Davis's creative process and illuminate Signifyin(g) in jazz, as the thesis observes Davis renegotiating musical tradition through the power of his Signifyin(g) voice.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter One, groundwork for this thesis took the form of comparing tracks from *Kind of Blue* with other key works of the period through a note-based intertextual approach.¹ An important part of this process was to identify recordings that Davis likely signified upon to compose *Kind of Blue*, which required some form of selection procedure in order to direct enquiries towards possible contenders. Otherwise, a great deal of time might have been wasted exploring unrewarding directions that failed to deliver instances of Signifyin(g). As this chapter will describe, three lines of enquiry produced the majority of relevant findings: (1) underdeveloped intertextual accounts; (2) clues foregrounding contemporaries of Davis; and (3) compositions by Davis and Evans.

The process was investigative, following existent musical and biographical clues in search of repetition-with-difference. Crucially, a critically selective approach was adopted to ensure that a sound basis for comparison was in place. Specifically, some tracks displayed highly persuasive musical relationships, whereas others seemed less plausible and so were not pursued further. Indications of plausibility included distinctive musical features only shared by those musical texts, multiple layers of Signification (e.g. harmony and melody) identified within the same musical passages, and precise transformations displaying “neatness” unlikely to occur coincidentally.

¹ This study builds on an MA dissertation, expanding beyond its investigation concerning who authored “Flamenco Sketches” and “Blue in Green” (i.e. Davis or Evans) to explore the creative process behind all of the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*.

Signification was identified through accurate transcription of musical passages and their comparison. Transcription required specific equipment and techniques, whereas notation of passages necessitated careful consideration of issues related to music transmitted aurally within the recording studio. Comparison involved the following type of formula – to create item “A” Davis repeated item “B” with difference generated through technique “C.”

The thesis also tried to learn from existing analyses of *Kind of Blue*, focusing on two particular issues – first, the challenge of maintaining intertextual perspective when examining note-based details; and secondly, the importance of remaining critically aware when employing musical analysis alongside a deductive (or “top down”) approach, due to the accommodating nature of musical theory.

Research Questions

- (1) *Which recordings did Davis Signify on to create the compositional settings of Kind of Blue and what musical items were repeated?*
- (2) *How did Davis generate difference and do commonalities exist across Kind of Blue to describe a Signifyin(g) voice?*
- (3) *To what extent do the Significations of Davis direct listeners towards shared knowledge?*
- (4) *Are Davis’s Significations motivated or unmotivated and in what manner does he revise musical tradition?*

Research Questions (1) and (2) collectively address repetition-with-difference in *Kind of Blue*. The latter also incorporates Tomlinson’s phrase Signifyin(g) voice, in order to explore his inference that there is something idiosyncratic about Davis’s Significations. The word “commonalities” is simply adopted to infer repeating trends.

Chapter Two introduced the term “indirection.” For the purposes of Research Question (3) this is interpreted as a dialogical quality within Davis’s compositional settings to direct listeners towards predecessors. Research Question (4) investigates rhetorical strategies within *Kind of Blue*, employing Gates’s descriptions of parody and pastiche in jazz as starting points for discussion. Given his observation that pastiche foregrounds tradition as the process of formal revision, this question also serves as an opportunity to observe Davis working within the jazz tradition.

Identifying Potential Predecessors

Existing Intertextual Accounts

This thesis re-evaluates three existing intertextual observations in the literature. Mark Gridley’s identification of an aural similarity between the vamp to “Piece Peace” and Segment 1 of “Flamenco Sketches” (reiterated by Kernfeld) and two comparisons made by Barrett (“Milestones” and “All Blues”/“Moanin” and “So What”). In each case, a Sextet recording is associated with a single predecessor to form an intertextually narrow comparison, one which risks the exclusion of other relevant recordings.

A more comprehensive approach may be found in the work of Paul Berliner,² in his account detailing the compositional development of “Round Midnight.” Berliner notes that although the piece was composed by Thelonious Monk in 1944, the first recorded version is credited to Cootie Williams,³ who added his own embellishments to Monk’s melody within the recording studio. These melodic notes were subsequently transcribed and incorporated into the published sheet music based on Williams’s version. In 1946, Dizzy Gillespie

² Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

³ Cootie Williams, *Cootie Williams and his Orchestra 1941-44*, Classics 827, 1995, LP.

recorded another arrangement⁴ incorporating an eight-bar intro/coda that he originally wrote for his version of “I Can’t Get Started.”⁵ In consequence, this became a standard feature of “Round Midnight” including Monk’s rendition. Finally in 1955, Davis added a three measure interlude to end the piece’s first chorus, an idea subsequently adopted as a formal element of the composition by other artists.⁶

Telling the story of “Round Midnight” from an intertextual perspective permits Berliner to outline how the piece developed over time, as a result of a number of recordings by different artists. Thus, its history is not encapsulated by a single author or recorded version and can only be properly understood intertextually. The creative process Berliner describes includes the original composed work followed by three subsequent recordings, four texts that collectively embody the evolution of “Round Midnight.”⁷ His description also involves other recordings, such as “I Can’t Get Started,” that contribute as silent second texts (see Chapter Two). Clearly, this is a much broader perspective than the two-text analyses mentioned above, and it is this comprehensive approach that will be adopted by this thesis.

Existing commentaries concerning *Kind of Blue* appear under-investigated by comparison. For example, although it is widely observed that the vamp of Segment 1 (“Flamenco Sketches”) originates from Bill Evans’s solo piano arrangement of “Some Other Time,”⁸ his recording of Bernstein’s work typically functions in the literature as an explanation why the pianist began to improvise “Peace Piece” in the studio. There is nothing written about how

⁴ Dizzy Gillespie, *Modern Jazz Trumpets*, Spotlight (E) SPJ 132, 1946, EP.

⁵ Dizzy Gillespie Sextet, *The Jazz Makers*, Columbia CL 1036, 1945, LP.

⁶ Miles Davis, *Round About Midnight*, Columbia CL-949, 1957, LP.

⁷ Although other arrangements of “Round Midnight” have been recorded since Davis’s version and might be included in any intertextual discussion of the piece, Berliner’s account describes the development of its main compositional features as we now know them.

⁸ Bill Evans, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, Riverside RLP 12-291, 1959, LP.

all three pieces (“Some Other Time,” “Peace Piece” and “Flamenco Sketches”) fit together intertextually, with the contributing details of each set out as in Berliner’s description.

Similarly, Barrett restricts his examination of “So What” to gospel-blues features such as the “Amen” rhythm and call-and-response. Non-blues characteristics, including the distinctive two-handed piano voicing employed by Bill Evans and the use of double bass as a melodic instrument, are not examined intertextually. Likewise, his comments about “Milestones” centre on what he describes as a “blues figuration” causing him to overlook possible non-blues predecessors. Overall, these criticisms suggest that all three intertextual accounts warrant re-examination, a fresh take that includes the broadest number of recordings that display evidence of Davis’s Significations.

Contemporaries of Davis

The identification of “Peace Piece” and “Moanin’” as predecessors, suggests that Davis was willing to Signify on the compositional materials of his contemporaries. One figure who we know inspired Davis was pianist Ahmad Jamal, described by Carr as the biggest single influence on Davis’s 1950s Quintet.⁹ His observation is supported by lavish praise from Davis in 1958 – “Ahmad is one of my favourites. I live until he makes another record.”¹⁰ Carr includes an interesting table in his biography¹¹ that compares titles Jamal and Davis both recorded during the second half of the 1950s (see Appendix Two). He highlights a trend within Davis’s repertoire of recording numbers shortly after Jamal, arguing that most of the medium-fast standards performed by his Quintet came from the pianist’s book.¹²

⁹ Davis’s sidemen were John Coltrane, Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones.

¹⁰ Quoted in Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 100. Also see *The Jazz Review*, December 1958.

¹¹ Compiled by Trevor Timmers.

¹² Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 101.

Since these recordings from Jamal's repertoire had clearly caught Davis's ear, they seemed a logical place to begin searching for musically related materials. One obvious piece of repertoire to select from the list was "New Rhumba" since its introduction features double bass used as a melodic instrument within a call-and-response relationship (musical devices shared by "So What"). Thus, this piece offered an immediate direction by which the research might move beyond Barrett's blues-orientated assessment.

Another observation made by Carr deemed significant for this study is his description of the bass-vamp to "All Blues" as a "lilting boogie-woogie figure reminiscent of Jimmy Yancey."¹³ His description resonates with analytical work by Kernfeld into the improvisational language of the Sextet, specifically Davis's paraphrasing of "a familiar bass line, perhaps borrowed from boogie-woogie pianists"¹⁴ during three different recordings of "Straight No Chaser." All of these tracks were made in 1958 (including the version on *Milestones*) shortly before Davis designed the compositional settings for *Kind of Blue*. The observations of Carr and Kernfeld appear to correlate, since both writers persuasively identify boogie-woogie piano as a source of creative inspiration for Davis during his Sextet period, in his improvisational "paraphrase technique" and compositional "vamp-style" accompaniments for "All Blues."

One biographical detail these writers overlook is the trumpeter's close connection with the family of boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons. Davis was intimately associated with his son, tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons, with whom he toured and recorded during 1946 as a member of the Billy Eckstein Band. At this time both men began to use heroin together and

¹³ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 149.

¹⁴ Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 109. The three versions of "Straight No Chaser" may be heard on the following albums (track times for boogie-woogie paraphrases indicated in brackets) – Miles Davis, *Milestones*, Columbia CL 1193, 1958, LP (2:38), Miles Davis, *At Newport 1958*, Columbia CK 85202, 1958, LP (1:58); and; Miles Davis, *Jazz at the Plaza*, Columbia C 32470, 1958, LP (1:34).

when the band broke up in 1947, Davis spent time with the saxophonist in his hometown of Chicago playing engagements at the Jumptown Club. Albert Ammons was also performing in Chicago at this time and at the height of his creative powers, having recently been awarded the twin accolades of a recital at Harvard University and an invitation to perform at the presidential inauguration of President Harry S. Truman.¹⁵

Unfortunately, it is unmentioned in the literature whether Davis met Albert Ammons or discussed boogie-woogie with his son. However, it is encouraging to observe that the trumpeter employs an Ammons-style introduction for his Quintet arrangement of “If I Was a Bell.”¹⁶ The boogie-woogie pianist used this idiosyncratic “Big Ben” theme to introduce pieces such as “Shout for Joy”¹⁷ and “Mecca Flat Blues.”¹⁸ Overall, the comments of Carr and Kernfeld, combined with Davis’s early association with Gene Ammons, indicate the recordings of Albert Ammons as a possible area to investigate.

Compositions by Davis and Evans

Chapter Two touched upon the changing testimony of Bill Evans concerning his involvement in *Kind of Blue*. In addition to the mentor-protégé narrative Kahn employs in his analysis of “Blue in Green,” Evans claimed (co)authorship of two tracks during a recorded radio interview for WKCR.¹⁹ Here the pianist claims to have gone to Davis’s apartment the

¹⁵ Peter Silvester, *A Left Hand Like God: The Story of Boogie-woogie* (London: Omnibus Press, 1990), 185.

¹⁶ Miles Davis, *Relaxin’ with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige PRLP 7129, 1956, LP. The “Big Ben” introduction is not scored for either the 1950 Broadway version of *Guys and Dolls* or the 1955 film adaptation starring Marlon Brando. Pianist Red Garland, who played the introduction on Davis’s version, recorded his own version (with the same intro) after the Quintet.

¹⁷ Meade Lux Lewis – Albert Ammons, *Bear Cat Crawl/Shout for Joy*, Vocalion 4608, 1939, EP.

¹⁸ Albert Ammons, *Boogie-woogie/Mecca Flat Blues*, Solo Art 12001, 1939, 78 rpm. It is interesting to note that Ammons also began many of his recordings with a piano roll, a boogie-woogie trademark that Evans sustains behind the bass and horn-vamps of “All Blues.”

¹⁹ King’s Crown Radio based at Columbia University (New York). When licensing commercial radio stations, the US federal government assigned the call letter W to Eastern stations (K to Western stations) hence WKCR.

morning before the first *Kind of Blue* recording session²⁰ stating “I sketched out “Blue in Green,” which was my tune and I sketched out the melody and the changes to it for the guys.”²¹ Evans also asserts that he and Davis worked on “Flamenco Sketches” together “at the piano until we arrived at the five levels we used...all little sketches I made.”²² The thesis will return to these claims post-analysis (Chapter Seven) to identify elements of truth buried within these statements. For now, aural evidence does suggest that the vamp from his improvisation “Peace Piece” did contribute to the settings of “Flamenco Sketches.” Thus, the thesis investigates other original works recorded by Evans prior to *Kind of Blue*.

Evans recorded a piano trio album the year before *Kind of Blue* and several months afterwards. The prior album, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*,²³ contains two originals, “Peace Piece” and “Epilogue.” The possible influence of “Peace Piece” has already been raised, whereas “Epilogue” seems an unlikely contender, being a very short folkloric fragment based around a pentatonic scale. The later album *Portrait in Jazz*²⁴ contains Bill Evans’s trio recording of “Blue in Green” (clearly of interest) and “Peri’s Scope.” The latter, composed in 1958,²⁵ was written in a much more conventional manner than “Epilogue” and so informs how the pianist was composing shortly before *Kind of Blue*. Finally, although from an earlier album, it is impossible to ignore “Waltz for Debby”²⁶ since this constitutes Evans’s most

²⁰ “Freddie Freeloader,” “So What” and “Blue in Green” were recorded during the first session (2 March, 1959) whereas “Flamenco Sketches” and “All Blues” were recorded during the second session (22 April, 1959).

²¹ Bill Goldenberg and Eddie Karp, *Interview with Bill Evans* (tape recording), Fort Lee: WKCR, 1979. Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 98.

²² *Ibid.*, 134.

²³ Bill Evans, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, Riverside RLP 12-291, 1958, LP.

²⁴ Bill Evans, *Portrait in Jazz*, Riverside RLP 12-315, 1959, LP.

²⁵ Pettinger, *Bill Evans*, 82.

²⁶ Bill Evans, *New Jazz Conceptions*, Riverside RLP 12-223, 1956, LP.

renowned original. As Chapter Six will illustrate, this proves a wise inclusion because the piece would appear to be an important predecessor for “Blue in Green.”²⁷

Evans’s role as pianist on *Kind of Blue* is another important area to investigate. His knowledge of European piano literature is well-documented,²⁸ whereas several commentators have described the introduction to “So What” as a prelude with impressionistic qualities.²⁹ Davis did not provide detailed notated parts for his musicians during the *Kind of Blue* recording sessions and so the pianist may have shaped the harmonisations during this section. For this reason, a piano prelude by the French Impressionist composer Debussy is included within the study as a possible influence.

Davis Recordings Before and After Kind of Blue

Chapter Two introduced Walser’s suggestion that Davis may have Signified on his own past recordings of “My Funny Valentine” during his 1964 live performance. This thesis broadens his idea beyond improvisational language to include the trumpeter’s earlier compositions, encouraged by Gates’s insistence that Signifyin(g) does not necessarily involve trickery or insult (see Chapter Two). Obvious candidates include recordings made with the Sextet, including the album *Milestones* and its title track, a piece commonly associated with “So What” through its use of modality. However, this album contains another Davis original – “Sid’s Ahead” – which is of particular interest because it already exists within an intertextual chain, described by Carr as “a variation on Miles’s own early blues, “Weirdo.”³⁰

²⁷ At this point, I would like to credit an anonymous peer reviewer of my article about “Blue in Green” (Fyffe, 2015) whose remark about “notable correspondences between some of the chord sequences” of “Waltz for Debby” and “Blue in Green” inspired me to more closely compare the harmonies of these pieces.

²⁸ See Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

²⁹ For example, while Kahn describes it as a “dreamy prelude” Carr refers to “impressionist chord voicings.” See Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 112; Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 146.

³⁰ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 126.

The track “On Green Dolphin Street”³¹ stands out from the Sextet studio session of 26 May 1958, because it is one of those numbers recently recorded by Ahmad Jamal. Another original composition by Davis – “Nardis” – was brought by the trumpeter to a recording session led by Adderley on 1 July 1958.³² Davis did not play on the album (*Portrait of Cannonball*)³³ yet his piece captured the imagination of Bill Evans, who subsequently recorded it many times with his piano trio.

This thesis also assesses *Kind of Blue* as a past performance upon which Davis might later Signify, because rather than marking the end of a Signifyin(g) series of recordings, the album is more likely to be situated in the centre of a chain stretching into Davis’s jazz-rock period.³⁴ One way to identify relevant post-*Kind of Blue* tracks is to focus on key musical attributes Davis carried forward into future recordings, in particular the Spanish sound of “Flamenco Sketches” and circular form of “Blue in Green.” These bring into play his collaborative album alongside arranger Gil Evans – *Sketches of Spain* –³⁵ and the recordings of his “Second Great Quintet” which (as Waters informs us) commonly utilise circular forms (see Chapter Six).

³¹ Miles Davis, *1958 Miles*, CBS/Sony (J) 20AP-1401, 1958, LP.

³² Julian Adderley Quintet, *Portrait of Cannonball*, Riverside RLP 12-269, 1958, LP.

³³ He had played trumpet on Adderley’s recording session earlier in the year (9 March, 1958). See Cannonball Adderley, *Somethin’ Else*, Blue Note BST 81595, 1958, LP.

³⁴ Both Kernfeld and Tomlinson suggest this notion but employ their own terminologies.

³⁵ Miles Davis, *Sketches of Spain*, Columbia CL1480, 1960, LP.

Transcribing and Notating Excerpts

The Value of Transcription

Van de Leur³⁶ identifies lack of access to key resources as an important factor in the creation of myths surrounding Ellington and Strayhorn during their lifetimes.

Those who probed the available resources for clues about the elusive workings of the partnership, all unquestioningly accepted one given: the hierarchical nature of the collaboration. Strayhorn, it was assumed, composed within a framework that was completely Ellingtonian, a style invented, developed, and intellectually owned by the orchestra's leader.³⁷

He argues that a proper assessment of the Ellington-Strayhorn partnership could not adequately be made during the men's lifetimes, because of the unavailability of primary sources for researchers and critics. Writing after the musicians' deaths, van de Leur bases his own reassessment on original documents from The Duke Ellington Collection, housed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (see Chapter One).

This thesis also requires access to the correct musical resources, yet Davis did not score out his music in the same manner as Ellington and Strayhorn, preferring to transmit ideas aurally rather than through notation. Moreover, although the accounts of Bill Evans describe three sketches employed during the *Kind of Blue* recording sessions,³⁸ only "Flamenco Sketches" survives courtesy of Plaut's photograph. The lack of scores and sketches necessitated that I transcribe and notate the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*, in order to compare them against musical passages from other relevant recordings.

³⁶ Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For – The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁸ Bill Evans claims to have written sketches for "Blue in Green" and "Flamenco Sketches" prior to the *Kind of Blue* recording sessions and to have received a single line sketch of the introduction to "So What" in the studio.

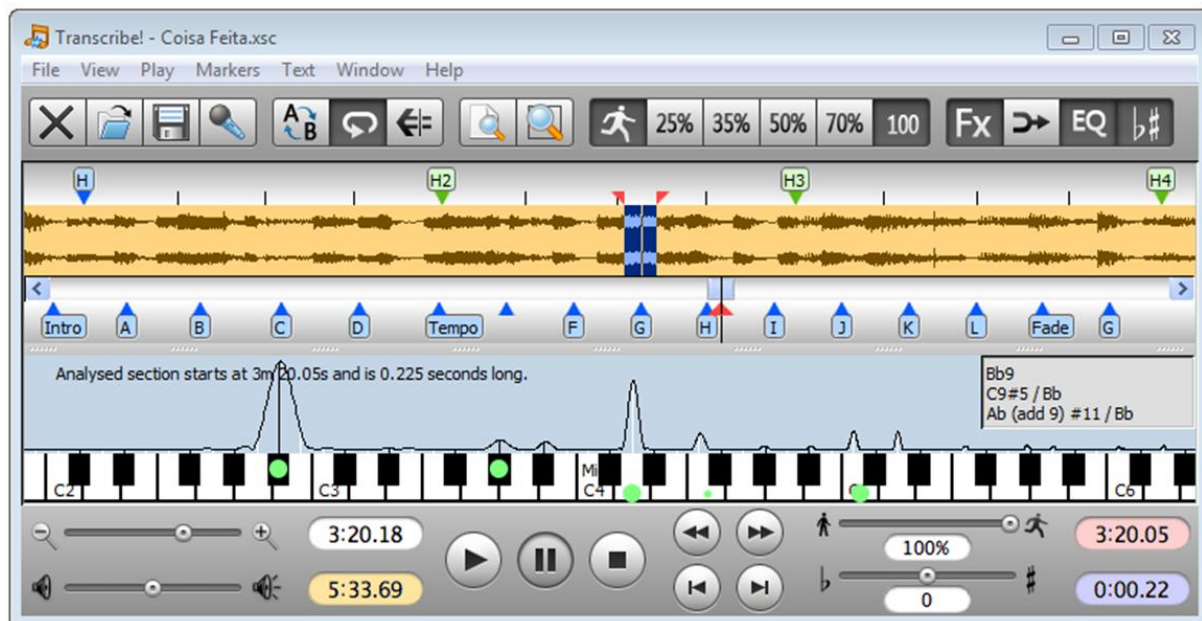
Equipment and Techniques

All of the musical examples for this study were transcribed using a licensed software package known as *Transcribe!*³⁹ The reason for using this program was to remedy common problems encountered while attempting to listen to a passage of music in a detailed manner (described below). It should be noted that the software does not transcribe actual notes, but rather facilitates a more controlled listening experience, primarily by repeating and slowing down passages of music.

When transcribing a passage of music, repeated listens are required in order to feel confident that the notes have been correctly discerned and notated. Using the scroll bar at the bottom of iTunes or Spotify to repeat passages is a crude tool, resulting in unnecessary musical sounds at the beginning and end that are distracting to the ear. A facility to accurately control these points by creating a loop (or A-B Repeat) ensures listeners' ears become quickly orientated to the passage of music and are not confused by non-essential tones. The software used by this study presents each recording as a waveform, with peaks and troughs users can employ to judge where to begin and end the loop, by simply highlighting the desired section in blue using the mouse (see **Fig. 4**).

³⁹ Version 8 licensed from www.seventhstring.com.

Fig. 4: Transcribe Window



These looped passages may then be manipulated in simple ways to make important musical details stand out. For example, complex passages may be slowed down to 70% of the original speed without detuning the track, which is particularly useful when transcribing fast tempos or semiquaver figures. Alternatively, stereo recordings can be manipulated to have their dual channels placed out-of-phase with one another, resulting in the cancellation of some auditory information. Most often the lead voice or instrument reduces in volume, making this technique particularly useful for the transcription of accompaniments. Finally, many listeners find it challenging to discern pitches in the bass register, in particular double bass which is much more difficult to play with perfect intonation than a fretted bass guitar. Fortunately, the software provides a facility to raise the pitch of the track up one octave, bringing bass figures into a higher register where it is much easier to identify the notes.

Selecting appropriate equipment to playback passages of music controlled by *Transcribe!* was an important choice, in order to ensure a high level of fidelity. The use of a quality set of headphones was preferred as a more cost effective solution than purchasing monitor

speakers. During transcription, I used a guitar to identify all pitches, the octave facility of Transcribe being used to lift double bass notes into this instrument's register. All other details (rhythm, timbre, articulation, etc.) were discernable by ear alone.

Each musical example transcribed in this manner was initially notated by hand on manuscript paper. In order to produce the thesis, these were re-notated using Sibelius software (employing their Reprise font) before being cut and pasted into Word as EMF Sibelius-generated graphic files (set at a resolution of 1200dpi). The following section outlines the main issues faced in transcribing and notating these examples with particular emphasis on "Blue in Green," since this proved the most complex compositional setting.

Key Issues Faced

One initial decision I was required to make was to select the most appropriate time signature for notating "All Blues." Within his liner notes to *Kind of Blue*, Evans refers to this piece as a "6/8 12-measure blues form," whereas Davis described it to Ralph Ellison as originally conceived in 4/4, "but when we got to the studio it hit me that it should be in 3/4."⁴⁰ The obvious discrepancy between these accounts is easily accounted for since no mention is made in the literature of a sketch to "All Blues," which suggests that these settings were learned aurally within the studio. Unless a time signature was specifically mentioned, each musician would have been free to conceive the composition in his own way. I hear the piece in 3/4 and notate it as such, while Davis's anecdote finds some corroboration in that all the predecessors identified for "All Blues" are in 4/4 (see Chapter Four).

⁴⁰ Ralph Gleason, "Composed for 6 Months, Then Made Tune a Waltz," *San Francisco Chronicle* (20 June, 1959). Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 96.

Bill Evans informs us that during the recording of “So What” the “introduction was written out single-line, and Paul and I played it and added a little harmony to it.”⁴¹ If so, this sketch has either not survived or not been discovered, leaving it to musical interpretation how to notate this section. As previously mentioned, Kahn publishes a photograph of Gil Evans’s score of the introduction⁴² from his rearrangement written for twenty-one piece orchestra and performed as part of Davis’s Carnegie Hall concert (19 May, 1961). It is uncertain whether Gil Evans had access to the sketch suggested by Bill Evans and he may well have transcribed it from *Kind of Blue*.

Therefore, I also transcribed the notes directly from the sound recording, yet referred afterwards to Gil Evans’s sketch to clarify two key details. First, the introduction maintains a loose sense of pulse throughout (despite some *rubato* phrasing) which Gil Evans and I interpret as a crotchet. In contrast, Kernfeld interprets this as a quaver,⁴³ meaning that his version is notated throughout with half the rhythmic values of my own transcription. Secondly, Evans also transcribes bar 7 of the introduction as eight quavers, relevant to Chapter Four where I argue this is a Signification on a boogie-woogie left-hand bass.

“Blue in Green”

Davis and Evans both recorded “Blue in Green” in 1959 – the Miles Davis Sextet version from *Kind of Blue* and the Bill Evans Trio version from *Portrait in Jazz*.⁴⁴ My transcription draws principally from choruses 1 and 2 of the Sextet version (Davis on trumpet) and chorus 1 of the trio version (Evans on piano). The piano cadenza Evans plays at the end of the

⁴¹ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 112.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴³ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 305.

⁴⁴ Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*, Columbia CL 1355, 1959, LP; Bill Evans, *Portrait in Jazz*, Riverside RLP 12-315, 1959, LP.

Sextet version, during which he states a truncated version of the melody, was used to resolve any discrepancies. Having several points of reference from which to draw to create the transcription was essential because Davis is very free in his melodic interpretation, both rhythmically and through the addition and subtraction of notes. For example, in chorus 1 of the Sextet version Davis omits B \flat (bar 2), F (bar 4) and G \sharp (bar 8). Nevertheless, all three notes are clearly outlined in his second chorus and stated by Evans in both chorus 1 of the Trio version and his piano cadenza. Thus, it is possible to transcribe a reliable version of the melodic note choices of “Blue in Green” through comparison.

Only two discrepancies of note selection consistently occur between the Sextet and Trio versions. First, Davis plays a Dm scale in bar 5 whereas Evans employs a Dm arpeggio. Secondly, Evans plays F and C \sharp in bar 10 whereas Davis begins on E and then improvises his way back to bar 1. I present these discrepancies by notating Evans’s melody and sketching in Davis’s passing notes and alternative note choices as cue notes (see Fig. 5).⁴⁵

Fig. 5: “Blue in Green”

The figure displays two musical staves in G major. The top staff shows Evans's melody with the following chords: Gm⁷, A⁷ALT., Dm⁷, Cm⁷, F⁷, and B \flat MAJ⁷. Fingering numbers are provided below the notes: 13, #9, b9, 11, 9, #11. A box labeled 'PASSING NOTES' with three arrows points to the final three notes of the phrase. The bottom staff shows Davis's alternative note choices with the following chords: A⁷ALT., Dm⁷, E⁷ALT., Am⁷, and Dm⁷. Fingering numbers are provided below the notes: #9, 11, b13, 9, 9. A box labeled 'DAVIS'S NOTE CHOICES' with two arrows points to the final two notes of the phrase.

The freedom with which Davis phrases the Sextet melody makes it rhythmically irreconcilable with the Trio version – he appears to filter “Blue in Green” through an

⁴⁵ This layout is not intended to suggest that Davis’s notes are in any way less authentic than Evans’s.

additional editing process improvised within the recording studio. Therefore, **Fig. 5** follows the convention (adopted by jazz fake books) of using a regularised version of the Trio rhythms.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the rhythmic freedom of Davis will be explored as an additional level of investigation when deemed appropriate and at that point, the thesis refers to a literal “note-for-note” transcription (see Appendix Three).

Analytical Approach

Transcription-Comparison

Having earmarked pieces Davis may have repeated-with-difference to compose *Kind of Blue* and accurately transcribed/notated relevant passages from the album, it was vital that these resources be brought together in an appropriate manner. For example, existing analytical approaches designed primarily with European art music in mind appear inappropriate, given Walser’s argument that these render Signifyin(g) in Davis’s trumpet technique invisible (see Chapter Two). Their unsuitability is doubly underscored by his assessment of the value of Gates’s work.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s, theory is useful precisely because his goal was to create the means to deal with cultural difference on its own terms...his work unmasks the shallowness of attempts to show that African literature is worthy of study because it is fundamentally the same as European literature, or that jazz is worthy of study because it is just like classical music.⁴⁷

Therefore, this research simply uses comparison to appraise musical passages in a manner compatible with the ethos of Gates’s theory. The approach of this thesis might best be described as “transcription-comparison” since in each instance two or more notated passages transcribed by this author are examined together. This is not dissimilar from Waters’ comparison of Wayne Shorter lead sheets with his own transcriptions (see Chapter

⁴⁶ The final note of bars 1-3 and 6-10 and first note of bar 4 are notated as crotchets whereas the arpeggio of bar 5 is notated as quavers (with Davis’s passing notes cued in-between).

⁴⁷ Walser, “Out of Notes,” 350.

One). Although seemingly simple, the approach is highly effective in identifying difference, as described in the following section.

Identifying Difference

Having transcribed potential predecessors, it became evident that in some cases materials were repeated, due to a striking similarity between certain passages (both visually in the notated examples and aurally through the recordings). Crucially, these observations ensured two points of reference were now available, meaning that seemingly related passages of music could be directly compared in order to observe how they had been transformed, one into the other. Therefore, it was not only possible to identify predecessors of *Kind of Blue* and repeated materials, but also to pinpoint the techniques of variation applied, simply by observing differences between the excerpts.

Interestingly, this had the desirable outcome of drawing yet more recordings into the debate. For example, difference identified through transcription-comparison often appeared to be inspired by another Davis recording, the trumpeter seemingly being drawn towards modalities, harmonies and note choices that had been successful in the past. This helped to facilitate the type of rich intertextual account exemplified by Berliner, as it generated a greater number of recordings relevant to each transcription-comparison.

More complex patterns of Signification became evident in other ways. On several occasions, it became apparent that Davis had Signified multiple times on the same musical item by varying the difference on each occasion, in order to generate vamp-style settings for two different pieces. This created a broader group of recordings linked intertextually through a common predecessor.

In addition to its effectiveness at identifying difference, transcription-comparison also embodied important safeguards that helped avoid issues faced by previous analyses of Davis's music. These sometimes derived from the fundamental nature of the approach, with good listening habits essential for transcription sustained throughout comparison, resulting in a healthy emphasis on aural similarity rather than solely visual patterns.

Whereas comparison by its essence demanded a multi-text outlook, meaning that the study had to maintain an intertextual focus. Nevertheless, the research also benefitted from an active awareness of important issues identified within existing analyses of Davis's music.

Learning from Existing Analyses

The previous analyses of compositional settings examined in Chapter Two exhibit two main issues: first, both investigations adopt a textual approach and secondly, they employ a deductive (or "top down") approach alongside music theory. Clearly, there is nothing wrong with deductive research per se, and my own analysis of "Flamenco Sketches" works from the premise that the piece is intertextual. Nevertheless, music theory can be very accommodating, meaning that an erroneous observation might easily be deemed correct because "the notes" can be visualised in a multitude of different ways.

Textual and Intertextual Readings

The textual approach Kernfeld adopts for his analysis of "Flamenco Sketches" – examining it in isolation from other works – seems inappropriate given the intertextual associations he raises (i.e. that Davis appears to be utilising a vamp from "Peace Piece"). Kernfeld was writing before the interdisciplinary approach of New Jazz Studies, yet more recently the articles of Barrett and Walser both lose intertextual focus as their respective articles

progress (see Chapter Two). This state of affairs is indicative of the challenges inherent in examining musical detail without losing sight of the broader intertextual perspective.

Part of this problem was negotiated within my research through a desire to study the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue* as opposed to the album's improvisational language. Rather than notating chorus after chorus of improvised lines, the musical figures transcribed for this study are relatively short, thus ensuring that there are not too many notes to mire the debate. Even the two most complex settings on *Kind of Blue* – the introduction to “So What” (13-bars) and “Blue in Green” (10-bars) – do not threaten a fall into textuality. One reason is because virtually every note and chord of “Blue in Green” can be traced back to predecessors written by Davis and Bill Evans, a circumstance that ensured that intertextuality remained part of the discussion. Similarly, while only 50% of the introduction to “So What” indicates some form of predecessor, the remaining half contains items related to the main theme of the composition. Although not intertextual in the strictest sense, this did offer multiple reference points between a composition and its “prelude.” We might surmise from these observations that an important ingredient in maintaining intertextuality within note-based examinations is the selection of appropriate subject matter. In other words, I would suggest that the use of musical analysis within an interdisciplinary framework is more appropriate to some musical contexts than others.

It should be noted that although the research maintains an intertextual perspective throughout, this thesis does not emulate the comprehensiveness achieved by Stanbridge in his reassessment of “My Funny Valentine,” because it only includes recordings within which the Significations of Davis are discernable. Therefore, while Stanbridge traces “My Funny Valentine” back to its Broadway beginnings, Davis only appears to Signify on his own

recording of “It Ain’t Necessarily So” (*Porgy and Bess*)⁴⁸ arranged by Gil Evans, not the original score by George Gershwin. Thus, since this research is concerned with the Significations of Davis, the latter text is not directly relevant to the discussions of this PhD.

Inductive and Deductive Research

Kernfeld approaches his analysis of the root notes belonging to Segments 1-5 of “Flamenco Sketches” from the perspective of functional harmony and the cycle-of-fifths. In typical fashion, the musical notes prove malleable enough to accommodate this stance, as Kernfeld reinterprets Segment 2 (A \flat) as the tritone substitute of Segment 4 (D – see Chapter One). Yet, this seems less convincing when the broader musical context is brought into play – namely, that the central compositional component of “Flamenco Sketches” is modality, a movement away from the complex re-harmonised cycle-of-fifth progressions of bebop. Similarly, Barrett’s article revolves around his theory of transformed blues language in *Kind of Blue*, turning to the musical notes for support. Yet his analyses of “So What” and “Flamenco Sketches” – both suggesting that movement from a “white note key” to one of five flats introduces flattened blue notes against C major – has no sound musical basis independent of his theory. Changing to a different modal area and employing blue notes within a given tonal centre are not truly analogous. As an example, compare the addition of $\flat 3$ to an improvised line over a blues in C against playing D \flat major – the former could be placed anywhere whereas the latter would be employed with extreme caution (probably not at all).

The key point here is that analysts must remain aware how accommodating “the notes” can be to preconceived theoretical ideas. In response, this thesis is critically selective of its

⁴⁸ Miles Davis, *Porgy and Bess*, Columbia CL1274, 1959, LP.

analytical findings, rejecting any work that does not display the type of indications of plausibility outlined at the start of the chapter. Conversely, there are also warning signs to indicate an analysis might be misfiring. For example, Kernfeld's examination of "Flamenco Sketches" involves a tidying up of analytical loose ends, achieved by labelling the B \flat of Segment 3 as an "interruption." Similarly, Barrett labours hard in presenting his interpretation of "Blue in Green," substituting the IV chord that suits his blues-based outlook in place of the less desirable bVI. In other words, working hard to rationalise analytical results – "making them fit" – may serve as a warning that something has gone amiss.

Once again, the key point here is to retain critical awareness, not argue the merits of inductive over deductive research. Interestingly, the groundwork for this PhD employed an inductive approach, through a note-based examination that found some of Davis's materials had been borrowed (and revised) from earlier recordings. This led towards a more deductive approach, through embracing the notion of Signifyin(g) followed by an exploration of that concept throughout *Kind of Blue* and other key works of the period.

Summary

The identification of possible recordings Davis may have Signified upon to generate the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*, largely involved the development of clues within the literature. First, existing "two-text" intertextual associations deemed unnecessarily narrow were earmarked for reassessment; secondly, Davis's association with the family of Albert Ammons and recent use of boogie-woogie motifs within trumpet improvisations resonated

with Carr's description of the bass-vamp of "All Blues" as a "lilting boogie-woogie figure."⁴⁹

Lastly, Walser's notion that Davis might Signify on his own recordings and the authorial claims of Bill Evans regarding *Kind of Blue* encouraged an examination of both men's work.

An absence of scores for *Kind of Blue* meant that transcription was the best means to provide accurately notated musical passages. Identifying repeated materials between compositional settings and predecessors proved highly effective in identifying difference, since it ensured two points of reference to compare in order to establish modes of variation.

The thesis has argued that a key part of successfully combining the detail of note-based observations with the breadth of intertextual theory is choosing appropriate subject matter – in this case, short compositional settings possessing multiple intertextual associations.

Another important point raised is that when employing a deductive approach, it is vital to remain aware of how accommodating the notes can be, rejecting any work that does not conform to the highest standards of plausibility. The following chapters put these thoughts into practice, through a series of transcription-comparisons that examine Signifyin(g) within the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*.

⁴⁹ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 149.

Chapter Four:

The Blues in *Kind of Blue*

Introduction

As its title suggests, this chapter investigates Significations associated with the blues. In the literature review, I argued that Barrett's "two text" comparison between the undeniably bluesy track "All Blues" and "Milestones" – bestowing blues credentials to the latter by association with the former – exhibits a narrow form of intertextuality that is over-focused on the blues. Barrett describes the central theme to "Milestones" as a "blues figuration...rising and falling between chordal tones over a static harmony," claiming that the groove of "All Blues" uses "this same figuration."¹ In response, this chapter reinvestigates both pieces from a broader intertextual perspective, in an attempt to map out the Significations Davis employed in designing these compositions more comprehensively.

I argue that the harmonised melody of "Milestones" and horn-vamp of "All Blues" resemble one another because both derive from a common predecessor – the trombone backing-figures from Davis's recording of "It Ain't Necessarily So" (*Porgy and Bess*).² Transcription-Comparison 1 reveals how the trumpeter's newly founded three-piece horn section permitted him to add an extra voice on top of these two-part trombone figures to form the harmonised theme of "Milestones." These "triadic horn-voicings" are colourful and

¹ Barrett, "Economy of Modal Jazz," 186. In the absence of further comment, the reader is left to surmise from the musical examples that Barrett is referring to the horn vamp of "All Blues," which shares characteristics with the harmonised melody of "Milestones" (A-Section) such as stepwise movement and harmonised intervals of a third.

² Gil Evans arranged the album. Miles Davis, *Porgy and Bess*, Columbia CL 1274, 1959, LP.

balanced structures, desirable traits that encouraged Davis to repeat this device with difference throughout *Kind of Blue*. In Transcription-Comparison 2, I contend that Davis Signified upon a boogie-woogie piano “left-hand bass,” resetting the trombone backing-figures over this dominant-seventh riff to form the horn-vamp of “All Blues.” Davis appears to repeat this left-hand bass with difference, not only to create the bass-vamp of “All Blues” but also bar 7 of the introduction to “So What.” Thus, one interesting aspect of these Significations is Davis’s apparent willingness to Signify more than once on the same musical item, repeating with an alternative difference on each occasion. Another discussion point is how Davis seems to renegotiate the musical tradition items belong to, transforming trombone backing-figures from Dorian modality into a blues vamp, and incorporating a boogie-woogie riff within an impressionistic prelude by transposing it into a minor key.

Transcription-Comparison 1: “Milestones”

It is important to note that *Milestones* was recorded in April 1958, whereas the *Porgy and Bess* sessions occurred later that year (July and August). Thus, if there were a Signification evident, chronologically speaking it would seem natural to assume that materials from “Milestones” were repeated-with-difference to form “It Ain’t Necessarily So.” However, musically speaking that makes little sense, since it would mean that Davis took a distinctive main melody from the former and transformed it into an inconspicuous backing-figure for the latter. As we shall see throughout the following chapters, Davis works in the opposite direction, by developing low-key items of interest into central compositional elements.

This paradox is easily accounted for if we shift our attention away from recording dates to refocus on periods of creative decision-making. Davis and Gil Evans had been planning

Porgy and Bess from the beginning of 1958, involving six months worth of regular visits by the arranger to the trumpeter's mid-town apartment to discuss the project and try out musical ideas on his piano.³ Thus, although "Milestones" was recorded first, Davis had ample opportunity to Signify on those *Porgy and Bess* arrangements the two men had discussed between January and April. The musical observations that follow, support my contention that Davis Signified on the settings of "It Ain't Necessarily So" during the period of their development (and before the track was recorded) to form the main theme of "Milestones."

Trombone Backing-Figures

"It Ain't Necessarily So" and "Milestones" both incorporate A-Sections based on vamp-style accompaniments in G minor, although the former is performed at a slower tempo and with less intensity.⁴ Listening to both A-Sections in comparison throws up a compelling aural similarity – the trombone backing-figures to "It Ain't Necessarily So" that support Davis's interpretation of George Gershwin's melody, sound strikingly similar to the harmonised melody of "Milestones." I cannot overemphasise the importance of experiencing this aural comparison firsthand before digesting the remainder of this section, since this offers valuable audible corroboration in support of the visual notated examples below.

A transcription of both musical passages reveals that the note-choices of the trombones are identical to the bottom two notes of the harmonised melody of "Milestones" (see **Fig. 6**).

³ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 139.

⁴ Since modality is the topic of Chapter Five, at this stage I will simply point out that both sections of music are commonly assumed to be in the mode of G Dorian. However, as mentioned in the literature review, Kernfeld argues that "modal playing" is an obscure term as his transcriptions indicate members of the Sextet commonly chose notes from outside the mode. As Waters notes, in the case of "Milestones" the tendency of authors to describe its A-Section as "G Dorian" does not acknowledge the resolution of Paul Chambers' bass notes to F major in bars 7-8 or the C pedal point played by Red Garland in bars 1-4. See Waters, *Studio Recordings*, 44.

Fig. 6: Trombone Backing-Figures and Harmonised Melody



In addition to sharing notes in an identical register and modality, on closer inspection the underlying rhythmic design of both pieces is also very similar. That is, they employ staccato crotchets mixed between “on the beat” and in anticipation of the beat (see **Table 1**).⁵

Table 1: Rhythmic Comparison

	“It Ain’t Necessarily So”	“Milestones”
Bar 1, beat 1	Anticipation	On the Beat
Bar 1, beat 3	On the Beat	On the Beat
Bar 2, beat 1	Anticipation	On the Beat
Bar 2, beat 3	On the Beat	Anticipation

Davis appears to be repeating his own vamp-style setting with difference, a Signification predominantly generated through the addition of an extra note placed above the trombone backing-figures at the interval of a third. A second notable variation is that unlike the hypnotic vamp of the trombones, Davis’s “Milestones” theme develops on its third statement, by falling to B♭ major before rising to a sustained C major (see **Fig. 7**).

⁵ This may be an example of difference in Davis’s Signifyin(g), or perhaps the trumpeter simply did not recall the exact rhythms of the trombone backing-figures.

Fig. 7: “Milestones” (bars 6-8)

The image shows a musical score for three staves in 4/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The middle and bottom staves are in bass clef. Above the top staff, the chords Bb, C, Dm, Bb, and C are indicated. The top staff contains a melody of eighth notes: Bb4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. The middle staff contains a bass line of eighth notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The bottom staff contains a bass line of eighth notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

This difference renders Davis’s Signification less blatant, taking the “Milestones” theme somewhere new by reordering its existing triads and changing articulation for the final voicing (C). “It Ain’t Necessarily So” is further disguised as a predecessor by the fact that less prominent backing-figures have been promoted to main melody status, meaning that the attention of listeners is (to a degree) drawn away from the trombones towards Davis’s own statement of Gershwin’s theme, rendering aural associations with “Milestones” less likely. Finally, both arrangements present other sections of music containing materials that are not shared. Therefore, while the aural similarity between these tracks seems obvious when their A-Sections are compared side-by-side, as a predecessor “It Ain’t Necessarily So” has passed under-the-radar until this point in the literature.

The evidence presented thus far is the first part of a broader intertextual account completed in Transcription-Comparison 2, where it encompasses “All Blues” and “So What.” The following section contributes to this discussion, while also illustrating the key role played by repetition-with-difference for Davis’s generation of compositional settings for *Kind of Blue*.

Triadic Horn-Voicings

The principal difference generated by Davis – adding another note on top of the trombone backing-figures at the interval of a third – was made possible because the album *Milestones* coincided with the expansion of Davis’s group into a Sextet. This enlargement was initiated

by personnel rather than compositional issues. Davis had disbanded his Quintet in March 1957 in order to prepare for the *Miles Ahead*⁶ recording sessions with Gil Evans.⁷ Having completed the recordings and taken time out for throat surgery, the trumpeter decided to reform his group in the autumn of 1957. However, as the original members were unavailable Davis recruited Art Taylor, Tommy Flanagan and Julian “Cannonball” Adderley.⁸ In November, Davis travelled to Paris without a group⁹ returning to New York by the end of the year. On this occasion he was able to rehire his first-choice rhythm section (Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones) yet retain the formidable improvisatory voice of Adderley to place alongside that of Coltrane,¹⁰ thus forming a sextet.

The personnel of his three-piece horn section – Adderley, Coltrane and Davis¹¹ – was now firmly in place for *Milestones* and *Kind of Blue*.¹² Davis immediately realised the compositional potential of this development through the triadic-harmonised melody of “Milestones.” As the following section describes, its voicings are balanced and colourful, desirable traits that contributed to the success of Davis’s arrangement. He would reuse this technique throughout *Kind of Blue*, repeating-with-difference through variations in triadic inversion, melodic contour, articulation and selection of major and/or minor triads.

Horn-Voicings of Kind of Blue

As notated in the previous section, Davis expanded the trombone backing-figures of “It Ain’t Necessarily So” into root-position triads derived from the key signature of one-flat (B♭

⁶ Miles Davis, *Miles Ahead*, Columbia CL 1041, 1957, LP.

⁷ See Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 116.

⁸ After briefly using Belgian saxophonist Bobby Jasper.

⁹ It was on this trip that Davis recorded the soundtrack for the Louis Malle film *L’Ascenseur pour L’Echafaud* (see Chapter Five).

¹⁰ See Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 64.

¹¹ Trumpet (Miles Davis), alto sax (Julian “Cannonball” Adderley) and tenor sax (John Coltrane).

¹² Davis’s rhythm section would change after *Milestones*, with Jimmy Cobb replacing Philly Joe Jones on drums, and Bill Evans (and later Wynton Kelly) replacing Red Garland on piano.

major, C major and D minor). Thus, the A-Section theme of “Milestones” employs major and minor triads, which punctuate a medium-fast hard-swinging rhythm section (outlining G-minor) by stabbing stepwise within a rising-and-falling melodic contour (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8: “Milestones” (A-Section)

These triadic horn-voicings proved musically successful as an arranging technique, in large part because the resulting voicings are balanced, meaning that they retain the same shape throughout (e.g. root-position triads). This ensures that each member of the horn section changes note by the same interval, creating a smooth sound with no parts “jumping about” an effect complemented by the theme’s stepwise movement. Another desirable feature is how the voicings move into the upper-extensions of G minor thereby generating colour – for example, D minor triad outlines the 5th, 7th and 9th of the overall tonality (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 9: “Milestones” (bar 6) – Upper-Extensions

It is interesting to note that both blues-based tracks on *Kind of Blue* – “Freddie Freeloader” and “All Blues” – employ similar triadic horn-voicings. The former is a basic blues¹³ that employs a “stripped-down” chord progression, in marked contrast to the more complex reharmonisations of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴ Employing just four chords, its mood is mellow being at a medium tempo and employing sustained melody notes, built from first-inversion minor triads that descend stepwise by a tone (see **Fig. 10**) in contrast with “Milestones.”

Fig. 10: “Freddie Freeloader” (bars 1-8)

However, like “Milestones” these voicings maintain the same shape throughout, thereby ensuring a balanced sectional sound. Furthermore, each triad in “Freddie Freeloader” contains a guide-tone (3rd or 7th), which helps to outline the harmony,¹⁵ and an extended tone (9th, 11th or 13th) to add colour. For example, G minor has G on top (13th of Bb7) whereas F minor has C at its centre (9th of Bb7). Thus, Davis repeats the desirable qualities

¹³ Mark Levine, *Jazz Theory Book* (Petaluma, Sher Music Co., 1995), 220-221.

¹⁴ “Freddie Freeloader” does contain an extra twist in bar 11, moving to \flat VII7 (A \flat 7) rather than I7 (B \flat 7). A clue to this unusual feature might lie in its biographical title, named after a hipster hanging out in the New York scene. In an interesting parallel, the title “Killer Joe” (written in 1959 by Benny Golson) refers to another real life mooch and its “vamp-style” A-Section also features the \flat VII7 chord.

¹⁵ G minor contains D (3rd of B \flat 7) whereas F minor contains A \flat (\flat 7th of B \flat 7).

of his “Milestones” horn-voicings – balance and colour – while supplying difference through changes in articulation, chord-inversion, triad type and melodic contour (see **Table 2**).

“All Blues” also employs triadic voicings, in the last four measures of its 24-bar form (see **Fig. 11**). Like “Milestones” these are arranged as major *and* minor triads that ascend-descend in a stepwise movement, yet on this occasion the voicings are in second-inversion and are articulated as “long” dotted minims¹⁶ as opposed to “short” root-position triads.

Fig. 11: “All Blues” (bars 21-

In bars 21 and 23, these triads create a rich harmonic structure, since F major triad over G in the bass forms a contemporary sounding G9sus chord.¹⁷ In addition to this colourful structure, Davis once again creates balance by maintaining the same inversion throughout to create a smooth sectional sound, complemented once again by stepwise movement.

The triadic horn-voicings utilised by Davis are a good example of repetition-with-difference in his work, since each piece repeats the same successful formula but with varied characteristics. At this point, the discussion should also include “So What” – investigated more fully in Chapter Five – which employs second-inversion major triads in the horns to double the right-hand notes of a distinctive two-handed chord played by pianist Bill Evans

¹⁶ Pianists and arrangers commonly regard second-inversion as the strongest sounding triadic arrangement. See Levine, *Jazz Theory Book*, 44 and 104.

¹⁷ Many pianists would think of this as a slash chord – F major over G in the bass (F/G). See Levine, *Jazz Piano Book*, 23.

(see Fig. 25). **Table 2** summarises these variations across all four pieces. Davis appears to retain the desirable characteristics of colour and balance¹⁸ evident in “Milestones” while generating variation through inversion, triad-type, melodic contour and articulation.

Table 2: Difference in Triadic Horn-Voicings

Title	Inversion	Triads	Contour	Articulation
“Milestones”	Root-position	Major and Minor	Ascending/ Descending	Short (long final tone)
“Freddie Freeloader”	First-inversion	Minor	Descending (by a tone)	Long
“All Blues”	Second-inversion	Major and Minor	Ascending/ Descending	Long
“So What”	Upper-triad of two-handed piano chord	Major	Descending (by a tone)	Long-short

Like his repetition-with-difference of the trombone backing-figures, once pointed out Davis’s reuse of triadic-horn voicings are highly audible Significations. Yet in sharp contrast with the common comparison made between the modalities of “Milestones” and “So What,” this recurring feature is uncharted intertextually within the literature. I find this omission testament to the persuasiveness of Davis’s Significations, since while his variations in triadic horn-voicing are simple they provide enough difference to avoid sounding obvious.

To summarise the observations made so far, Davis appears to have repeated-with-difference the trombone backing-figures of “It Ain’t Necessarily So” to create the A-Section theme of “Milestones” and Signified on these transformed materials to generate triadic horn-voicings for *Kind of Blue*. Thus, it is possible to observe chains of recordings within the Significations of Davis (see **Diagram 1**).

¹⁸ We might add stepwise movement to this list.

Diagram 1: Signifyin(g) Chain

“It Ain’t Necessarily So” (trombone backing-figures)



“Milestones” (A-Section theme)



“All Blues” (bars 21-24)

The following section builds on the findings of Transcription-Comparison 1, through a re-assessment of the vamp-style accompaniments of “All Blues” as Significations on two items from contrasting musical traditions – boogie-woogie and modal jazz.

Transcription-Comparison 2: “All Blues”

In the methodology section, I identified the music of boogie-woogie pianist Albert Ammons as an area worthy of further investigation. Initially encouraged by Carr’s description of the bass-vamp to “All Blues” as a “lilting boogie-woogie figure,”¹⁹ I observed that Davis had been intimately associated with Gene Ammons (son of Albert) during his early career. The following transcription-comparison investigates two possible predecessors to the vamp-style accompaniment of “All Blues” – a traditional “left-hand bass”²⁰ commonly associated with boogie-woogie standard “Suitcase Blues” (recorded by Albert Ammons) and once again the trombone backing-figures of “It Ain’t Necessarily So.” I argue that these musical items interact when placed in juxtaposition, with the apparent consequence that each proposes difference in the other, to form the “All Blues” bass-vamp and horn-vamp. Moreover, further support is identified for the left-hand bass as a predecessor through its repetition-with-difference elsewhere on *Kind of Blue*, in bar 7 of the introduction to “So What.” Thus, the trombone backing-figures and left-hand bass both illustrate Davis’s willingness to Signify

¹⁹ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 149.

²⁰ A boogie-woogie riff played in the bass register (of the piano) with the left hand.

multiple times on a single musical item, which he accomplished by varying the difference on each occasion.

Boogie-woogie Piano

A useful point to emphasise at the outset of this transcription-comparison, is that the bass and horn-vamps of “All Blues” share a musical characteristic – both accompaniments exploit the fifth, sixth, and flattened-seventh scale degrees of G7, in the top voice of the horn-vamp and the upper-notes of the bass-vamp (see **Fig. 12**).

Fig. 12: “All Blues” Vamps

The figure shows two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with notes G5, A5, Bb5, and G5. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and G4. Chord symbols G7, 5, 6, b7, and 6 are placed above the notes. Fingering numbers 5, 6, 5, b7, 5, 6, 5 are placed below the notes in the bass staff.

This musical device – which I will refer to henceforth as “5th-6th-7th” – has been present in boogie-woogie since the earliest recordings of the genre, in part because of “Suitcase Blues” originally recorded by pianist Hersal Thomas in 1925.²¹ Albert Ammons was greatly influenced by Thomas and released his own pared-down version of the piece in 1939, which edits out variations in the left hand to focus on Thomas’s main riff (see **Fig. 13** – bar 1).²²

²¹ Hersal Thomas, *Suitcase Blues*, 8958-A Okeh 8227, 1925, Phonograph Record (also released on various CD compilations).

²² Albert Ammons, *Suitcase Blues*, Blue Note BLP 7017, 1939, Phonograph Record (also released on various CD compilations).

Fig. 13: Left-Hand Bass



Its use of 5th-6th-7th is easier to observe with the upper-pedal note removed from the vamp (see **Fig. 13** – bar 2). Intriguingly, the inner-line of this left-hand bass presents the same notes (an octave lower) arranged in a similar melodic contour (ascending-descending) as the trombone backing-figures of “It Ain’t Necessarily So” (see **Fig. 14**).²³

Fig. 14: Trombone Backing-Figures and Left-Hand Bass



Moreover, if we compare the note choices of the trombone backing-figures with the “All Blues” horn-vamp, it becomes evident that they are near identical. A simple change in harmony from minor-seventh to dominant-seventh (Gm7 becomes G7) raises the third from B \flat to B \sharp , a seemingly small alteration that creates a profound change in musical character from Dorian modality to the blues. Although clearly notated in **Fig. 15**, I recommend experiencing this transformation aurally by comparing both examples at the piano.

²³ One cannot help wonder if this similarity inspired Davis to combine the two ideas together.

Fig. 15: Trombone Backing-Figures and “All Blues” Horn-Vamp



Returning to the left-hand bass, if we compare its note choices with the “All Blues” bass-vamp, once again a straightforward Signifyin(g) difference is apparent – all of the roots and fifths appear to have been exchanged for one another (see Fig. 16).

Fig. 16: Left-hand Bass and “All Blues” Bass-Vamp



Note that Fig. 16 presents the left-hand bass without its upper pedal. If Davis did repeat this piano riff with difference, as appears to be the case, he rescored it for double-bass. This re-orchestration would necessitate the removal of its upper-pedal, since the double stops notated in Fig. 13 (bar 1) would be challenging to articulate on a fretless bass instrument. Davis appears to adopt the upper-pedal note as the basis of his melody (see Fig. 17).

Fig. 17: Upper-Pedal Melody Note

Thus, we can see that Davis completes his Signification of the left-hand bass by playing the upper-pedal note himself, in the form of a sustained B \sharp (embellished by an upper mordent). Moreover, the status of the trombone backing-figures as predecessor to the horn-vamp receives additional support in bar 9, in the form of their re-minorisation (see Fig. 18).

Fig. 18: Re-Minorisation of the Horn-Vamp (bars 9-12)

These are the exact same notes and harmony as the trombone backing-figures. Note the chord in Fig. 18 is notated as Gm7 rather than the more typical chord IV (C7) found in most fake books. As tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath informs us:

When people play it other than in the Miles Davis band, a lot of people play it where they go from the G chord to C, a traditional blues. But when we played “All Blues,” Miles would always say don’t go to the IV chord on the second part of that. He wanted it to stay in a modal concept. So he’d go from G7 to a G minor sound, really playing that mode so that let his improvisation sound a little dissonant, and a little more sophisticated.²⁴

²⁴ Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 142.

The bass vamp continues in bar 9 as before, working perfectly with this re-minorisation since it does not contain the 3rd. Rather than play $\flat 3$ ($B\flat$) in the melody, Davis begins a rising and falling melodic figure on the 9th of $Gm7$. I will discuss minor-ninth sonorities (9th melody note over a minor-seventh chord) further in Chapter Six.

Clearly, there is much musical resemblance to present within this transcription-comparison. However, what is more interesting is that once these apparent silent second texts are juxtaposed (see **Fig. 14**) each appears to propose difference in the other. For example, the dominant-seventh harmony outlined by the left-hand bass suggests a major third in the trombone backing-figures, transforming them into the notes of the “All Blues” horn-vamp. Moreover, the 5th-6th-7th characteristic shared by both predecessors, means that the left-hand bass repeats too many notes belonging to the trombone backing-figures, a problem solvable by exchanging roots and fifths. As a result of this apparent Signification, the “All Blues” bass-vamp begins on a stronger note (the root) and acquires the desirable “lilt” quality Carr alludes to, by generating stepwise 5th-6th-5th movement (see **Fig. 12**).

Another contributing factor to the “lilt” of “All Blues” is the time signature of 3/4. It is interesting to note that Davis claims to have originally envisaged “All Blues” in 4/4, changing its settings to 3/4 at the last minute within the recording studio.²⁵ I raised some of the issues surrounding the testimony of jazz musicians within the literature review and there is no question here that Davis’s anecdote fits the tendency of jazz mythmaking to foreground spontaneity. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that both tracks identified as silent second texts to “All Blues” are vamp orientated compositions in 4/4, thus correlating with the trumpeter’s contention that he originally created the vamps in this time signature.

²⁵ Ralph Gleason, “Composed for 6 Months, Then Made Tune a Waltz,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (20 June, 1959). Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 96.

One of the most interesting findings of this chapter is how Davis appears to make multiple Significations on a single musical item. More specifically, Davis appears to repeat the trombone backing-figures from “It Ain’t Necessarily So” to generate both the harmonised theme of “Milestones” and the “All Blues” horn-vamp (most likely on separate occasions) by using alternative forms of difference. While in one case an additional note is placed above the backing-figures at the interval of a third, in the other its harmony is transformed from minor-seventh to dominant-seventh. Intriguingly, the left-hand bass also appears to be developed into both the “All Blues” bass-vamp (root/5th exchange) and bar 7 of the introduction to “So What” (see next section).

Introduction to “So What” (bar 7)

Although “So What” is the subject of Chapter Five, this section briefly examines bar 7 of its introduction. Its figure shares similar characteristics with the left-hand bass, featuring an upper line that moves in stepwise motion (G – F – E – F – G) between the 5th and the 7th (b7 – b6 – 5 – b6 – b7) against a lower pedal note (see Fig. 32).²⁶ Thinking momentarily up a tone in key, to transform the left-hand bass would simply require a change in harmony from dominant to minor (by flattening the 6th – F \flat) and an inversion of melodic contour so that the upper-line descends-ascends (see Fig. 19).

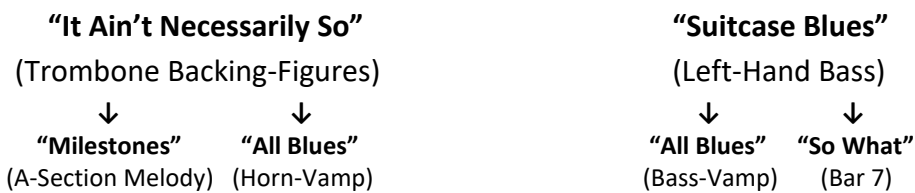
Fig. 19: Signifyin(g) the Left-Hand Bass



²⁶ The observation that bar 7 (of the intro) and the “All Blues” bass-vamp appear to derive from the same source (“Suitcase Blues”) suggests that the opening bars of “So What” might function in the broader role of introduction to the entire album (*Kind of Blue*).

It is important to note that both of these differences are familiar, reflecting those already encountered. More specifically, one factor evident in the Signification of triadic horn-voicings is variety of melodic contour (see **Table 2**), and Davis appears to Signify upon the trombone backing-figures through a change of harmony to generate the “All Blues” horn-vamp (in this case minor to dominant). This leads to a broader point, that although each observation made within these transcription-comparisons possesses individual merit, stronger evidence in support of Signification within the work of Davis can be found in reoccurring creative processes. Another interesting commonality identified thus far is the identification of separate instances of multiple Significations on a single musical item.

Diagram 2: Multiple Signification



Both examples add further weight to a growing sense that the findings presented in this chapter are not serendipitous, but indications of a creative process.

Signifyin(g) the Blues

What have we learned about the blues in *Kind of Blue*? One of the most surprising insights so far concerns the movement of musical items between traditions, in particular into/out of the blues. It is difficult to imagine any listener anticipating that the “All Blues” horn-vamp would derive from a modal setting, nor that the impressionistic introduction to “So What” would be constructed in part from a boogie-woogie riff. It is the change in harmony used to generate difference in both instances, which shifts the trombone backing-figures *into* and

left-hand bass *out of* the blues tradition, thereby creating profound changes in musical character that render these Significations less discernable.

It is possible to relate this point to Davis's tendency to repeat multiple times on the same musical item, by varying difference on each occasion. This is because on both occasions this occurs, one of the Significations involves a transformation either *into* or *out of* the blues. Whether instinctive or intentional behaviour on the part of Davis, this ensures that musical outcomes derived from a single predecessor sound dissimilar to one another, thus obscuring their common predecessor.

Turning to the research questions, this chapter has clearly presented likely predecessors to *Kind of Blue*, musical items repeated and Davis's compositional strategies in generating difference. There are several commonalities apparent within these findings, which inform about the trumpeter's Signifyin(g) voice. First, simplicity and neatness are evident within Davis's transformations, typified by his root/fifth exchange – **"Suitcase Blues" (left-hand bass) → "All Blues" (bass-vamp)** – which is uncomplicated and clean (see **Fig. 16**). Each root and fifth is exchanged for the other without exception, creating a stronger and more elegant figure with no other changes in note choice necessary.

Davis is also economical in his use of musical materials, exemplified by the way he employs single musical items to shape multiple compositional settings (see **Diagram 2**). Another example is his reemployment of the upper-pedal from the left-hand bass ("Suitcase Blues") as the beginning of his melody for "All Blues." This gives a feeling of completeness about the Signification, since every aspect of the left-hand bass is transformed. Finally, an

impression is beginning to emerge that Davis always Signifies (and never repeats), an observation that will be corroborated as the study progresses.

There is a mixed message whether the Significations of Davis direct listeners towards shared knowledge (i.e. an awareness that Signifyin(g) is taking place and which silent second text is in play). Chapter Three observed that Carr identifies boogie-woogie antecedents for “All Blues,” identifying the correct style but mistakenly suggesting pianist Jimmy Yancey. This study only identified a more probable silent second text, by following up a biographical clue (Davis’s acquaintance with Gene Ammons) with transcription-comparison. This author did first associate the trombone backing-figures of “It Ain’t Necessarily So” with the A-Section melody of “Milestones” through careful listening to *Porgy and Bess*. However, the predecessor of the “All Blues” horn-vamp (also the trombone backing-figures) is less discernable because of the former’s shift into the blues tradition.

Overall, there seems to be a notable variation in audibility between Significations, which leads to shared knowledge (without the aid of transcription-comparison) in one case. It would appear to this author that some Significations are more discernable than others because Davis adopted varied modes of revision. Thus, rather than viewing the success with which Significations direct hearers towards shared knowledge as a measure of Davis’s Signifyin(g) prowess, there is a growing sense that audibility/inaudibility ultimately serves the creative process, in this instance permitting multiple Significations on the same item (see **Diagram 2**).

On possession of shared knowledge through transcription-comparison, comparing this track with its predecessors reveals no evidence of parody within these Significations, suggesting

they were unmotivated (see Chapter Two). However, unlike Gates's description of Count Basie's "Signifyin'" as a recapitulation of solo piano styles in jazz, Davis is clearly in the business of renegotiating African-American musical tradition. Within this decoded Signification, a discourse emerges concerning both the continued relevance of blues-related devices belonging to African-American music and a requirement to revamp such items in response to contemporary developments in jazz. In this instance, a boogie-woogie figure is resituated within 3/4, reflecting a general interest in "other" time signatures (than 4/4) during the period, expressed most famously in the Dave Brubeck album *Time Out*²⁷ released months after *Kind of Blue*.

There is also the sense that "All Blues" says one thing but means another. At face value, the piece represents an affirmation of the blues, through its strongly blues-inflected accompanimental vamps. Yet once the Signification is decoded, comes the realisation of another dialogue about the mutability of the blues, the ease at which it may be renegotiated, and the insubstantiality of stylistic boundaries traversed with ease by Davis's Signifyin(g) voice. The following chapter will build on these observations.

²⁷ The head of "Blue Rondo á la Turk" is in 9/8 whereas "Take Five" is famously in 5/4. Dave Brubeck Quartet, *Time Out*, Columbia CL 1397, 1959, LP.

Chapter Five: Modal Compositions

Introduction

This chapter focuses on “Flamenco Sketches” and “So What,” the two pieces from *Kind of Blue* that are commonly presented (along with “Milestones”) as examples of modal jazz.

Modality is one area of *Kind of Blue* that the literature discusses comprehensively, with studies typically situating Davis within a broader collection of individuals experimenting with the concept. Although the notion of modality as a shared concept is convincing, the thesis will argue that this feature of “So What” is overemphasised in comparison with other devices Davis creatively combined to form its settings. Moreover, the literature does not go far enough in mapping-out the design of either piece from an intertextual perspective, failing to acknowledge the fundamental importance of Signifyin(g) to the creative process.

Transcription-Comparison 3 begins with a brief overview of modality as a mutual commodity, before moving on to discuss other musical features present in the theme to “So What.” This investigation examines distinctive rhythms, harmonic structures and orchestrations that the piece shares with other recordings of the period by Davis and his contemporaries. I argue that in an interesting parallel with the *Monkey Tales*, it is how these separate formulas are recombined through the skill of Davis as “narrator,” which ensures they are “rendered anew in unexpected ways.”¹

This section concludes with an examination of the introduction to “So What,” identifying an additional level of Signification courtesy of pianist Bill Evans, whose contributions to *Kind of Blue* will be clarified from here onwards in the thesis. Transcription-Comparison 4 builds on

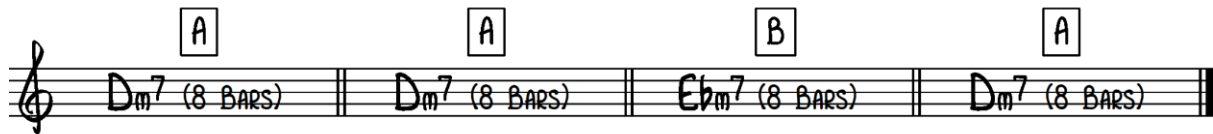
¹ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 67.

this theme through an investigation into “Flamenco Sketches,” making the case that while Evans conceived and recorded its primary predecessor, the difference evident in this Signification originates from Davis, an argument developed further throughout Chapter Six.

Transcription-Comparison 3: "So What"

“So What” is commonly described as a modal composition because its central theme (following the impressionistic prelude that begins *Kind of Blue*) is constructed from sections of music that each outline a single harmony/modality. Written in AABA form, the piece consists of 16-bars of vamp-style accompaniment in D minor, followed by an 8-bar bridge in E \flat minor (up a semitone) before returning to D minor for the final 8-bars (see Fig. 20).²

Fig. 20: “So What” – Form and Harmony



Although the Sextet recordings did much to popularise modality, in practice it was a communal concept, with Davis’s friendships alongside arranger Gil Evans and composer George Russell appearing as particularly common themes in the literature. Ingrid Monson concisely sums up the impact of Russell and his theoretical book – *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation* – on the period.³

² While jazz pedagogy would describe these sections modally, as D Dorian and E \flat Dorian, Kernfeld’s transcriptions indicate that members of the Sextet commonly used notes outside these modes. My own preference is to notate the AABA form using minor-seventh chords, simply because this is how jazz musicians would interpret the two-handed piano voicing played by Bill Evans (see below).

³ George Russell, *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation* (Brookline: Concept Publishing, 1953).

In the 1950s and early 1960s Russell's theoretical explorations and expertise on mode were well known among leading jazz musicians...Russell's conceptions of modality predated the idea of "modal jazz" that emerged in the wake of Miles Davis's *Milestones* (1958) and *Kind of Blue* (1959) recordings, and indeed, Russell discussed the Lydian Chromatic Concept in detail with Davis at least a year prior to the recording of *Milestones*.⁴

As Monson suggests, Russell circulated his ideas through informal channels in addition to his book, with conversation among musicians being central to the dissemination of modality.

As Kernfeld points out, the influence of Russell and Gil Evans may be traced back to the *Birth of the Cool* recording sessions and an informal discussion group hosted at the flat of Evans.

The references to Gil Evans and George Russell raise the possibility that Davis's concern with "scales" reached back almost a decade earlier than 1958. Gil Evans was a central figure in the famous 1949 Davis nonet's recording for Capitol, and Russell belonged to Evans's informal composers' conclave, which counted among its members other essential contributors to these historic "Birth of the Cool" sessions: Johnny Carisi, John Lewis and Gerry Mulligan.⁵

Thus, the literature portrays modality as a concept openly shared through a published book and informal meetings, mechanisms associated with Russell and Gil Evans respectively.

However, while the depiction of Davis as one of a number of musicians experimenting with this idea is persuasive, this thesis contends that the notion of musical devices circulating among jazz colleagues applies equally well to the non-modal characteristics of "So What."

Therefore, in order to fully understand this piece, we must move beyond modality to discuss other aspects of its construction, developing a broader intertextual debate as a result.

Unsurprisingly, this examination includes features such as call-and-response and the "Amen" cadence, as emphasised by Barrett's blues-based argument. However, there is a wider debate to be had, incorporating yet more characteristics of "So What" – in particular its distinctive two-handed piano chord and use of double-bass as a melodic instrument – thus drawing in other predecessors. There is also the introduction to consider, an

⁴ Ingrid Monson, "Oh Freedom, George Russell, John Coltrane and Modal Jazz," in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*, ed. Bruno Nettl with Melinda Russell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 149-150.

⁵ Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 132.

impressionistic prelude evocative of European piano repertoire that promises to contribute yet more non-modal devices. Thus, reassessing “So What” as a piece constructed from musical items derived from numerous recent recordings, offers another excellent opportunity to examine Signifyin(g) within the compositional settings of Davis.

Beyond Modality

The theme of “So What” features two gospel-like characteristics. First, it is based on a call-and-response relationship, an opening melodic statement on double bass answered by a two-handed piano chord, with the horn section doubling its right-hand notes (see Fig. 21). Secondly, the dotted-crotchet-to-quaver rhythm expressed by piano and horns is highly evocative, bringing to mind the vocalisation of a congregation responding to its preacher’s exaltations with “Yes, Lord!” or simply “Amen!”

Fig. 21: “So What” – Call and Response

The musical score for 'So What' illustrates a call-and-response relationship. The Double Bass part (bottom staff) begins with a melodic line in 4/4 time, starting with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note, and ending with a half note. The Piano (middle staff) and Horns (top staff) parts enter with a two-handed chord in the second measure, mirroring the rhythm of the Double Bass. The Piano part is a two-handed chord, and the Horns part is a two-handed chord, both mirroring the rhythm of the Double Bass. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

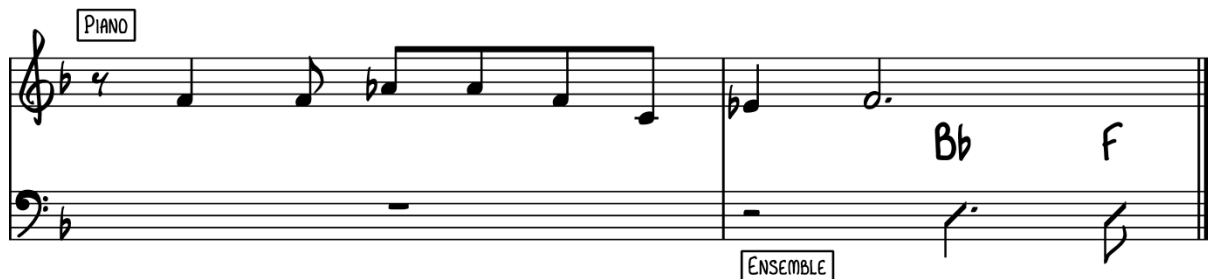
In his autobiography, Davis attributes the Gospel-like characteristics of *Kind of Blue* to childhood reminiscence. His testimony puts forward a Romantic version of authorship, with Davis as sole author responding creatively to a nostalgic sound-memory of Arkansas.

Kind of Blue also came out of the modal thing I started on *Milestones*. This time I added some other kind of sound I remembered from being back in Arkansas, when we were walking home from church and they were playing these bad gospels. So that kind of feeling came back to me and I started remembering what that music sounded like and felt like. That feeling is what I was trying to get close to. That feeling had got in my creative blood, my imagination, and I had forgotten it was there.⁶

However, while Davis’s account of a childhood memory resurfacing later in life as creative inspiration is appealing, in reality “Amen” cadences within call-and-response figures had appeared in a number of successful recordings by contemporaries of Davis shortly before *Kind of Blue*. Like modality, these were musical items that existed beyond a single artist or recording, belonging instead to the musical landscape of the period.

One example is mentioned in Barrett’s article about *Kind of Blue*, wherein he observes that the theme of “So What” resembles the track “Moanin’” in its “two-bar structure, overall rhythmic profile, and “Amen” cadence”⁷ (see Fig. 22).

Fig. 22: “Moanin’” (bars 1-2).



In this case a preacher-like “call” on piano is responded to by the remainder of the ensemble through an “Amen” rhythm. Although Barrett’s comparison is essentially correct, the same argument could be made for other tracks from the period. For example, “Blue Train” by John Coltrane⁸ exhibits the same gospel roots as “So What” and “Moanin’”

⁶ Davis and Troupe, *Autobiography*, 224.

⁷ Barrett, “Economy of Modal Jazz,” 186.

⁸ John Coltrane, *Blue Train*, Blue Note BLP 1577, 1958, LP.

through shared characteristics, such as its preacher-like call from the horn section and rhythm section “Amen” response (see Fig. 23).

Fig. 23: “Blue Train” (bars 1-2).

Moreover, it is important to recognise that not all of the characteristics of “So What” are gospel-inspired, such as its use of double bass as a melodic instrument. When this feature is introduced to the debate, another recording from the period stands out, a non-blues track just as closely related to “So What” as the pieces mentioned thus far – namely, Ahmad Jamal’s “New Rhumba” with its introduction featuring single-line double bass employed in a call-and-response relationship with piano and guitar (see Fig. 24). Crucially, rather than sounding gospel influenced, here bassist Israel Crosby improvises bass lines between Ahmad Jamal’s piano figures in a style reminiscent of the early-1940s duets between Jimmy Blanton and Duke Ellington (e.g. “Pitter Panther Patter”).⁹

Fig. 24: “New Rhumba”

⁹ Duke Ellington, *Solos Duets and Trios*, Bluebird 2178-2-RB, 1990, CD. “Pitter Panther Patter” was originally recorded in Chicago for RCA-Victor on 1 October 1940.

Chapter Three identified a trend within Davis's repertoire of adopting numbers shortly after Jamal. "New Rhumba" is a prime example, recorded by Jamal in 1955 followed by Davis's version two years later for the album *Miles Ahead*.¹⁰ Thus, Davis's use of double bass as a melodic instrument for "So What" might also be regarded as a Signification on his own recording. As was the case with *Porgy and Bess*, Gil Evans arranged *Miles Ahead*, which suggests another trend in Davis's Significations – one of Signifyin(g) upon settings from his large ensemble for the Sextet albums.

In terms of shared knowledge, identifying these silent second texts does not require transcription-comparison – the musical items they share with "So What" are clearly audible. Davis's nostalgic memory of Arkansas sustains the romantic ideals of his narrative concerning *Kind of Blue* – i.e. that its inspiration welled-up from deep within. Yet we may also see within his mythmaking how testimony serves to draw our thoughts back to his childhood, thus disguising a clear trend in recordings of the period to incorporate call-and-response, "Amen" rhythms and melodic double bass. In the same way that modality was a commodity shared by innovators of the time, these other features were common to a collection of influential tracks leading up to *Kind of Blue*.

As the thesis shall argue, Davis's achievement was not the transformation of nostalgia into music as suggested in his autobiography, but the deft recombination of these disparate features to create a groundbreaking new recording through Signification. Drawing inspiration from successful recordings of the recent past, Davis amalgamated features common to the musical landscape of the period to create something innovative. Thus, like the narrators of the *Monkey Tales*, his skill is to take widely available formulas and render

¹⁰ Miles Davis, *Miles Ahead*, Columbia CL 1041, 1957, LP.

them anew by recombining them in unexpected ways. The following section contributes to this growing list of characteristics by examining the harmonic devices of “So What.”

Searching for the “So What” Chord

The triadic horn-voicings that express the “Amen” response in “So What” (see Chapter Four) are part of a larger harmonic structure, doubling the right-hand part of a two-handed piano chord played by Bill Evans (see **Fig. 25**). While the horns play resonant second-inversion major triads, the piano voicing is largely quartal, its intervallic construction being three perfect fourths with a major third on top. Davis exposes the sound of this structure in his arrangement by orchestrating the horns so they begin from bar 9 of the theme (i.e. the “second eight”) and drop out every fourth “Amen” thereafter.

Fig. 25: “Amen” Cadence – Horns and Piano

The musical score for Figure 25 consists of two systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'HORNS' and features a single treble clef staff. It shows two chords: a G major triad (G, B, D) and an F major triad (F, A, C). The second system is labeled 'PIANO' and features a grand staff with both treble and bass clefs. It shows two chords: an E minor 7th chord (E, G, Bb, D) and a D minor 7th chord (D, F, Ab, C). The piano voicing is quartal, with three perfect fourths and a major third on top.

Nowadays, jazz pianists commonly refer to this piano voicing as the “So What” chord.¹¹

This structure has developed ramifications beyond *Kind of Blue*, becoming a useful colour in its own right and forming part of the broad harmonic palette jazz pianists may apply to any piece. Within the confines of “So What,” it creates a richness of sound which we strongly associate with the composition. However, it is not only favoured by contemporary jazz

¹¹ Levine, *Jazz Piano Book*, 97.

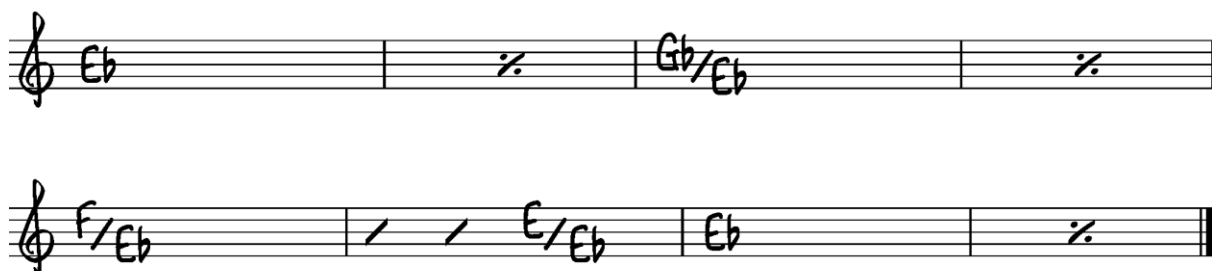
pianists for its sound but also because of its versatility, since the same structure can function as several different chord types depending on which note is in the bass. For example, with D in the bass it sounds like Dm7,¹² whereas B \flat in the bass makes the “So What” chord function as B \flat maj7 (see Fig. 26).¹³

Fig. 26: Two Applications of the “So What” Chord



This piano voicing is present in the recordings of Davis and Evans (in its major-seventh form) the year before *Kind of Blue*. Its first appearance in the Sextet occurs within Davis’s arrangement of “On Green Dolphin Street.”¹⁴ The first eight bars of this composition may be regarded as a series of “slash chords,” major triads which move in parallel against a tonic pedal in the bass (see Fig. 27).¹⁵

Fig. 27: “Green Dolphin” Slash Chords



¹² Although this chord contains an 11th there is no need to label this voicing as Dm11, since for a jazz pianist it is simply one of the many varied structures that can be used to voice chord II, all of which are more easily conceived of and/or notated as Dm7.

¹³ This structure also works with E \flat in the bass (E \flat maj7#11).

¹⁴ Miles Davis, *1958 Miles*, Columbia SL-1268, 1958, LP.

¹⁵ The standard or “book” key is usually C major.

Evans plays the major-seventh version of the “So What” chord as his piano voicing during this section of the Sextet arrangement, shifting the structure in parallel over a bass pedal (see Fig. 28).

Fig. 28: Simplified Piano and Bass

The figure displays two systems of musical notation for piano and bass. The first system shows two systems of piano and bass staves. The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with chords Ebmaj7 and Gbmaj7/Eb. The bass line is shown in a single staff below, moving in parallel motion with the piano chords. The second system shows three systems of piano and bass staves. The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with chords Fmaj7/Eb, Emaj7/Eb, and Ebmaj7. The bass line is shown in a single staff below, moving in parallel motion with the piano chords.

Jazz pianists typically use an eclectic mix of structures to explore a variety of colour, density and register in their accompaniment. However, the “So What” chord makes more than a transient appearance in “On Green Dolphin Street” – rather, it features as a key part of the Sextet’s arrangement, distinctively harmonising the 8-bar A-Section with a single voicing used in parallel motion. Davis seems aware of the structure emanating from the piano since it appears to influence his phrasing of the tune. For example, “On Green Dolphin Street” usually begins with the tonic note in the melody (see Fig. 29 – bars 1-2). However, the “So

What” chord played by Evans has the major seventh on top, which would form a dissonant minor-second interval with Davis’s trumpet (marked by an arrow).

Fig. 29: Davis Interprets the Melody

The figure displays a musical score for a piece in B-flat major. It is divided into two sections: 'AS WRITTEN' and 'INTERPRETED'.
 - **AS WRITTEN:** The melody (top staff) consists of a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) features a chord voicing with a major seventh interval (F#4 and G4) on top, which is marked with a downward-pointing arrow. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.
 - **INTERPRETED:** The melody (top staff) begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) features a different voicing, starting with a dominant note (F4) on the first beat, which then leaps to the tonic (G4) on the second beat. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.

Rather than change the piano voicing, Davis alters his melodic interpretation by beginning with the dominant note on the “and of 1” and leaping up to the tonic once Evans has sounded his chord on beat 1 (see **Fig. 29** – bars 3-4). Interestingly, Evans suggests that it was Davis who led on the reharmonisation of “On Green Dolphin Street,” which is surprising given Evans’s important role as an innovator of jazz piano voicings.

Miles occasionally might say, “Right here, I want this sound,” and it turns out to be a very key thing that changes the whole character of the [song]. For instance, on “On Green Dolphin Street,” the original changes of the chorus aren’t the way [we recorded it]: the vamp changes being a major seventh up a minor third, down a half tone. That was [one when] he leaned over and said, “I want this here.”¹⁶

This structure was immediately treated as common property, with Evans reusing the chord extensively with his piano trio later in the year for the album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*.¹⁷

The “So What” chord reappears in three different pieces – “Tenderly,” “Night and Day” and “What is there to Say?” (see **Fig. 30**).

¹⁶ Bill Goldenberg and Eddie Carp, *Interview with Bill Evans* (tape recording), Fort Lee: WKCR, 1979. Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 82.

¹⁷ Bill Evans, *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, Riverside RLP 12-291, 1958, LP.

Fig. 30: “Tenderly,” “Night and Day” and “What is There to Say?”

The figure displays three musical staves, each representing a different piece of music. Each staff consists of a treble clef and a bass clef, both in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/E-flat minor). The first staff, titled "TENDERLY" - 2:28, is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the treble with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass line with chords Fm7, Bb7, and Ebmaj7. The second staff, titled "NIGHT AND DAY" - 0:57, is in 4/4 time and features a melody in the treble with a bass line including chords Fm7(b5), Bb7ALT., and Ebmaj7. The third staff, titled "WHAT IS THERE TO SAY?" - 2:12, is in 4/4 time and features a melody in the treble with a bass line including chords Bb7ALT. and Ebmaj7.

Nowadays, jazz pianists employ the “So What” chord in every key and to represent a variety of chord types (see before). However, on this album Evans reuses the chord exclusively in the key of E \flat and in its major-seventh form (E \flat maj7) precisely as it appears in “On Green Dolphin Street.” This implies that the “So What” chord was a recently acquired structure which the pianist had yet to explore to its full potential.

There is no question that Evans makes excellent use of the structure throughout his album, yet his straightforward repetition contrasts sharply with the Signification of Davis. More specifically, on his next small-group recording project (*Kind of Blue*) Davis repeats the structure with difference, employing it in a different key and in its minor-seventh variation

during the “Amen” response of “So What.” As in Chapter Four, I find Davis’s inclination to repeat-with-difference (rather than simply repeat) characteristic of his Signifyin(g) voice.

It would seem that both harmonic structures – the “So What” chord and the triadic horn-voicings that double the right-hand of Evans – are Significations on recent settings by the Sextet (“On Green Dolphin Street” and “Milestones”). Thus, Davis appears to Signify on both his large ensemble work with Gil Evans (see above) and his earlier Sextet recordings to generate compositional settings for *Kind of Blue*. Both voicings may be added to the list of musical items Davis amalgamated to form “So What” (see **Table 3**).

Table 3: Characteristics of “So What”

Gospel Features	Harmonic Structures	Other
Call-and-Response “Amen” Cadence	Triadic Horn-Voicing “So What” Chord	Melodic Double Bass Modality

The final section of Transcription-Comparison 3 completes the discussion about harmonic structures, through an examination of the introduction to “So What.”

The Introduction

The introduction to “So What” provides another opportunity to compare and contrast the Significations of Davis and Bill Evans. For the purpose of this transcription-comparison, the study divides its thirteen bars into four contrasting sections (see **Table 4**).

Table 4: Four Sections of the Introduction

Bars 1-6	Piano chords over a dominant pedal
Bars 7-9	Piano and double bass unison line
Bars 10-12	Piano chords over a tonic pedal
Bar 13	Solo double bass figure

Evans appears to harmonise the first and third sections by drawing from classical piano repertoire, whereas Davis seems to Signify on boogie-woogie piano in bar 7 (see Chapter 4). However, despite listeners being presented with alternative piano traditions (boogie-woogie/classical) repeated-with-difference by separate contributors (Davis/Evans) the introduction to “So What” remains a coherent musical statement. As we shall see, this is partly because Davis’s Signification is much less audible than those of Evans, which ensures only the impressionistic gestures are perceived by most listeners, but also because the opening bars of “So What” introduce musical materials closely related to its main theme.¹⁸

Bars 1-6: Piano Chords over a Dominant Pedal

The introduction is reminiscent of classical music¹⁹ to many commentators – while Kahn refers to it as a “dreamy prelude” Carr describes it as having “impressionist chord voicings.”²⁰ This ambiance is set during the opening two bars, which present right-hand harmonic structures that are typical of European piano repertoire (see **Fig. 31**, bars 1-2).²¹

Fig. 31: Introduction (bars 1-6)

¹⁸ Please note that it is not my intention to valorise Davis’s music by comparing it with features from classical music, but simply to discuss how this section of music works in the clearest possible manner.

¹⁹ I employ the term classical in its broader sense (i.e. European art music rather than the classical period).

²⁰ See Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 112 and Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 146. Both comments would seem to appeal to the values of Western classical music, for which commentators André Hodeir and Gunther Schuller have been criticised (see Chapter One). Nevertheless, bars 1-2 do contain structures from European piano repertoire.

²¹ Two examples are Schubert Op. 142 No. 2 (bars 17-18) and Debussy Prelude IV (bar 37).

The three-note chords in bars 1-2 are essentially octaves with an extra note placed in-between, voicings that I will refer to through the self-descriptive label “octaves with inner voice.” As these structures are commonplace in classical piano, it would be inappropriate to associate them with a specific work as predecessor, although we might regard bars 1-2 as a Signification on a musical tradition. Nevertheless, difference may be clearly identified, since in classical piano these structures typically form the right-hand notes of a larger chord played with both hands. In contrast, Evans doubles the shifting top note of Chambers’ dominant pedal (key of D minor) with his left hand throughout bars 1-6 (G# in bar 1). Given that these “octaves with inner voice” are untypical of jazz piano²² and taking into account Bill Evans’s well-documented knowledge of European piano repertoire,²³ it seems probable that these structures derive from him rather than Davis. This suggestion corroborates with Evans’s claim that he (alongside bassist Paul Chambers) harmonised the introduction from a single-line sketch provided in the studio.

On “So What,” the introduction was written out single-line, and Paul and I played it and added a little harmony to it.²⁴

Bars 3-4 are also of interest, since Evans plays descending second-inversion triads (G and F major – see **Fig. 31**). These are the right-hand notes of the “So What” chord, meaning that these bars anticipate a musical feature belonging to the main theme, subtly preparing the listeners’ ears for the “Amen” cadence.²⁵ Once again, Evans prefers to outline double bass

²² The right hand structures of two-handed chords in jazz piano are typically either triadic (such as in “So What” and upper-structure chords) or quartal.

²³ See Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

²⁴ Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 112.

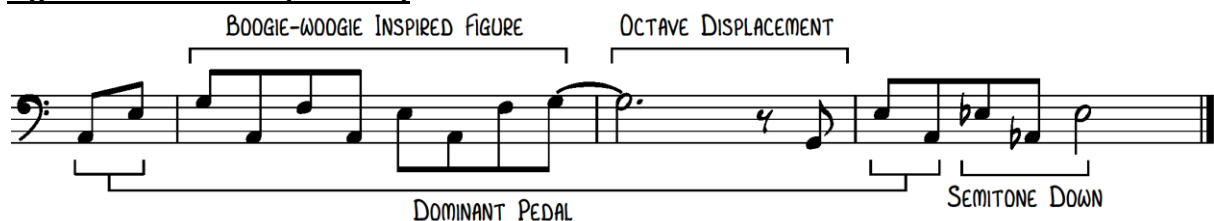
²⁵ Also compare **Fig. 11** with **Fig. 31** to see how bars 21-24 of “All Blues” resemble bars 3-4 of the introduction, with the addition of F (beginning) and E minor (at the end).

rather than add the left-hand part of this two-handed piano chord, thus conforming to the largely triadic nature of his harmonisation of the introduction.²⁶

Bars 7-9: Piano and Bass Unison Line

Bars 7-9 are a non-harmonised section of the introduction. Its unison line begins with a pick-up that is a continuation of the “root and fifth” dominant pedal introduced in bars 1-6 (see **Fig. 31**). The phrase ends by presenting the same two notes, first reversed and then transposed down a semitone, labelled below the staff (see **Fig. 32**).

Fig. 32: Introduction (bars 7-9)



In Chapter Four, I argued that Davis Signifies on a well-known boogie-woogie left-hand bass in bar 7, transposing it into a minor key and changing its melodic contour. Rather than ending on a lower pedal note (A) on the “and-of-four” (see **Fig. 19** – bar 3) this figure appears to anticipate the vamp’s next repetition by stating its first note G. Yet the rest of the riff fails to materialise, since this note (G) is extended into a dotted-minim before being restated in a lower register through octave displacement.

An interesting point to note is the difference in audibility between this Signification and the “octaves with inner voice” (bars 1-2). While Evans’s Signification clearly sets the tone of an impressionistic prelude, the boogie-woogie credentials of bar 7 remain inaudible without

²⁶ One cannot help but wonder if Davis originally intended the introduction to be performed by his three-piece horn section. Only one month later it was scored by Gil Evans for his orchestra, appearing with Davis on the television series *The Robert Herridge Theatre* in an episode entitled “The Sound of Miles Davis.”

the aid of transcription-comparison.²⁷ I would argue that it is this audibility/inaudibility that permits the introduction to make such a coherent impression on the ears of listeners, as represented by the comments of Carr and Kahn. The difference in Evans's Signification – repeating only the right-hand part of a typically two-handed structure – does not impede our access to “shared knowledge” as described by Mitchell-Kernan (see Chapter Two), whereas Davis renegotiates the tradition of his left-hand bass, obscuring its blues roots. Thus, rather than hearing competing Significations on contrasting piano traditions, we are presented with a more integrated musical statement. However, transcription-comparison has the power to change these perceptions, since once pointed out the boogie-woogie antecedents of bar 7 sound highly audible. The genie is “out of the bottle” since having been revealed, the materials Davis incorporates transform our listening experience. Bar 7 may now be heard to anticipate the blues-based tracks of *Kind of Blue* (“All Blues” and “Freddie Freeloader”) rendering the introduction a fitting prelude to the entire album.

Bars 10-12: Piano Chords over a Tonic Pedal

This passage consists of a series of second-inversion major triads constructed through chromatic parallelism over a tonic note on double bass.²⁸ The first point to make is that this appears to be a chromatic development of the descending triad theme of bars 3-4²⁹ placed over a tonic (D) rather than a dominant (A) pedal (see **Fig. 33**).

²⁷ Here I am drawing from my own perceptions of the music, supported by the fact that this Signification has remained unobserved within existing literature.

²⁸ Chromatic parallelism is when an identical harmonic structure is transposed from note to note, shifting to different pitches while retaining the same shape (thereby creating compositional logic). This technique often necessitates the appearance of notes from other keys.

²⁹ And thus by association, the horn parts to “So What” (see **Fig. 25**).

Fig. 33: Comparing Bars 3-4 and Bars 10-11

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'INTRO BARS 3-4', features a treble clef with a whole rest in the first bar, followed by a G chord in the second bar and an F chord in the third bar. The bass clef has a whole note in the first bar and a half note in the second bar. The second system, labeled 'INTRO BARS 10-11', features a treble clef with a complex chordal pattern in the first bar, a G chord in the second bar, and an F chord in the third bar. The bass clef has a whole note in the first bar and a half note in the second bar.

There is also the suggestion of a silent second text at play within these bars, as if Evans was reminded of another piece of music while embellishing this passage. Specifically, bars 10-11 resemble bars 39-41 of Prelude VII (book 2) by Claude Debussy (see Fig. 34).

Fig. 34: Intro (bars 10-12) and Debussy Prelude VII Book 2 (bars 39-41)

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'INTRO', features a treble clef with a complex chordal pattern in the first bar, a G chord in the second bar, and an F chord in the third bar. The bass clef has a whole note in the first bar and a half note in the second bar. The second system, labeled 'PRELUDE VII - BOOK 2', features a treble clef with a complex chordal pattern in the first bar, a G chord in the second bar, and an F chord in the third bar. The bass clef has a whole note in the first bar and a half note in the second bar.

The first point to note is that both passages share near-identical second-inversion triads in precisely the same register (see **Fig. 35**). The only difference in selection is that Bill Evans employs an A minor triad rather than A \flat major.

Fig. 35: Shared Structures



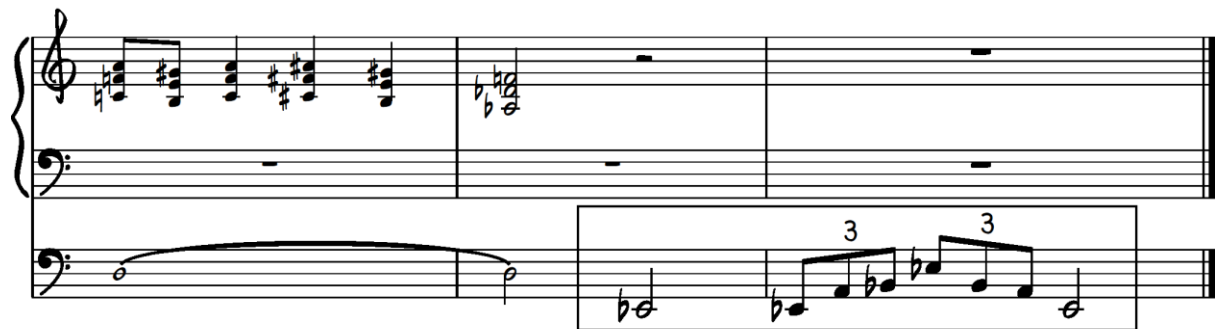
Moreover, both segments are based around chromatic parallelism. First, the opening bars of each passage targets G major from a semitone below (F \sharp – G – F \sharp). Secondly, bar 41 of the Prelude resembles the central section of the intro (marked with brackets) in that both embellish G major from above (A \flat /A minor) and F major from below (E). In the introduction, each of these figures is a harmonised upper/lower mordant respectively.³⁰ I do not wish to overstate this comparison, which is presented out of interest rather than as central to my argument. Clearly, there is a notable resemblance between the two passages, although how this came about (e.g. Signification, kinaesthetic memory or serendipity) is difficult to say with certainty. The important point I wish to emphasise is that bars 10-12 are evocative of impressionism, by which I mean to suggest that Bill Evans is once again Signifyin(g) on a musical tradition (classical piano) in an audible manner (as in bars 1-2).

³⁰ One possible difference between the two passages is the varied manner in which they fill the space between the tritone G-D \flat . While the introduction outlines a descending whole tone scale – G, F, E \flat (absent), D \flat – the Prelude suggests ascending diminished harmony (D \flat , E, G). This point marks a brief departure from the “jazz theory” based approach of this thesis to present an alternative way of viewing the music that acknowledges Debussy’s partiality for symmetrical scales.

Bar 13: Solo Double Bass Figure

Chambers plays a solo quaver-triplet figure (without piano) in E \flat to conclude the introduction (see Fig. 36) taking the trouble to detune the lowest string of his instrument (normally E) by a semitone to play this phrase.

Fig. 36: Intro (bars 11-13)



At first glance, this motif resembles a statement in the Lydian mode, since it contains the note A (the #11 of E \flat) a possible nod towards the theoretical work of George Russell and his book *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation*. However, looking at bar 13 in relation to the introduction as a whole, perhaps Davis is simply reincorporating the dominant pedal of bars 1-9 within his final phrase. Intriguingly, this inclusion of the dominant note (of D minor) appears echoed during the 8-bar bridge of “So What” within the double-bass melody, through its inclusion of the tonic note D (see Fig. 37 – bars 3-4).

Fig. 37: “So What” Double Bass Figures



While all of the other notes from Chambers’ A-Section bass melody (see Fig. 37 – bars 1-2) are transposed up a semitone for the bridge, the 7th (C) goes up a tone to D rather than D \flat .

Kernfeld, whose own transcriptions throw up the same anomaly, argues that this inclusion serves to retain a sense of the tonic.³¹ By the same token, perhaps the closing figure of the introduction incorporates A to retain a sense of the dominant.

Although this is an interesting set of observations, the main point to emphasise is that Chambers' figure prepares our ears for the bridge to "So What" by introducing the sound of Eb, in a similar way that bars 3-4 anticipate the "Amen" cadence of the main theme (see above). Both examples imply an attempt by Davis to create a sense of cohesion between the introduction and main theme of "So What."³²

Formulas Rendered Anew

I chose the term formula primary to paraphrase Gates and his description of the skill displayed by narrators of the *Monkey Tales*. Working within the boundaries of set characters and the central events that befall them, "the narrator's technique, his or her craft, is to be gauged by the creative (re)placement of these expected or anticipated formulaic phrases and formulaic events, rendered anew in unexpected ways."³³ Davis's interest in items belonging to recently successful recordings – musical devices of the moment – ensured he was sharing materials with his contemporaries. In addition, items derived from his own work such as the "So What" chord, rapidly became common property as demonstrated by its use on the album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*. Despite the open availability and recent use of these formulas by his contemporaries, Davis generated a composition considered groundbreaking by commentators and musicians alike.³⁴

³¹ Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 146.

³² I do not intend to valorise Davis by comparing his music with values held by classical music (in raising its cohesiveness) but simply to describe the musical features of this section as clearly as possible.

³³ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 67.

³⁴ Kahn presents a useful historical overview of the album's "legacy." See Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 174-198.

It is the insertion of materials from “other” traditions into a gospel-blues framework (and the inevitable renegotiation that ensues) that characterises Davis’s Signification. While call-and-response in “Moanin’” and “Blue Train” remains squarely rooted within the gospel-blues tradition, in “So What” these figures take on new meaning. Above and beyond their transportation into Dorian modality, “the preacher” now speaks with the voice of Jimmy Blanton whereas “his congregation” answer in the resonant language of quartal harmony.³⁵

The Significations of Bill Evans during the introduction to “So What” add to this gospel-blues renegotiation. The pianist sets an unmistakably impressionistic tone through his use of “octaves with inner voice” and chromatic parallelism, a mood that colours and inflects our experience of the main theme that follows, thus rendering Davis’s Signification on formulas of the day all the more unexpected. Having examined Bill Evans as pianist, the next section investigates the other role he may be ascribed on *Kind of Blue* – that of composer of works upon which Davis creatively Signified.

Transcription-Comparison 4: “Flamenco Sketches”

Transcription-Comparisons 4 and 5 investigate those pieces on *Kind of Blue* that appear to be Significations on predecessors composed by Bill Evans – “Flamenco Sketches” and “Blue in Green.” Thus, as a modal composition “Flamenco Sketches” completes Chapter Five, yet also introduces important themes to be explored further in Chapter Six. Transcription-Comparison 4 begins by reassessing the well-documented aural similarity between the vamps of Evans’s improvisation “Peace Piece” and the introduction to “Flamenco Sketches” from a broader intertextual perspective.

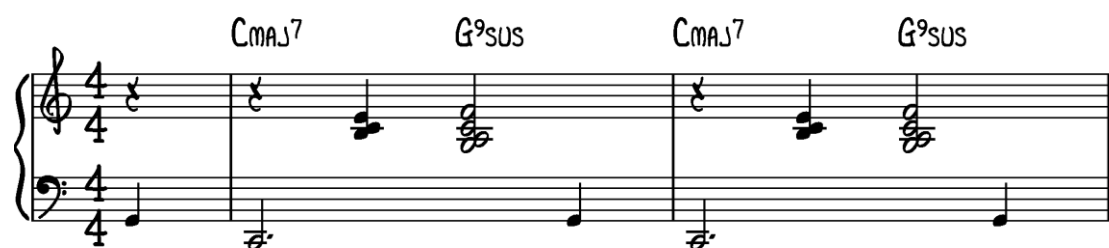
³⁵ Although not quartal in the strictest sense, the lower three intervals of the “So What” chord are perfect fourths with a major third above.

This is achieved by reintroducing the Evans’s recording “Some Other Time” into the debate. The thesis contends that Davis repeated its vamps with difference to form Segments 1 and 2 of “Flamenco Sketches,” whereas the trumpeter completed this Signification by drawing inspiration from “familiar” vamps he had used successfully within his own recent recordings. Overall, this discussion prepares the way for the central argument of Chapter Six – namely, that while Evans appears to be an author of silent second texts, transcription-comparison suggests that the difference within each Signification derives from Davis.

The Second Vamp

Although the aural similarity between the vamps of Bill Evans’s improvisation “Peace Piece” and the introduction to “Flamenco Sketches” is a common theme in the literature, surprisingly no commentator has transcribed them for comparison. However, Kahn does publish a useful sketch (handwritten by Evans) of the vamp to “Peace Piece” (see **Fig. 38**).³⁶

Fig. 38: Vamp to “Peace Piece”



The voicing Evans uses for Cmaj7 has become part of the broad palette of harmonic structures used by contemporary jazz pianists.³⁷ Constructed from a consonant major-third interval placed above a dissonant minor-second, this tightly packed structure opens out into

³⁶ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 134. Please note Evans’s handwritten sketch is four bars, because he writes out the same two-bar vamp twice.

³⁷ Like the “So What” chord, this structure can function as several different chords depending on which note is in the bass – e.g. Evans often used this voicing for Am7. For a complete list of applications, see Levine, *Jazz Piano Book*, 147.

a resonant quartal voicing³⁸ (G9sus) with the 9th (A) added for additional colour. I will refer to this vamp-style setting henceforth as the *peace vamp*.

Comparing this sketch with my own transcription of the introduction to “Flamenco Sketches” confirms that the vamps are near identical, the main difference being that “Peace Piece” is for solo piano whereas the latter is orchestrated for Sextet. Thus, in “Flamenco Sketches” Paul Chambers plays the root-fifth pedal of the peace vamp on double bass. This frees up Evans’s left-hand to embellish bars 3-4 with two-handed piano chords, a re-orchestration that contributes greater depth of sound and harmonic richness (**Fig. 39**). The pianist sustains the vamp in a similar manner throughout Segment 1, with double bass facilitating accompanimental freedom expressed through variations of voicing and rhythm.

Fig. 39: Introduction to “Flamenco Sketches”

The musical score for the introduction to "Flamenco Sketches" is presented in two systems. Both systems are in 4/4 time. The first system consists of two measures. The piano part (treble clef) has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The double bass part (bass clef) has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G2, a quarter note B2, and a quarter note D3. Chord voicings are indicated above the piano staff: CMAJ7 and G9sus for the first measure, and CMAJ7 and G9sus for the second measure. A box labeled "DOUBLE BASS" is placed below the first measure of the bass staff. The second system also consists of two measures. The piano part has a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The double bass part has a quarter rest, then a quarter note G2, a quarter note B2, and a quarter note D3. Chord voicings are indicated above the piano staff: CMAJ7 (Am7) and G9sus for the first measure, and CMAJ7 (Am7) and G9sus for the second measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

³⁸ See Levine, *Jazz Piano Book*, 146.

“Some Other Time”

The peace vamp was originally conceived for Bill Evans’s solo piano arrangement of “Some Other Time.”³⁹ At the end of his recording session for the piano trio album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, the pianist sat down to record his version of Leonard Bernstein’s song when he began to improvise over the vamp.

I started to play the introduction, and it started to get so much of its own feeling and identity that I just figured, well, I’ll keep going.⁴⁰

Although this improvisation (“Peace Piece”) was ultimately chosen for the LP, Evans did record a complete performance of “Some Other Time.”⁴¹ The A-Section to this number employs the peace vamp precisely as notated in **Fig. 38**⁴² and yet despite this vamp-style setting being common to all three pieces (“Some Other Time” → “Peace Piece” → “Flamenco Sketches”) surprisingly little attention has been invested in this recording.

One observation overlooked in the literature is that Bill Evans’s arrangement of “Some Other Time” is built from two vamps not one, its Bridge being based on another figure in the key of A \flat major. This is not dissimilar to the peace vamp, since it employs another compact three-note chord (A \flat maj9) expanding into a fourth chord that incorporates the intervals of a tritone (augmented 4th) and perfect 4th (E \flat 7 \sharp 9 – see **Fig. 40**).⁴³

³⁹ Pettinger notes a similarity between the opening bars of *Berceuse* (Op. 57 in D-flat major) by Frédéric Chopin and the vamp to “Peace Piece” (and so by association “Some Other Time” and “Flamenco Sketches”). See Pettinger, *Bill Evans*, 69.

⁴⁰ Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 134. Originally quoted in Jim Aitkin, “Peace Piece,” *Contemporary Keyboard* (June 1980), 46.

⁴¹ This is often included as a bonus track on CD reissues of the album.

⁴² For its introduction, Bill Evans adds an upper-register flourish to the peace vamp. It is also worth noting that during its A-Section and Bridge, “Some Other Time” employs functional harmony alongside its vamps, in contrast with the modality of “Peace Piece” and “Flamenco Sketches.”

⁴³ In this case, the compact three-note voicing is constructed from a minor-third interval over a major second. Although E \flat 7 \sharp 9 is not quartal (i.e. all perfect intervals) Mark Levine includes voicings containing a tritone within his discussion about diatonically-extended fourth chords. See Levine, *Jazz Piano Book*, 106.

Fig. 40: Bridge Vamp to “Some Other Time”

The image shows a musical score for a bridge vamp in 4/4 time. The score is written on two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (A-flat major). The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure is labeled with the chord $A\flat MAJ7$ and the second measure is labeled with the chord $E\flat 7(\#9)$. The treble staff shows a whole note chord in the first measure and a whole note chord in the second measure. The bass staff shows a half note in the first measure and a half note in the second measure. The notes in the bass staff are $A\flat$ and B in the first measure, and $A\flat$ and B in the second measure. The notes in the treble staff are $A\flat$, B , C , and D in the first measure, and $A\flat$, B , C , and D in the second measure. The notes in the treble staff are $A\flat$, B , C , and D in the first measure, and $A\flat$, B , C , and D in the second measure.

At this point, it is worthwhile recalling that Segment 2 of “Flamenco Sketches” is $A\flat$ Mixolydian (see Chapter Two). Therefore, the A-Section of “Some Other Time” and Segment 1 of “Flamenco Sketches” both incorporate the peace vamp (C major/Ionian) before moving to $A\flat$. The disparity of key/mode – i.e. Bridge ($A\flat$ major); Segment 2 ($A\flat$ Mixolydian) – is one part of the difference in this Signification, alongside a re-orchestration of the peace vamp and the two handed piano voicings this facilitates.

It is interesting to note that Davis had employed an $A\flat$ Mixolydian vamp in the past, adding an 8-bar interlude ($A\flat 9sus$) to his 1950s Quintet arrangement of the Dave Brubeck composition “In Your Own Sweet Way.”⁴⁴ Thus, according to my argument, the $A\flat$ of Segment 2 is not a tritone substitute for D as in Kernfeld’s cycle-of-fifths interpretation, or an introduction of flattened “blue notes” against the “white notes” of Segment 1 as in Barrett’s blues-based argument. Rather, it is simply another example of Signification in *Kind of Blue*, as Davis repeats the vamps of “Some Other Time” with difference substituting its Bridge vamp for a familiar modal area built on the same root note ($A\flat$) as a means to generate difference.

⁴⁴ Miles Davis, *Workin’ with the Miles Davis Quintet*, Prestige PRLP 7166, 1956, LP.

My contention that Davis completed his Signification by drawing inspiration from vamps belonging to his own recent recordings is supported by Segment 5 (G Dorian). This was a familiar modality that Davis had improvised over during several earlier tracks, including the “Maids of Cadiz” and “Blues for Pablo”⁴⁵ in addition to “It Ain’t Necessarily So” and “Milestones.” This impression that Davis was gravitating towards the familiar finds further support in the Spanish sounding Segment 4, from which the piece “Flamenco Sketches” derives its name.

Spanish Influences

Segment 4 introduces the idea that “Flamenco Sketches” functioned as a predecessor that Davis would later repeat-with-difference. As previously mentioned, Kernfeld transcribes Bill Evans’s piano accompaniment to Segment 4 as D and E \flat major triads.⁴⁶ He uses this to identify “a direct relationship” between “Flamenco Sketches” and the track “Solea” (*Sketches of Spain*).⁴⁷ The latter’s accompaniment “consists almost entirely of an oscillation between I- \flat II” whereas difference is generated through the orchestration of Gil Evans.⁴⁸

One detail overlooked by Kernfeld is that Davis had employed I- \flat II vamp-style accompaniments before *Kind of Blue*, most notably in his sound track for the Louis Malle film *L’Ascenseur Pour L’Echafaud*.⁴⁹ One of the devices Davis employed was a minorised

⁴⁵ Miles Davis, *Miles Ahead*, Columbia CL 1014, 1957, LP.

⁴⁶ I find Davis’s first solo intriguing in its repeated exposure of F (flattened third) as a long note at the top of his trumpet line and complete avoidance of F \sharp . Although the mixed-third clash this note forms with the accompaniment of Evans (D triad contains F \sharp) is consistent with flamenco music, Davis appears to be exploiting its tonal ambiguity to the absolute fullest. This puts me in mind of a comment by Davis that “Flamenco is the Spanish counterpart to our blues” (Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 160) since his solo is not dissimilar to how a blues guitarist might emphasise the flattened third over a dominant-seventh chord.

⁴⁷ Miles Davis, *Sketches of Spain*, Columbia CL 1480, 1960, LP.

⁴⁸ Kernfeld, “Melodic Coherence,” 165. “Solea” is a tone up (A major to B \flat major) and scored for orchestra.

⁴⁹ Miles Davis, *Jazz Track*, Columbia CL 1268, 1958, LP. Another example is the G minor to A \flat vamp at the beginning of “Gone Gone Gone” from *Porgy and Bess*, which derives from Gershwin’s original score.

version of the I-♭II vamp – A minor to B♭ minor (over an A pedal) – used as the introduction to several numbers on the film including the opening track “Générique.”⁵⁰ This soundtrack is important to “Flamenco Sketches” for another reason. As Carr suggests, this may have been the moment Davis realised “it was possible to create absorbing music with neither formally written themes nor any real harmonic movement.”⁵¹ Davis reused this approach for “Flamenco Sketches” since in place of a composed theme, the trumpeter bookends the piece with improvised trumpet lines at the beginning and end.⁵²

Examining “Flamenco Sketches” from a broader intertextual perspective has drawn in a much wider assemblage of recordings to inform the debate. While the peace vamp used in “Peace Piece” and “Flamenco Sketches” undisputedly derives from “Some Other Time,” I find the notion that Davis substituted its bridge vamp in A♭ major for the familiar modality of A♭ Mixolydian compelling. Yet even if this were not the case, there still appears to be a trend of familiarity running through the modes of “Flamenco Sketches” – not only because of Davis’s prior use of A♭ Mixolydian and G Dorian vamp-style settings, but also due to his clear interest in I-♭II progressions. Thus, Transcription-Comparison 4 serves to introduce another idea – that Davis completed his Signification on Bill Evans’s recording by drawing inspiration from his own recent settings, a topic I will develop further during Chapter Six.

⁵⁰ Difference here exists in the form of major vs. minor.

⁵¹ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 119. Pejrolo also marks this recording as a pivotal point, emphasising the roles played by Pierre Michelot (bass) and René Urtreger (piano) in fostering its modal improvisational approach. See Andrea Pejrolo, “Transatlantic Interplays: The Origins of Miles Davis’s Modal Jazz in *Ascenseur Pour l’Echafaud* (Lift to the Scaffold) – 1957,” *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 3, no. 1 (2006): 63-82.

⁵² There is something in Davis’s use of the Harmon mute close to a microphone that lends his improvisations a composed quality. Perhaps the dialogical aspects of his trumpet technique (identified by Walser) engage the listener, making his lines more profound and less transient.

Signifyin(g) and Modality

This chapter argues that as with modality, other characteristic features of “So What” were musical devices that appeared in recordings by Davis and his contemporaries in the period leading up to *Kind of Blue*. These include call-and-response/“Amen” cadence (“Blue Train” and “Moanin”), call-and-response/melodic double bass (“New Rhumba”), the “So What” chord (“On Green Dolphin Street”) and triadic horn-voicings (“Milestones”). Davis’s claim that the gospel-inspired characteristics of *Kind of Blue* derive from a nostalgic memory are consistent with Romantic ideals of the author as genius, discernable within his autobiography (see Chapter Two). In this instance, testimony serves his narrative by drawing our attention back to Davis’s childhood in Arkansas and away from recent recordings that employ these devices.

Ironically, the creative process revealed through Transcription-Comparison 3 is no less an accomplishment than that implied by Davis’s autobiography (i.e. artistic inspiration swelling up from latent memories held deep within). In an interesting parallel with the narrators of the *Monkey Tales*, Davis skilfully recombines a series of widely available formulas to create a groundbreaking recording through Signification. A key part of this success is the manner in which the gospel-like characteristics of “So What” take on new meaning, in large part through the casting of double bass in the role of preacher and use of the “So What” chord to represent voices of the congregation. This theme is preceded by impressionistic piano rather than church organ, whereas the functional harmonic language of gospel music is stripped away to be replaced by a backdrop of Dorian modality.

Turning to the research questions, the predecessors identified for “So What” and those items repeated are summarised above. The broader strategy behind the piece appears to

be produced in a contrasting manner to “All Blues.” While the latter is based around the juxtaposition of two contrasting vamps, “So What” is formed by superimposing devices belonging to modern jazz onto a gospel-blues framework, imbuing its structures with a contemporary sound. However, this Signification does share those commonalities identified in Chapter Four. For instance, there is simplicity and neatness in this process, as resonant textures populate a traditional form without altering or detracting from the underlying design. Economy is also evident, through Davis’s reuse of the “So What” chord in another incarnation (i.e. as a minor-seventh), which also underscores his consistency in Signifyin(g) rather than repeating (see before). Even Davis’s reuse of the peace vamp for “Flamenco Sketches” is varied through re-orchestration, with double bass freeing Evans to extemporise using two-handed piano chords. What is more, this is the first half of a broader Signification on both vamps belonging to “Some Other Time,” with only the key centre of A \flat retained from its bridge to be reinterpreted as the familiar mode of A \flat Mixolydian in Segment 2.

“Flamenco Sketches” and “So What” exhibit the most discernable silent second texts on *Kind of Blue*, as evidenced by Gridley’s identification of “Peace Piece” and Barrett’s recognition of “Moanin’” as predecessors. However, as the thesis suggested in Chapter Three, such “two-text” observations are underexplored intertextually, a state-of-affairs that requires a broader set tools to illuminate than the aural perceptions of listeners. For this study, while identifying earlier recordings that employ the “So What” chord relied wholly on transcription skills, understanding how the bridge vamp to “Some Other Time” related to Segment 2 of “Flamenco Sketches” was equally dependent on the theoretical concept of repetition-with-difference. Based on the necessity of this thesis to employ broader tools to access shared knowledge, the Significations of Davis appear not to direct listeners. As

previously argued, disparity in the audibility of Significations appears derived from Davis's adoption of varied modes of revision, rather than viewed as an indicator of the trumpeter's Signifyin(g) skill.

Transcription-Comparison 3 provides another example of how mixed audibilities serve the music. Carr and Kahn's impressionistic descriptions of the introduction to "So What" (see before) indicate the discernibility of Bill Evans's Significations on European piano repertoire. Crucially, the clarity of this musical statement is aided by the inaudibility of Davis's Signification on the left-hand-bass in bar 7, which ensures there is no mixed musical message for the listener. This idea will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

Access to shared knowledge through transcription-comparison, reveals once again that Davis's Significations evident within "So What" show no signs of parody. Transcription-Comparison 3 corroborates with Chapter Four, in presenting a renegotiation (rather than recapitulation) of musical tradition. There is a discourse evident in "So What" about the appropriateness of revalidating African-American traditional structures – in this case, Gospel-like figures – using devices from contemporary jazz.

Moreover, the presence of "In Your Own Sweet Way" as a silent second text foregrounds how different "Flamenco Sketches" is to previous Davis recordings that utilise vamps. There is an important distinction to be drawn between adding a suspended vamp to "In Your Own Sweet Way" as an appendage, and disposing of the melody and functional harmony of "Some Other Time" to retain a single vamp and modal root note (A \flat) from its bridge. Thus, the latter speaks through its absence about an approach to designing vamp-style settings

that facilitates melodic coherence by liberation from the composed melodies and harmonies of the American Songbook.

Chapter Six: Circular Form and Extended Tones

Introduction

In the methodology section, I listed the assertion of Bill Evans that he was composer of “Blue in Green,” as among the indicators of where to begin searching for recordings repeated-with-difference to generate the settings of *Kind of Blue*. This chapter argues that the majority of harmonic and melodic materials belonging to this piece derive from the Bill Evans tune “Waltz for Debby,” whereas difference identified within this Signification points towards the compositions of Davis, from before and after *Kind of Blue*.

The thesis contends that “Blue in Green” is marked by two important characteristics – its 10-bar circular form and melodic extended tones. Crucially, despite the composition being built largely of materials repeated from “Waltz for Debby,” it is the difference generated by Davis’s Significations that moulds both distinctive traits. Thus, Evans may be considered composer of a silent second text whereas Davis appears to play a more active role, using Signification to transform traditionally written musical materials into a forward-thinking composition that paved the way towards the trumpeter’s Quintet of the 1960s.

Transcription-Comparison 5 begins by identifying those harmonic and melodic materials belonging to “Blue in Green” that are seemingly repeated from “Waltz for Debby,” thus demonstrating its credentials as predecessor. The remainder of Chapter Six focuses on difference in the Signification. First, the thesis describes how the circular form of “Blue in Green” was likely generated, arguing that this characteristic trait derives from difference

within the Signification, not those materials repeated. Moreover, this difference would seem to originate from Davis, a point illustrated through examples of similar Significations by the trumpeter before and after *Kind of Blue*.

Secondly, the study focuses on the melody of “Blue in Green,” which features colourful sounding extended tones. These also appear to derive from Davis’s Signification, as the trumpeter manipulates a seven-note phrase repeated from “Waltz for Debby” to create an extended sound in bars 1-2 of “Blue in Green.” However, because Davis is working with a set series of notes, other less desirable outcomes arise unbidden as the trumpeter arranges this phrase to best effect. Despite this “compositional static” he completes his extended tone melody, principally by drawing melodic tropes from his own recent compositions.

Transcription-Comparison 5: “Blue in Green”

Harmonic and Melodic Repetition

This section identifies those musical materials belonging to “Waltz for Debby” that appear to have been repeated in “Blue in Green.” First, harmonically compare bars 5-11 of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” with bars 1-7 of “Blue in Green” (see **Fig. 41**). The progressions are near identical with seven chords from Evans’s bridge seemingly repeated in an identical order, the main variation being that bar 4 of “Blue in Green” has an additional F7 chord creating a II-V-I progression (Cm7-F7-B♭maj7).¹

¹ Also note that Bill Evans often selects Dm6 piano voicings during bars 3, 7 and 10 of “Blue in Green.”

Fig. 41: Harmonic Comparison

WALTZ FOR DEBBY - BRIDGE

BLUE IN GREEN

Secondly, melodically compare bars 5-8 of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” with bars 1-4 of “Blue in Green” (see **Fig. 42**). Both feature a stepwise descent from D to F, followed by a distinctive leap upwards of a major 6th back to D. For ease of reference, these seven notes will be referred to collectively as the *major 6th phrase*.

Fig. 42: Melodic Comparison

Fig. 43 summarises the melodic and harmonic parallels drawn between the pieces so far.

Materials that are not repeated through Signification have been excluded leaving gaps (e.g. blank bars and/or no chord symbol) resulting in seven bars of harmony and four bars of

melody that appear to derive from “Waltz for Debby.”² One important point to emphasise is that these harmonic and melodic materials occur together (i.e. in the same bars). This correlation adds weight to the contention that this is a Signification on materials from “Waltz for Debby” rather than coincidental resemblance.

Fig. 43: Comparative Summary

WALTZ FOR DEBBY

The figure displays two musical excerpts. The first, titled "WALTZ FOR DEBBY", is in 3/4 time and features a bridge section (indicated by a box labeled "BRIDGE") in the first four bars. The melody in the bridge consists of a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter rest. Chord annotations above the staff are Gm7, A7, Dm7, and Cm7. The second excerpt, titled "BLUE IN GREEN", is in 4/4 time. The first four bars of the bridge section show a melody of a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Chord annotations above the staff are Gm7, A7, Dm7, Cm7, and Bbmaj7. The following two bars show a melody of a quarter note G4 and a quarter note A4, with chord annotations A7 and Dm7. Brackets are drawn under the G4 and A4 notes in both excerpts to highlight their similarity.

The small section of non-cadential harmony in “Blue in Green” (Am7-Dm7-Gm7) that occurs in bars 9-10 and bar 1 (see **Fig. 45**), also appears to derive from “Waltz for Debby” – in this case the bars immediately following its bridge (Section C). The first chord after the bridge is generally transcribed as Fmaj7/A.³ However, during its improvised solo sections the chord inversions (or slash chords) of “Waltz for Debby” (e.g. Fmaj7/A) are transformed into root

² See below for an explanation of the melody in bar 7 of “Blue in Green” (marked with brackets).

³ Chuck Sher, *The New Real Book* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1988), 387.

position equivalents. Therefore, this chord is ordinarily treated as Am7, followed by Dm7 and Gm7 (see Fig. 44). These are the non-cadential harmonies of “Blue in Green.”⁴

Fig. 44: Am7-Dm7-Gm7 in “Waltz for Debby”

The figure displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in 3/4 time and is labeled "WALTZ FOR DEBBY SECTION C BARS 1-4". It shows a sequence of chords: F major (with a handwritten 'C' above it), Dm7, Gm7, and C7. The bottom staff is in 4/4 time and is labeled "WALTZ FOR DEBBY SECTION C - SOLOS". It shows a sequence of chords: Am7, Dm7, Gm7, and C7, with a slash between each chord indicating a change in harmonic rhythm.

Therefore, 9 bars of the harmony of “Blue in Green” appear derived from “Waltz for Debby,” meaning that only bar 8 (E7alt) is new harmonic material. The following section describes how the 10-bar circular form of “Blue in Green” was likely forged from these materials through difference in the Signification, a creative process that is “Davis-like.”

Circularity through Difference

“Blue in Green” is deemed a circular composition because its form is disguised in such a way that bar 1 of each repeating chorus no longer sounds like “the beginning.” Keith Waters points out that the circularity of “Blue in Green” derives from two features: (1) its 10-bar form; and (2) that the opening harmony in bar one (Gm7) continues a non-cadential

⁴ Note that during its solo sections “Waltz for Debby” increases in harmonic rhythm by altering the time signature to 4/4 and changing chord twice per bar (rather than once). The piano solo of “Blue in Green” shares a similar feature, doubling and then quadrupling its harmonic rhythm (without changing time signature). This parallel supports the notion that the solo section of “Waltz for Debby” may have influenced the format of “Blue in Green” – if so Evans did not record this version until two years later (Bill Evans Trio, *Waltz for Debby*, Riverside RLP-399, 1961, LP).

progression begun in bars 9-10 (Am7-Dm7-Gm7).⁵ Thus, 32-bar song form and II-V-I cadences, which ordinarily mark out the end/beginning of each chorus, are both absent from “Blue in Green” permitting the music to drift past bar 1 “unnoticed” (see Fig. 45).

Fig. 45: “Blue in Green”

The figure displays two staves of musical notation for the piece "Blue in Green". The top staff shows a sequence of chords: Gm7 (with a circled 13 below it), A7ALT. (with a circled #9 below it), Dm7 (with a circled b9 below it), Cm7 (with a circled 11 below it), F7 (with a circled 9 below it), and BbMAJ7 (with a circled #11 below it). The bottom staff shows a sequence of chords: A7ALT. (with a circled #9 below it), Dm7 (with a circled 11 below it), E7ALT. (with a circled b13 below it), Am7 (with a circled # below it), and Dm7 (with a circled 9 below it). Above the top staff, a box labeled "PASSING NOTES" has three arrows pointing to a melodic line. Above the bottom staff, a box labeled "DAVIS'S NOTE CHOICES" has two arrows pointing to specific notes.

The 10-bar form of “Blue in Green” appears to have been constructed by fusing together the seven bars of harmony repeated from the bridge of “Waltz for Debby” with the non-cadential progression, using a single chord – E7alt. Thus, difference is seemingly generated by deleting the last five bars of harmony from the bridge and filling the resultant gap with this chord (see Fig. 46). Moreover, the Gm7 which begins the seven bars of bridge harmony and the Gm7 which ends the non-cadential progression seem to be treated as (or merged into) the same chord. Put simply, the Dm7 in bar 10 proceeds directly to Gm7 in bar 1 (not “bar 11”) thereby “gluing together” the 10-bar loop (see Fig. 46 – marked by dotted arrow).

⁵ Keith Waters, *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75.

Fig. 46: Bridge + Non-Cadential Harmony

The image shows handwritten musical notation for two pieces. The first piece, "WALTZ FOR DEBBY" - BRIDGE INTO SECTION C, is in 3/4 time and consists of 10 bars. Bars 1-4 are Gm7, A7, Dm7, and Cm7. Bars 5-7 are Bbmaj7, A7, and Dm7. Bar 8 is G7, with a bracket above it labeled "REPLACE WITH E7ALT" that spans bars 8-10. Bar 9 is Abmaj7 and bar 10 is Dbmaj7. The second piece, "BLUE IN GREEN", is in 4/4 time and consists of 10 bars. Bars 1-5 are Gm7, A7ALT., Dm7, Cm7 (F7), and Bbmaj7. Bars 6-10 are A7ALT., Dm7, E7ALT., Am7, and Dm7. A dashed arrow points from the "REPLACE WITH E7ALT" bracket in the first piece to the E7ALT. chord in the second piece. A box labeled "SECTION C CONTINUES" with an arrow points to the right from the end of the first piece's notation.

Thus, while the majority of these harmonic materials appear to be repeated from “Waltz for Debby” (with the exception of E7alt) circularity seems generated by difference in the Signification. For example, the seven bars of harmony (from the bridge) and non-cadential progression might have been combined to form part of a more conventional 16-bar structure. It is the manipulation of harmony and form to generate difference – the insertion of a single chord (E7alt) and merging of two chords (Gm7 + Gm7) – that creates a 10-bar structure. Similarly, non-cadential harmony does not necessarily imply circularity. As Waters suggests, it is the strategic placement of the non-cadential progression (bars 9-10 into bar 1) which helps to create a circular composition by overlapping (and so disguising) the end/beginning of the 10-bar form without a cadence (II-V-I).

“Davis-like” Signification

Davis Signified in a very similar manner before *Kind of Blue*, which leads this thesis to describe the process outlined above as “Davis-like.” For example, his composition “Sid’s Ahead”⁶ appears to be a Signification upon “Walkin”⁷ credited to Richard Carpenter. Davis recorded his version of the latter in 1954, a significant track described by Carr as the trumpeter’s “first full-scale masterpiece.”⁸ Davis appears to construct “Sid’s Ahead” by repeating the distinctive #11 figures of “Walkin” (bars 1 and 5) while deleting all of the other harmonic materials and much of the remaining melodic materials,⁹ to create gaps he then filled with altered chords (C7alt and D7alt – see Fig. 47).

Fig. 47: “Sid’s Ahead”

The figure displays three staves of musical notation for the piece "Sid's Ahead" in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a melodic line starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. Above the staff, the chords F#11, C7ALT, D7ALT, and C7ALT are indicated. A bracket under the first two notes is labeled "WALKIN". A dashed line below the staff, labeled "ALTERED", spans from the start of the second measure to the end of the fourth measure. The second staff shows a similar melodic line. Above the staff, the chords Bb7#11, D7ALT, and C7ALT are indicated. A bracket under the first two notes is labeled "WALKIN". A dashed line below the staff, labeled "ALTERED", spans from the start of the second measure to the end of the fourth measure. The third staff shows a melodic line starting with a quarter note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. Above the staff, the chords C7ALT, D7ALT, a repeat sign (∞), and F7#11 are indicated. A dashed line below the staff, labeled "ALTERED", spans from the start of the first measure to the end of the fourth measure.

⁶ Miles Davis, *Milestones*, Columbia CL 1193, 1958, LP.

⁷ Miles Davis, *Walkin'*, Prestige PRLP 7076, 1957, LP.

⁸ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 78.

⁹ While the harmony is stripped away in bars 2-4, melodically the motive F-Bb-Ab (“Sid’s Ahead”) resembles a pared-down version of F-Bb-A (“Walkin’”). The harmony and melody of bars 7-11 appear to be edited out. This creative process began the month before Davis recorded “Walkin’” (April, 1954) as evidenced by his track “Weirdo” (March, 1954). As notated in Appendix Four, the melodies of “Weirdo” and “Sid’s Ahead” are near identical – in the latter, Davis simply deletes F7 in bars 4 and 8 to create more gaps to fill with altered chords, thus completing the harmonic structure of “Sid’s Ahead.”

This process strongly resembles the Signification described earlier in this chapter, in which the final five bars of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” are deleted and the resultant gap plugged with an altered-dominant chord (E7alt – see **Fig. 46**)

The development of circular form in “Blue in Green” also resembles Significations from later in Davis’s career. Circular form was a technique which the trumpeter would employ several times within his 1960s Quintet, although particularly close parallels exist between “Blue and Green” and his 1966 work “Circle.”¹⁰ As Waters points out, the harmony of “Circle” is a reworking of an earlier Davis composition – “Drad Dog” – beginning from the latter piece’s middle section.¹¹

Thus “Circle” begins in the middle of “Drad Dog,” and the relationship of the two compositions suggests a view of “Circle” as an endless loop. Not only does “Circle” show the quintet creatively reworking earlier materials, but its specifically circular reworking re-evaluates the notion of beginning, middle and end.¹²

It is notable that “Blue in Green” begins in the middle of “Waltz for Debby” (i.e. during its bridge). Therefore, it might be said that the Signification evident within “Blue in Green” also re-evaluates the notion of beginning, middle and end. Moreover, both Significations feature a change in time Signature, with “Drad Dog” (4/4) transformed to 3/4 in “Circle.” Viewed from its own point in time, “Circle” appears to Signify on the editing processes and circularity of “Blue in Green.” Thus, rather than occupying the end of a Signifyin(g) chain of pieces, “Blue in Green” should be viewed in the middle (“Waltz for Debby” → “Blue in Green” → “Circle”) and as a preceding work with which revising texts could engage.

To summarise the central arguments so far, this thesis contends that one of the key characteristics of “Blue in Green” – its circular form – derives from difference in the

¹⁰ Miles Davis, *Miles Smiles*, Columbia CL 2601, 1966, LP.

¹¹ Miles Davis, *Someday My Prince Will Come*, Columbia CL 1656, 1961, LP.

¹² Waters, *Studio Recordings*, 158.

Signification. This difference is considered “Davis-like” because it closely resembles Significations the trumpeter made both before and after *Kind of Blue*. The following section supports this contention, through an examination of another key feature of “Blue in Green” – its use of melodic extended tones.

Melodic Extended Tones

The first note of “Blue in Green” (E) is an extended tone (13th of Gm7) and as such possesses a rich natural colour to its sound,¹³ which is accentuated by its length and placement at the beginning of the melody. This note sets the tone of the piece, since the melody that follows is marked by similarly treated extended notes. It should be noted that melodic extended tones were not exclusive to the compositions of Davis or a recent phenomenon – by 1959 many jazz standards had been written with this feature, including “Stella by Starlight” written in 1944 for the film *The Uninvited*.¹⁴ Its bridge contains extended tones placed as long notes at the beginning of each bar (see **Fig. 48**).

Fig. 48: “Stella by Starlight” (Bridge)



¹³ All things being equal, jazz musicians consider extended tones to sound more colourful than basic chord tones, which require particular structures (quartal/slash chords) or re-harmonisations (tri-tone substitution/sus chords) to achieve a similar effect.

¹⁴ The Sextet recorded a version during the same studio session as “On Green Dolphin Street.” Miles Davis, *1958 Miles*, CBS/Sony (J) 20AP-1401, 1958, LP.

However, although “Blue in Green” employs extended tones in precisely this manner, what makes it so distinctive is that it incorporates this approach within a circular composition, created through a 10-bar form and non-cadential harmony. Thus, extended tones are an important constituent part of the composition and one of its most characteristic traits.

In examining this feature, **Fig. 43** (lower half) is particularly useful because it permits us to differentiate between those materials of “Blue in Green” repeated from “Waltz for Debby” against those that are not. Thus, it would appear that the first note (E) is new material inserted before the major 6th phrase (see **Fig. 42**). This has the effect of displacing the major 6th phrase into a different position in relation to the bar lines than in “Waltz for Debby.”¹⁵ The *displacement note* (as it will henceforth be referred to) appears to extend the colour created by its own sound by shifting the notes C and B \flat into the following bar. This process results in the reclassification of these notes from basic chord tones (passing note and $\flat 3$) into extended tones ($\#9$ and $\flat 9$ – see **Fig. 49**). As a result, in bar 1 the displacement note (13th) replaces D (5th) whereas in bar 2 a newly categorised C ($\#9$) replaces A (the root).

Fig. 49: Melodic Reclassification

The diagram illustrates the melodic reclassification of notes between two pieces. The top staff, labeled "WALTZ FOR DEBBY" BRIDGE - BARS 5-6, is in 3/4 time and features a Gm7 chord. The notes are 5, a passing note, $\flat 3$, and R. The bottom staff, labeled "BLUE IN GREEN" - BARS 1-2, is in 4/4 time and features a Gm7 chord. The notes are 13, 5, $\#9$, and $\flat 9$. A dashed line connects the passing note in the top staff to the $\#9$ note in the bottom staff, and another dashed line connects the $\flat 3$ note in the top staff to the $\flat 9$ note in the bottom staff. The bottom staff is also labeled A7 ALT.

¹⁵ The pieces are also in different time signatures.

This would appear to be another example of difference in the Signification (though the use of a displacement note) moulding a key characteristic of “Blue in Green.” Certainly, its melodic extended tones do not derive from those materials repeated, since bars 1-2 of “Waltz for Debby” display the opposite trait – basic-chord tones linked by passing notes. Not only is this Signification indicative of the direction Davis wished to pursue in the construction of composed melody, it situates his new work alongside pieces the trumpeter had written the previous year (see later).

Repercussions of Note Displacement

The use of a displacement note would appear to involve a certain amount of compromise, since the remaining notes of the major 6th phrase are also pushed into new locations in a type of “domino effect.” This generates outcomes that contradict the strategy identified in bars 1-2, most notably shifting A onto beat one of bar 3, which results in a basic-chord tone (5th) replacing a more colourful 11th (see Fig. 50).

Fig. 50: Colourful 11th is Pushed Away

The figure shows two musical staves in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The top staff is for "WALTZ FOR DEBBY" BRIDGE - BARS 7-8, in 3/4 time. It starts with a Dm7 chord. The first note is a dotted quarter note G4 (labeled 11), followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note Bb4. The bottom staff is for "BLUE IN GREEN" - BARS 3-4, in 4/4 time. It starts with a Dm7 chord. The first note is a dotted quarter note G4 (labeled 5), followed by a quarter note A4 (labeled 11), and then a quarter note Bb4. A dashed line connects the 11th label on the top staff to the 11th label on the bottom staff, illustrating the displacement of the A note.

Bar 3 is the only measure in the Sextet version of “Blue in Green” not to begin with an extended tone, seemingly because A (the middle note of the major 6th phrase) must fall here to accommodate the transformation of bar 2. In a possible response to losing the 11th

from the beginning of bar 3, the original undisrupted notes from “Waltz for Debby” (G and F) rematerialise over Dm7 in bar 7 (see **Fig. 43** – marked by brackets). Thus, the 11th would seem to be reinstated, which implies a concerted effort to counterbalance undesirable consequences resulting from use of the displacement note.

In a similar instance, the final note of the major 6th phrase – D (9th of Cm7) – is also shifted from the start of the bar/phrase through the displacement note. In this example D remains an extended tone but loses its prominent position, yet is increased in length from a crotchet to a dotted minim, seemingly to re-emphasise its colourful qualities (see **Fig. 51**).

Fig. 51: Minor-Ninth Sonority

The figure consists of two musical staves. The top staff is for "WALTZ FOR DEBBY" BRIDGE - BARS 7-8, in 3/4 time, with a Dm7 chord and a Cm7 chord. The bottom staff is for "BLUE IN GREEN" - BARS 3-4, in 4/4 time, with a Dm7 chord and a Cm7 chord. A dashed line connects the '9' (ninth) of the Cm7 chord in the top staff to the '9' of the Cm7 chord in the bottom staff, indicating the displacement of the D note.

Thus, the major 6th phrase should be regarded as a set series of notes rearranged to best effect. Its fixed character appears responsible for another traditional melodic feature – the resolution of extended tones in “Blue in Green.” These are often treated as tensions which resolve downwards by stepwise motion in a very similar manner to standards such as “But Beautiful,” “Beautiful Love” and “Autumn in New York” (see **Fig. 52**).

Fig. 52: Extended Tones Descend Stepwise

BUT BEAUTIFUL

Gmaj9 Bm7b5 E7 Am9 C#m7b5 F#7b9

BEAUTIFUL LOVE

Em7b5 A7(b13) Dm

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK

Gm9 Am7 Bbmaj7 C9 F6/9 Gm9 Am7 D7

As can be seen in **Fig. 42** (lower half), the first six notes of the major sixth phrase descend in a stepwise motion and the displacement note conforms to this melodic movement, resolving by a tone. Therefore, the stepwise resolution of extended tones within the melodic design of “Blue in Green” would appear set by the materials Signified upon in its opening bars (where the major 6th phrase is situated).

Overall, it would appear that Signifyin(g) upon materials from “Waltz for Debby” brought with it various forms of “compositional static.” While basic chord tones were transformed into colourful extended tones, other traditional characteristics rose to the surface as by-products, unbidden yet accommodated in the deftest possible manner.¹⁶ Despite this “static,” nine out of ten bars in the Sextet version of “Blue in Green” prominently display extended tones (9ths, 11ths and 13ths) placing them as longer notes at the beginning of

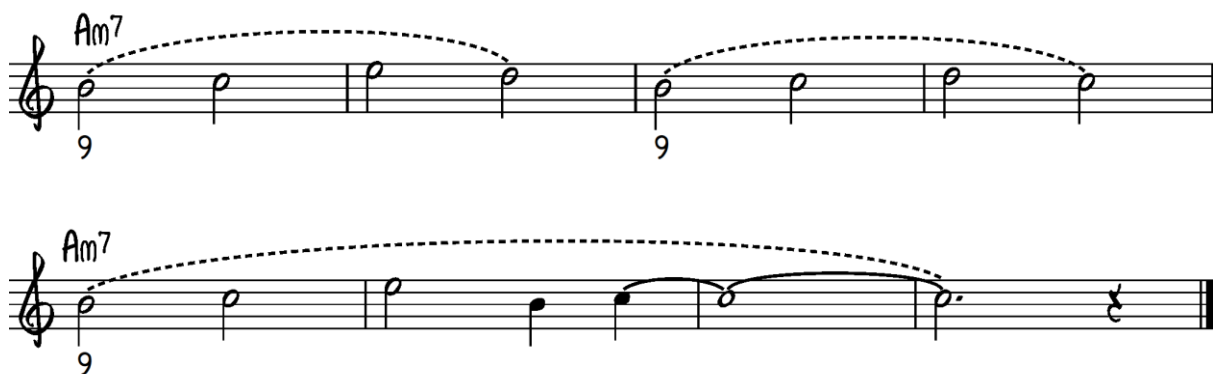
¹⁶ The harmony of “Blue in Green” also contains a large amount of functional harmony, some of which appears to derive from its repeated materials – in particular the V-I progression A7-Dm7.

each bar (or phrase) thereby exploiting their rich tonal colours. The following section demonstrates how Davis completed the extended tone strategy begun in bars 1-2, by incorporating melodic tropes from works he wrote the year before *Kind of Blue*.

Part-Improvised Melodic Tropes

This section draws a comparison between “Blue in Green” (bars 9-10) and two compositions Davis wrote the previous year – “Milestones” and “Nardis” – which share the same minor-ninth chords/melody notes. First of all, the bridge to “Milestones” (see **Fig. 53**) contains three phrases (indicated by dotted phrasing marks) that begin on B (9th of Am7). These minor-ninth extended tones are presented as long minims at the beginning of each phrase, exposing their colourful sound in a similar manner to “Blue in Green.”

Fig. 53: “Milestones” (Bridge).



Another example occurs in the bridge to “Nardis,”¹⁷ which features the same extended tone as “Milestones” – B (9th of Am7) – employed as dotted minims beginning bars 1 and 3. Bar 5 also begins with a minor-ninth – E (9th of Dm7) – notated as a minim (see **Fig. 54**).

¹⁷ Cannonball Adderley, *Portrait of Cannonball*, RLP 12-269, 1958, LP.

Fig. 54: “Nardis” (Bridge).

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the bridge of "Nardis". The first staff contains two measures: the first measure is labeled Am7 and contains a quarter note G (labeled 9) and a half note B (labeled #11); the second measure is labeled FMAJ7 and contains a quarter note A, a quarter note C, and a half note G. The second staff contains four measures: the first measure is labeled Dm7 and contains a quarter note G (labeled 9) and a quarter note A; the second measure is labeled G7 and contains a quarter note B and a quarter note C; the third measure is labeled CMAJ7 and contains a quarter note D and a half note G; the fourth measure is labeled FMAJ7 and contains a quarter note A, a quarter note C, and a half note G. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

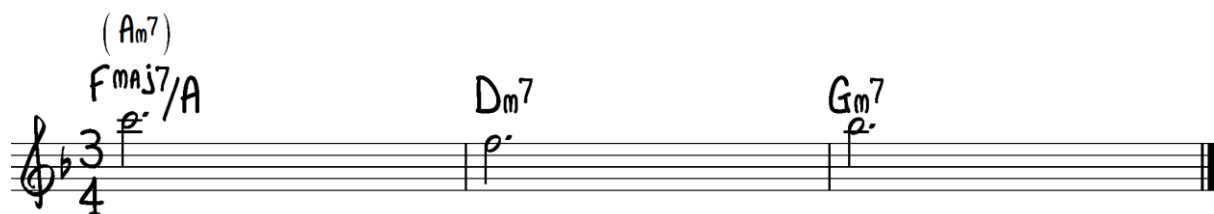
Bars 9-10 of “Blue in Green” employ the same minor-ninth sonorities as the bridges of “Milestones” and “Nardis” – bar 9 begins with a B (9th of Am7) whereas bar 10 begins with an E (9th of Dm7 – see **Fig. 45**).¹⁸ As previously observed, the non-cadential progression (Am7-Dm7-Gm7) begins in bars 9-10 (leading back to bar 1) harmony this thesis argues derives from “Waltz for Debby.” However, the extended tone melody of “Blue in Green” initiated in bars 1-2 (through the use of a displacement note) would appear completed by Davis in bars 9-10 by adopting melodic notes from the bridges of “Milestones” and “Nardis,” which share the same harmonies (Am7 and Dm7). This is consistent with the argument of Chapter Five, that although Segments 1 and 2 of “Flamenco Sketches” derive from Evans’s arrangement of “Some Other Time,” the piece was completed through Significations on vamp-style settings Davis had recently employed.

This section of Transcription-Comparison 5 is rendered yet more complex, when we recall that the melody of bar 10 is one of the few consistent discrepancies in note choice between the Sextet and Trio versions of “Blue in Green” (see Chapter Three). As a reminder, Evans states F (b3 of Dm7) in both the Trio recording and his piano cadenza with the Sextet

¹⁸ Sextet version of “Blue in Green.” It is worth noting that the bridge to “Nardis” also employs Lydian sonorities (#11 melody notes over major-seventh chords) that anticipate bars 2, 4 and 8. This sound is also utilised in bar 5 of “Blue in Green.”

Evans claims that he provided a musical sketch of “Blue in Green” for the *Kind of Blue* recording sessions²⁰ and it seems likely that such a manuscript would contain his version of the notes. Davis’s deliberateness in bars 9-10 would appear to underscore his interpretation of the melody, thus emphasising an improvised change of note selection for the attention of the Sextet (in particular Evans who might select different piano voicings as a result). In transforming $\flat 3$ into 9th, Davis seems to be Signifyin(g) on the minor-ninth sonorities of his 1958 compositions in order to complete the transformation of basic chord tones into extended tones begun in “Blue in Green” bars 1-2. Whereas, Bill Evans’s persistent choice of $\flat 3$ is indicative of his status as composer of a silent second text, since F is the melodic note from “Waltz for Debby” bar 2 (Section C), part of the non-cadential progression that corresponds to bar 10 of “Blue in Green” (see Fig. 56). Thus, Evans plays the original note choice derived from his work, rather than that improvised by Davis.

Fig. 56: “Waltz for Debby” – Section C (bars 1-3)



Evans’s preference for F ($\flat 3$) is also consistent with his writing style during the period. For example, “Peri’s Scope” (composed the year before *Kind of Blue*)²¹ does not feature extended tones. Rather, it resembles “Waltz for Debbie” in its reliance on basic chord tones linked by passing notes (see Fig. 57).²²

²⁰ Bill Goldenberg and Eddie Karp, *Interview with Bill Evans* (tape recording), Fort Lee: WKCR, 1979. Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 98.

²¹ Bill Evans, *Portrait in Jazz*, Riverside RLP 12-315, 1959, LP. Pettinger informs when “Peri’s Scope” was written. See Pettinger, *Bill Evans*, 82.

²² Even the 11th in bar 1 sets a traditional tone – jazz musicians of the 1930s re-harmonised standards by turning V chords into II-V progressions, transforming melodic root notes into 11ths in the process.

Fig. 57: “Peri’s Scope” and “Waltz for Debby”

PERI’S SCOPE

BAR 1-4

Dm7 G7 Cmaj7 Am7 Dm7 G7 Cmaj7 Am7

WALTZ FOR DEBBY

BAR 1-8

Fmaj7/A Dm7 Gm7 C7 A7/G D7/F# G7/F C7/E

In addition to shared minor-ninth sonorities between bars 9-10 and “Milestones”/”Nardis,” bar 8 of “Blue in Green” is very “Davis-like” in its presentation of a $b13$ (C) melody note over E7alt. Two-thirds of “Sid’s Ahead” is constructed in precisely this manner, filling the gaps left by deleted materials with dotted-minim $b13$ melodic notes (over altered-dominant chords) at the beginning of bars 3, 7, 9 and 11 (see **Fig. 47** – indicated by dotted brackets).

Comparisons with the 1960s Quintet

Testimonies concerning how Davis amended the compositions of sidemen later in his career – in particular within his “Second Great Quintet” of the 1960s²³ – resemble many of the processes identified in this chapter. For example, pianist Herbie Hancock describes how Davis deleted sections of the melody to Ron Carter’s composition “Eighty-One”²⁴ and re-spaced the remaining notes.

Interestingly, Evans did prominently feature extended tones after *Kind of Blue* in the bridge of ‘Very Early’ recorded in 1962 – Bill Evans, *Moonbeams*, Riverside RLP 9428, 1962, LP.

²³ See Keith Waters, *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2011) for a detailed investigation into this group.

²⁴ Miles Davis, *E.S.P.*, Columbia CL 2350, 1965, LP.

Miles took the first two bars of melody notes and squished them all together, and he took out other areas to leave a big space that only the rhythm section would play. To me it sounded like getting to the essence of the composition.²⁵

Davis describes a similar process in which he re-spaces the melodies and changes the time signatures of compositions by other sidemen from his 1960s Quintet.

Well, Herbie, Wayne (Shorter) or Tony will write something, then I'll take it and spread it out or space it or add some more chords, or change a couple of phrases, or write a bass line to it, or change the tempo of it, and that's the way we record. If it's in 4/4 time, I might change it to 3/4, 6/8, or 5/8.²⁶

There is no doubt that the testimonies of Hancock and Davis foreground spontaneity in jazz (see Chapter Two). Yet musical continuity exists between these descriptions and observations made throughout Transcription-Comparison 5, not only in the way Davis edits-out music to create gaps, but also how he re-spaces materials (mentioned in both anecdotes) reminiscent of the use of a displacement note to alter the position of the major-sixth phrase.²⁷

Thus, in comparison with works before and after *Kind of Blue*, there is something "Davis-like" about the harmonic and melodic Significations outlined in this transcription-comparison. Moreover, we have observed that the distinctive aspects of "Blue in Green" formed through these Significations (circular form and extended tones) originate from the difference therein (Davis) not those materials repeated (Evans). Therefore, it is possible to gain some insight into the Signifyin(g) roles played by Davis and Evans, which perhaps explains their seemingly contradictory claims of authorship. More specifically, 90% of harmonic materials and 50% of melodic materials (trio version) from "Blue in Green" would appear to be derived from "Waltz for Debby." Therefore, it seems plausible that Evans

²⁵ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, 10. Originally quoted in Len Lyons, *The Great Jazz Pianists: Speaking of Their Lives and Music* (New York: William Morrow, 1983), 274.

²⁶ Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones – Musician-to-Musician Interviews* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 13.

²⁷ The change of time signature between "Waltz for Debby" (3/4) and "Blue in Green" (4/4) is perhaps self-explanatory.

might regard “Blue in Green” as a development of his own piece and feel some sense of ownership, perhaps painfully so in light of the large sums in royalty payments paid to Davis. However, it is also understandable that Davis may have felt creative ownership of “Blue in Green” having used his Signifyin(g) voice to shape its most distinctive characteristics.

Summary

Ninety percent of the harmonic materials belonging to “Blue in Green” appear repeated from the Bill Evans composition “Waltz for Debby.” Comparing the harmony from the bridge of this piece with “Blue in Green” reveals that seven chords are repeated in an identical order (see **Fig. 46**). Moreover, the non-cadential progression of “Blue in Green” (Am7-Dm7-Gm7) seems to derive from the section of music immediately following the bridge. Davis appears to begin repeating materials from bar 5 of the bridge, generating difference by deleting bars 12-16, which are replaced by a single chord (E7alt) the only bar not harmonically derivable from “Waltz for Debby.” The resultant sequence is looped by merging the first (Gm7) and final chord (Gm7) together.

This deletion of unwanted material to form a gap filled with altered sonority, closely resembles the way Davis had developed “Walkin’” into “Sid’s Ahead.” Moreover, the trumpeter would later Signify on “Drad Dog” by beginning from this piece’s middle section to generate the circularity of “Circle.” Thus, despite nine out of ten bars of “Blue in Green” being harmonic repetitions from “Waltz for Debby,” it is the “Davis-like” difference in the Signification that creates circularity, one the pieces most characteristic traits.

Melodically comparing the bridge of “Waltz for Debby” with “Blue in Green” is equally revealing, because both share an identical sequence of tones (i.e. the major-sixth phrase).

The first note of “Blue in Green” (E) appears to be new material inserted to displace this phrase, shifting the notes C and B \flat into bar 2 to reclassify them as extended tones. This re-spacing of melodic notes resembles descriptions by Davis and Hancock concerning the trumpeter’s approach to developing the compositions of his later sidemen. Extended tones are another distinctive characteristic of “Blue in Green” shaped through “Davis-like” difference (a displacement note) rather than inherent within those materials repeated.

Although this creative approach involved some compromise as Davis arranged the major-sixth phrase to best effect, nine out of ten bars in the Sextet version of “Blue in Green” prominently display extended tones as longer notes at the beginning of each bar. Bars 9-10 appear to repeat minor-ninth sonorities from the bridges of “Milestones” and “Nardis,” thereby completing the sequence of extended tones begun by the displacement note. Bar 10 is particularly intriguing, an apparently improvised transformation from the $\flat 3$ derived from “Waltz for Debby” into the extended tone E (9th of Dm7). Bill Evans’s choice of the $\flat 3$ (F) for bar 10 of his own recording of “Blue in Green” reflects his status as composer of its silent second text. While it seems understandable that Evans might have regarded “Blue in Green” as simply a development of his own composition, Davis assumed creative ownership of the work by employing his Signifyin(g) voice to shape its key characteristics.

Reassessing “Blue in Green”

As in previous chapters, transcription-comparison has clearly identified key predecessors and those materials repeated. As previously noted, “Blue in Green” shares a broader Signifyin(g) strategy with “Flamenco Sketches.” That is, Davis appears to Signify upon an existing piece by Bill Evans (“Waltz for Debby”) to initiate a new work (“Blue in Green”) which is completed by employing materials from his own recordings. With regard to modes

of variation, yet again the methods Davis employs to generate difference are dissimilar to those previously described, but share underlying commonalities. For example, the insertion of a single note to displace the major 6th phrase and insertion of an altered chord to replace five bars of deleted harmony – thus creating a straightforward V-I cadence (E7alt to Am7) – match the simple modes of revision encountered previously.

Davis appears to “tidy up” compositional static caused by the displacement note, correlating with the neatness observed in previous transcription-comparisons. In addition, an economic use of musical materials is evident within Davis’s effort to negate these melodic repercussions, as a disrupted 11th (falling to $\flat 3$) over Dm7 (bar 7 of Evans’s bridge) is reinstated in bar 7 of “Blue in Green” (see **Fig. 43** – marked by brackets). Finally, every aspect of “Blue in Green” (melody, harmony and form) is built from repetition-with-difference, as Davis consistently Signifies rather than repeats.

There is little to suggest in Transcription-Comparison 5, that the Significations of Davis direct listeners towards shared knowledge. No previous commentator has suggested “Waltz for Debby” as a predecessor in the literature,²⁸ a start-of-affairs that can be clearly explained. Although a seven bar section of harmony is repeated from “Waltz for Debby,” the circularity of “Blue in Green” makes it difficult to “get a handle” on its progression, whereas the original sequence lies in the centre section of a bridge (bars 5-11), a non-prominent location. Similarly, the employment of a displacement note ensures that the melody has a very different sound in “Blue in Green” – i.e. long extended tones in prominent locations as

²⁸ I would like to credit an anonymous peer reviewer of my article about “Blue in Green” (Fyffe 2015) whose remark about “notable correspondences between some of the chord sequences” of “Waltz for Debby” and “Blue in Green” inspired me to more closely compare the harmonies of these pieces.

opposed to basic chord tones linked by passing notes. Thus, a broader set of tools than critical listening is required to access shared knowledge for “Blue in Green.”

As in the preceding chapters, access to shared knowledge via transcription-comparison reveals Davis’s revision of musical tradition. It is important to recognise that while “Blue in Green” is not forward-thinking in every sense (see before) “Waltz for Debby” is not a traditional work in every sense, being in 3/4 and employing an unusual form (32/16/32).²⁹ Nevertheless, there is a commentary evident concerning the transformation of basic chord tones into extended tones and reduction of a 16-bar bridge into a 10-bar form, compositional acts that embody Davis’s opinions about melodic note choice and form.

While the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” points to writing styles of the past, “Blue in Green” distinguishes itself as a recording that future works might wish to repeat-with-difference, paving the way towards Davis’s Quintet of the 1960s. There is no parody apparent – no poking fun at the past that would indicate motivated Signifyin(g). Yet there is a character to this Signification that in many ways reflects the dialogue between texts identified in the case of “Flamenco Sketches” and its predecessors (see below).

In the cases of “All Blues” and “So What,” there is a sense of African-American traditional forms being carried forwards, renegotiated through the devices of contemporary jazz. Thus, both are aptly described by the album title *Kind of Blue*. In contrast, the Significations evident within “Flamenco Sketches” and “Blue in Green” do not carry traditional forms forward in the same manner. Here, the dialogue between texts implies a break with the composed melodies and conventional forms of the past. “Blue in Green” looks forward to

²⁹ Perhaps these unusual features attracted Davis to the work.

Davis's 1960s Quintet, a work carrying forwards circular form and the editing techniques the trumpeter had been developing since his 1954 Quartet.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Introduction

During Chapters Four to Six, the thesis employed transcription-comparison to make a series of intertextual observations centred around individual tracks on *Kind of Blue*. This final chapter offers an opportunity to gather together all of those ideas, thus enabling findings that were previously discussed separately to be examined collectively, forming broader themes that reach across the album. The study will then contextualise its main findings against existing literature to assess what contribution it makes towards debates about Miles Davis, Signifyin(g) and *Kind of Blue*, and identify possible directions for future research.

Collective Findings

This section draws together the findings of Transcription-Comparisons 1-5, by returning to the four research questions introduced in Chapter Three, to formulate responses that reflect Davis's creative practice across *Kind of Blue*.

1) Which recordings did Davis Signify on to create the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue* and what musical items were repeated?

Preceding chapters have clearly addressed this question and rather than reiterate their findings in full, this section re-presents them in diagrammatical form. **Diagrams 3-6** include all of the predecessors identified in the thesis alongside key materials repeated (in brackets below) with intertextual relationships indicated by arrows. These diagrams do not attempt to present every aspect of Signification, since difference is discussed in a separate section

below.¹ The intention behind these diagrams is simply to avoid cumbersome reiterative paragraphs, which would detract from the conclusions of this thesis.

Diagram 3: “All Blues”

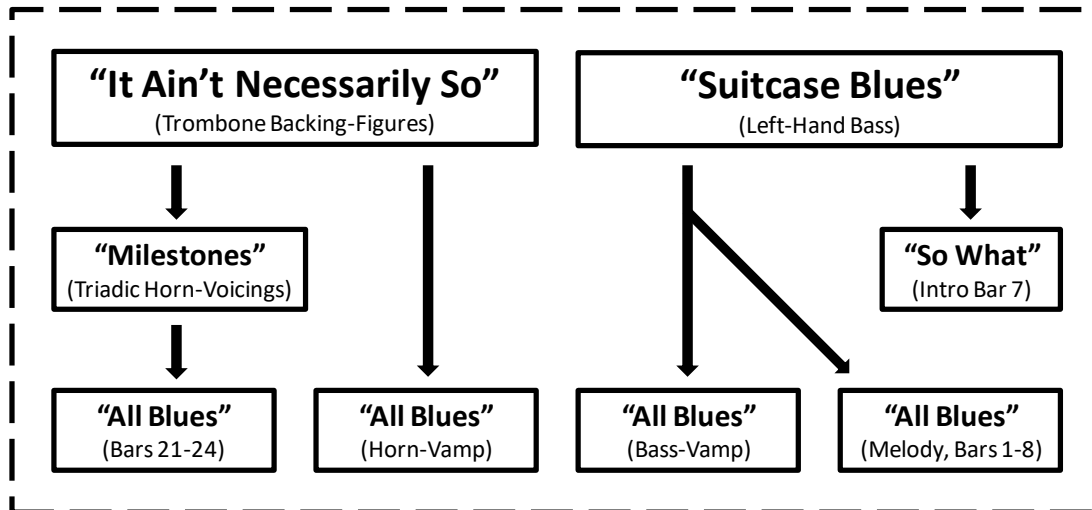
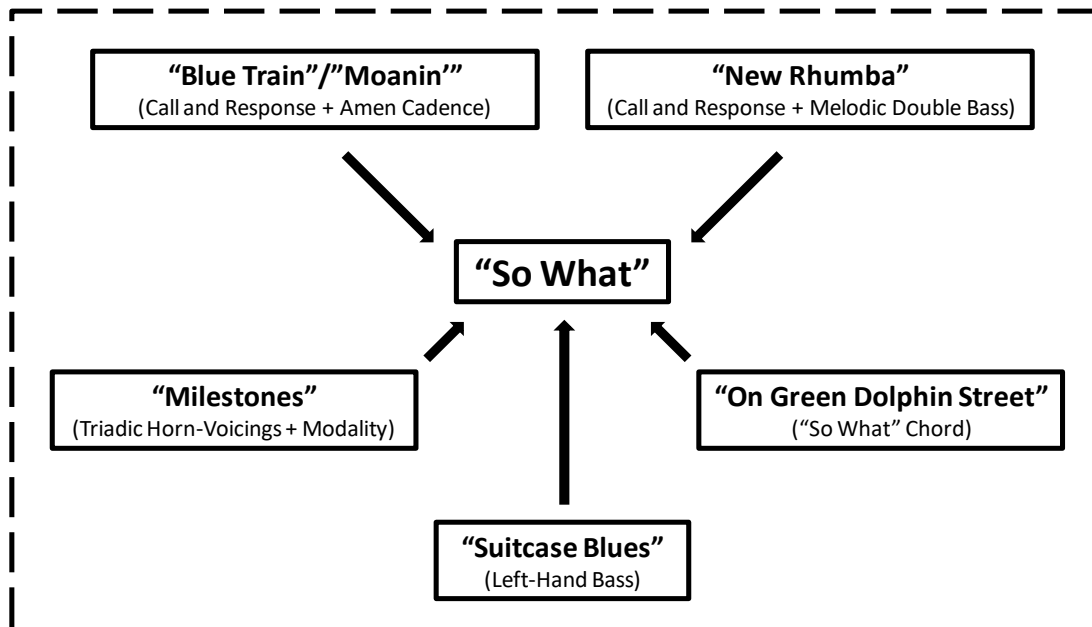


Diagram 4: “So What”



¹ Neither do I attempt to include texts from after *Kind of Blue* that appear to signify on its pieces (e.g. “Circle” or “Solea”).

Diagrams 5-6 present boxes outlined both in bold and dotted lines, intended to differentiate between predecessors written by Evans (bold boxes) used as the basis of Signification, and works by Davis (dotted boxes) that provided tropes employed to complete each work.

Diagram 5: “Flamenco Sketches”

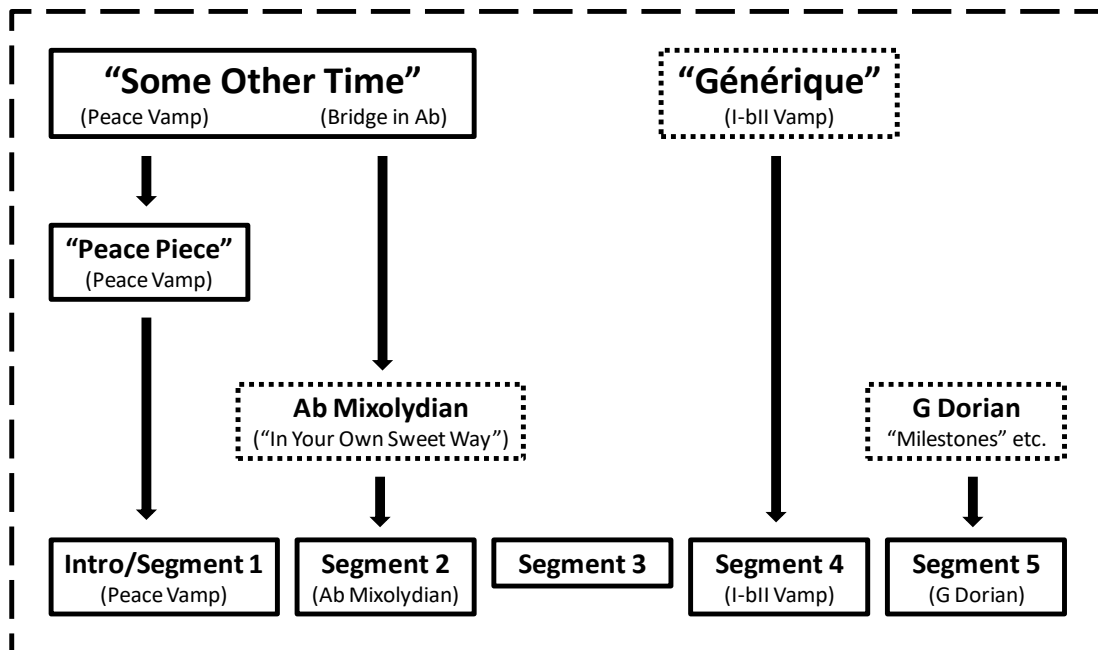
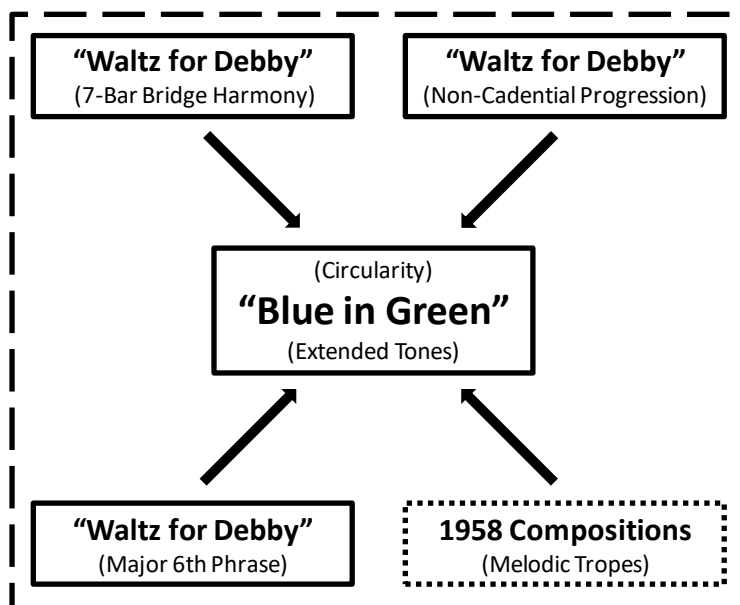


Diagram 6: “Blue in Green”



Comparing predecessors and repeated items across Transcription-Comparisons 1-5

foregrounds three observations expanded upon below: (1) Davis Signified almost exclusively upon his own recent recordings and those of his sidemen; (2) the trumpeter gravitated towards objects that play relatively inconspicuous roles within each predecessor; and (3) with the exception of “Blue in Green,” the popular image of *Kind of Blue* – i.e. a collection of modal pieces that constitute a movement away from the complexities of bebop – is not redefined by its predecessors.

Davis and his Sidemen

Viewing all of the predecessors identified together suggests that Davis did not search far and wide for works to inspire the creation of *Kind of Blue*. The trumpeter Signifies on recent recordings by the Sextet (“Milestones” – “On Green Dolphin Street” – “Sid’s Ahead”) and collaborations with Gil Evans (“It Ain’t Necessarily So” – “New Rhumba”) and Louis Malle (“Générique”). He also appears to Signify on recordings by his sidemen, most notably Bill Evans (“Peace Piece” – “Some Other Time” – “Waltz for Debby”) but also John Coltrane (“Blue Train”) Julian “Cannonball” Adderley (“Nardis”)² and former sideman Art Blakey (“Moanin’”) who played drums for the trumpeter’s 1954 Quartet.³

It is important to clarify that this study investigated further afield than the predecessors listed in **Diagrams 3-6**. For example, all of the tracks on *Miles Ahead*, *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain* were examined (not simply “New Rhumba,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So” and “Solea”) in addition to key works by composer and theorist George Russell and Maurice

² Davis composed this tune, but never recorded it.

³ Pianist Bobby Timmons composed “Moanin’” for Blakey’s album of the same name.

Ravel (in particular his Piano Concerto for the Left Hand).⁴ Thus, the predecessors represented in **Diagrams 3-6** are not simply a reflection of those areas this author chose to investigate, but works selected from a broader pool that evidence shared materials. While it is possible other predecessors might await identification, it is important to recognise that the majority of composed elements within the settings of *Kind of Blue* are intertextually addressed within this study. Therefore, although the summary of predecessors presented above is not necessarily exhaustive, it is likely to remain representative.

Only one repeated item does not fit into those categories listed – the left-hand bass that contributes to “All Blues.” However, as discussed in Chapter Three, this vamp is closely associated with boogie-woogie standard “Suitcase Blues” as recorded by pianist Albert Ammons. His son Gene Ammons was a former colleague, with whom Davis began to use heroin while on tour with Billy Eckstein and later spent time with in the saxophonist’s hometown of Chicago.

Overall, the predecessors Davis Signified upon to create *Kind of Blue* derive from “close to home” – i.e. his own recordings, those of his sidemen and former colleagues. This may well have been because Davis felt a sense of investment in these works and/or the artists that wrote them. Clearly, this seems likely in the case of his own original works and the rearrangements of numbers previously recorded by Ahmad Jamal (i.e. “New Rhumba” and “On Green Dolphin Street”). However, Davis may also have felt invested in his sidemen (and

⁴ In his autobiography, Davis suggests this piece was an influence on *Kind of Blue*. See Davis and Troupe, *Autobiography*, 224-225.

perhaps by extension, their works) since he tended to hire relatively inexperienced musicians who matured as artists while performing within his groups.⁵

Inconspicuous Objects

Comparing **Diagrams 3-6** raises another interesting observation concerning those materials repeated – most are supporting figures (e.g. trombone backing-figures, left-hand bass, “So What” chord, peace vamp, I-bII vamp). Davis generally avoids the central themes of each predecessor (i.e. melodic motifs) one obvious exception being the major-sixth phrase of “Waltz for Debby.” In this instance there are no supporting figures to signify upon, since Evans wrote his jazz waltz for piano trio and unlike “Peace Piece,” this is not a vamp-style work. Interestingly, Davis gravitates towards materials located in the centre section of its bridge, a relatively inconspicuous location.⁶ Overall, there is a lack of prominence about the musical items Davis repeats from predecessors, which contributes towards the protectiveness observable within many of his Significations (see later).

Modality, Basic Blues and Editing Processes

Kind of Blue is broadly portrayed in the literature as an album that popularised the concept of modality, in reaction to formulaic musical trends within bebop. Thus, identifying “It Ain’t Necessarily So” and “Suitcase Blues” as predecessors does little to redefine the way *Kind of Blue* is commonly perceived, since both recordings employ vamp-style accompaniments. While the A-Section of the former is a Dorian modal vamp the latter is a basic blues, both musical devices employed in *Kind of Blue*. Similarly, predecessors for “Flamenco Sketches”

⁵ It is interesting to note that Davis’s comments concerning the re-composition of works by others, derides these materials while emphasising his own role as composer: “Most of the songs are so weak that you have to rebuild them, so it’s like composing yourself.” Art Taylor, *Notes and Tones*, 14.

⁶ This observation is in addition to the comparison I make between “Blue in Green” and “Circle” (which begins “in the middle” of “Drad Dog”). See Waters, *Studio Recordings*, 158.

and “So What” are either modal, basic blues, or vamp-based. In the case of the latter, while a piano vamp (with improvised double bass) introduces “New Rhumba,” chromatic parallelism over a bass pedal note underpins the A-Section of “On Green Dolphin Street.” Overall, the trumpeter appears to have gravitated towards existing vamp-style settings in order to generate new accompaniments in a similar mould.

However, the intertextual relationships identified for “Blue in Green” contribute a fresh perspective to perceptions of *Kind of Blue*. While it is perhaps unsurprising that Davis reworked melodic tropes from his 1958 compositions into “Blue in Green,” the idea that the piece is primarily based on “Waltz for Debby” is more of a revelation. However, it is the editing processes “Blue in Green” shares with Davis’s other works, both before and after *Kind of Blue*, which redefines the album.

Kahn dedicates an entire chapter of his book to the legacy of *Kind of Blue*, exploring its status as a seminal album in jazz and its importance to commentators and musicians. Furthermore, Waters describes “Blue in Green” as the “*locus classicus* for jazz circular compositions.”⁷ Thus, there is a sense that both track and album are benchmarks, authoritative musical texts with a sense of the definitive – e.g. the view that *Kind of Blue* is a culmination of musical foundations Davis laid in *Milestones*. Yet, in terms of its editing processes, “Blue in Green” is a single link in a broader chain that begins in Davis’s 1954 Quartet (“Walkin” → “Weirdo”) and leads into his 1960s Quintet (“Blue in Green” → “Circle”). From this perspective, *Kind of Blue* is one stage in the longer-term development of Davis’s Signifyin(g) voice, during which time he developed the editing tools to repeat musical materials with difference, revising both his own works and those of his sidemen.

⁷ Waters, *Studio Recordings*, 75.

2) How did Davis generate difference and do commonalities exist across *Kind of Blue* to describe a Signifyin(g) voice?

There are three perspectives to consider in answering this question: (1) broader compositional strategies; (2) modes of revision; and (3) underlying characteristics. Only “Blue in Green” and “Flamenco Sketches” share the same compositional strategy – both are Significations on predecessors written by Bill Evans, completed using tropes from Davis’s own recent recordings. For “All Blues” Davis juxtaposes a left-hand bass against a trombone backing-figure, whereas in “So What” devices from contemporary jazz are superimposed onto a gospel-blues framework. The preceding chapters have presented a consistent message across *Kind of Blue*, regarding the later two perspectives. While Davis’s modes of revision (e.g. the use of a displacement note) differ for each Signification, they exhibit comparable underlying characteristics.

Having brought all of these Significations together for comparison, a broader explanation begins to emerge. The following section contends that once drawn towards musical items, Davis reacted musically to the qualities implicit within those materials, and due to their diverse natures a variety of responses took place. Thus, his process resulted in multiple outcomes as varied as the creative potential of those materials selected. However, while Significations unfold in response to the musical items on hand, each exhibits simplicity and neatness, an economical use of musical materials and a consistent desire to Signify rather than repeat. If these are Davis’s fingerprints, the trumpeter’s ability to realise the promise of musical items is his power, together embodying the Signifyin(g) voice of Miles Davis.

“Blue in Green”

In this Signification, Davis generates harmonic difference by deleting bars 12-16 of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” to be replaced by E7alt (see **Fig 46**), thus creating a V-I cadence into the non-cadential progression (E7alt to Am7). One quality to underscore here is the simplicity inherent in this Signification, since Davis employs a straightforward perfect cadence. The first chord of the 7-bar bridge harmony and last chord of the non-cadential progression are both Gm7 (see **Fig. 46**) most likely through serendipity rather than by design. The strength of Davis’s Signifyin(g) is in recognising the potential implicit within these materials as the trumpeter takes advantage by merging Gm7 + Gm7 into a single chord, thus gluing his 10-bar loop together to complete a circular form.⁸

Davis adopts the first seven melody notes (major-sixth phrase) that accompany the 7-bar bridge harmony. However, he clearly does not view the basic chord tones (linked by passing notes) that open the phrase in bars 5-6 of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” (see **Fig. 43**) as a musical asset. His response is to transform these into extended tones through the insertion of a displacement note, shunting the major-sixth phrase into a new location in relation to the bar lines (see **Fig. 49**). Once again, Davis employs an uncomplicated method, a single note that extends the colour of its own major 13th qualities by transforming the second and third notes of the major-sixth phrase into #9 and b9.

However, unlike harmonic aspects of the Signification, Davis’s melodic transformation results in less desirable consequences, most notably pushing a colourful 11th away from the beginning of the bar (see **Fig. 50**). Davis remedies this by restating the original notes from

⁸ It is interesting to speculate whether Davis was attracted to “Waltz for Debby” because of its atypical form (32 bars – 16 bars – 32 bars). If this did act as an inspiration, the trumpeter discovered his own means to transform a standard 16 bar bridge into a circular composition.

bar 7 of the bridge to “Waltz for Debby” in bar 7 of “Blue in Green” (see **Fig. 43** – marked with brackets). This correlates with Davis’s economical use of musical materials observed elsewhere. Crucially, yet again Davis appears to be reacting to the materials on hand, since bar 7 is already Dm7 as derived from the 7-bars of bridge harmony (see **Fig. 43**). Thus, he is astute enough to identify an opportunity to redress the undesirable creation of a basic chord tone at the beginning of bar 3, by reinstating the original notes over an existent chord.

Davis completes his extended tone melody in bars 9-10 by drawing on tropes belonging to his 1958 compositions (i.e. minor-ninth sonorities from the bridges of “Milestones” and “Nardis”). These harmonies (Am7 and Dm7) derive from “Waltz for Debby” as the first two chords of the non-cadential progression. Thus, Davis draws an association between these chords and his own recent works that share those harmonies, borrowing their minor-ninth melody notes in response to materials already on hand.⁹ This ability to recognise and respond to qualities implicit within musical materials is observable across *Kind of Blue*.

“All Blues”

The compositional settings of “All Blues” are generated through the juxtaposition of, and interaction between, two vamps – trombone backing figures (“It Ain’t Necessarily So”) and a left-hand bass (“Suitcase Blues”). Davis likely associated them together because of a similarity in note selection between the top voice of the former and inner line of the latter (see **Fig. 14**). Crucially, once placed together obvious problems arise that require solving, since it is musically desirable that they should possess matching harmony and avoid

⁹ This interpretation infers that Davis Signified harmony and then melody, an idea supported by the improvised nature of Davis’s use of E rather than F in bar 10 (see Chapter Six).

repeating too many of each other's notes. In other words, having initiated the broader strategy of juxtaposition, there is responsiveness evident within the materials on hand.

Davis responds with simplicity, changing only one note of the trombone backing-figures to make the harmony dominant-seventh (see **Fig. 15**),¹⁰ and exchanging all fifths for roots in the left-hand bass and vice versa (see **Fig. 16**) a solution remarkable in its neatness. Davis also solves the technical challenge of playing double-stops on double bass, required if the left-hand bass were to be playing in its entirety by Paul Chambers (see **Fig. 13** – bar 1). He simply relocates its upper-pedal note (B) to trumpet, forming the basis of the melody (bars 1-8) and providing a sense of completion – i.e. that all aspects of the predecessor are represented in Signified form.

Davis's economical use of musical materials is evident in repeating multiple times on the same musical item by varying the difference. For example, while the trombone backing-figures have an additional note added at the interval of a third to create the A-Section theme of "Milestones" (see **Fig. 6**), Davis changes their harmony to G dominant-seventh to form the "All Blues" horn-vamp. Similarly, the left-hand bass undergoes root/fifth exchange to become the "All Blues" bass-vamp (as mentioned above) but appears in a minorised format in bar 7 of the introduction to "So What" (see **Diagram 2**).

"Flamenco Sketches" and "So What"

"Blue in Green" and "Flamenco Sketches" are both Significations on works by Bill Evans, completed using tropes from recent recordings by Davis. However, despite these pieces sharing a broader strategy, the type of materials repeated from their respective

¹⁰ He also changes the articulation from all staccato to long minims and short crotchets.

predecessors fundamentally differs, encouraging different creative responses from the trumpeter. Unlike “Waltz for Debby” → “Blue in Green” Davis rejects the functional harmony and composed melody of “Some Other Time,” to Signify upon the vamps from its A-section and bridge. There is a sense of simplicity and economy within the Significations of Segments 1-5, as Davis draws on familiar vamps and modal areas that had served him well in the past.¹¹

His response to musical items derived from the predecessors of “So What” is again different. As outlined in Chapter Five, Davis acts in a similar manner to narrators of the *Monkey Tales*, by rendering a series of widely-known formulas anew. He adopts gospel-blues devices common to recent recordings of the period – call-and-response and “Amen” cadence – and inserts other materials into this framework. Davis simply recasts the participants of his musical sermon, as the preacher “calls” in a Blanton-like voice and the congregation “respond” in quartal-based harmony. Similarly the sermon is resituated, as Davis abandons the functional harmony of gospel music in favour of a backcloth of Dorian modality, whereas the service is preceded by the colourful piano of French Impressionism rather than the reedy sustain of a pipe organ. His reuse of the “So What” chord as a minor-seventh – as opposed to the major-seventh of “On Green Dolphin Street” – illustrates his economical use (or reuse) of materials and tendency to repeat-with-difference (in contrast with Bill Evans – see Chapter Five).

¹¹ I have yet to discuss Segment 3, which is in B \flat Ionian. This is also a familiar area being the typical key for “I Got Rhythm,” yet it seems impossible to draw concrete intertextual associations, since this is such a widely recorded harmonic progression in jazz.

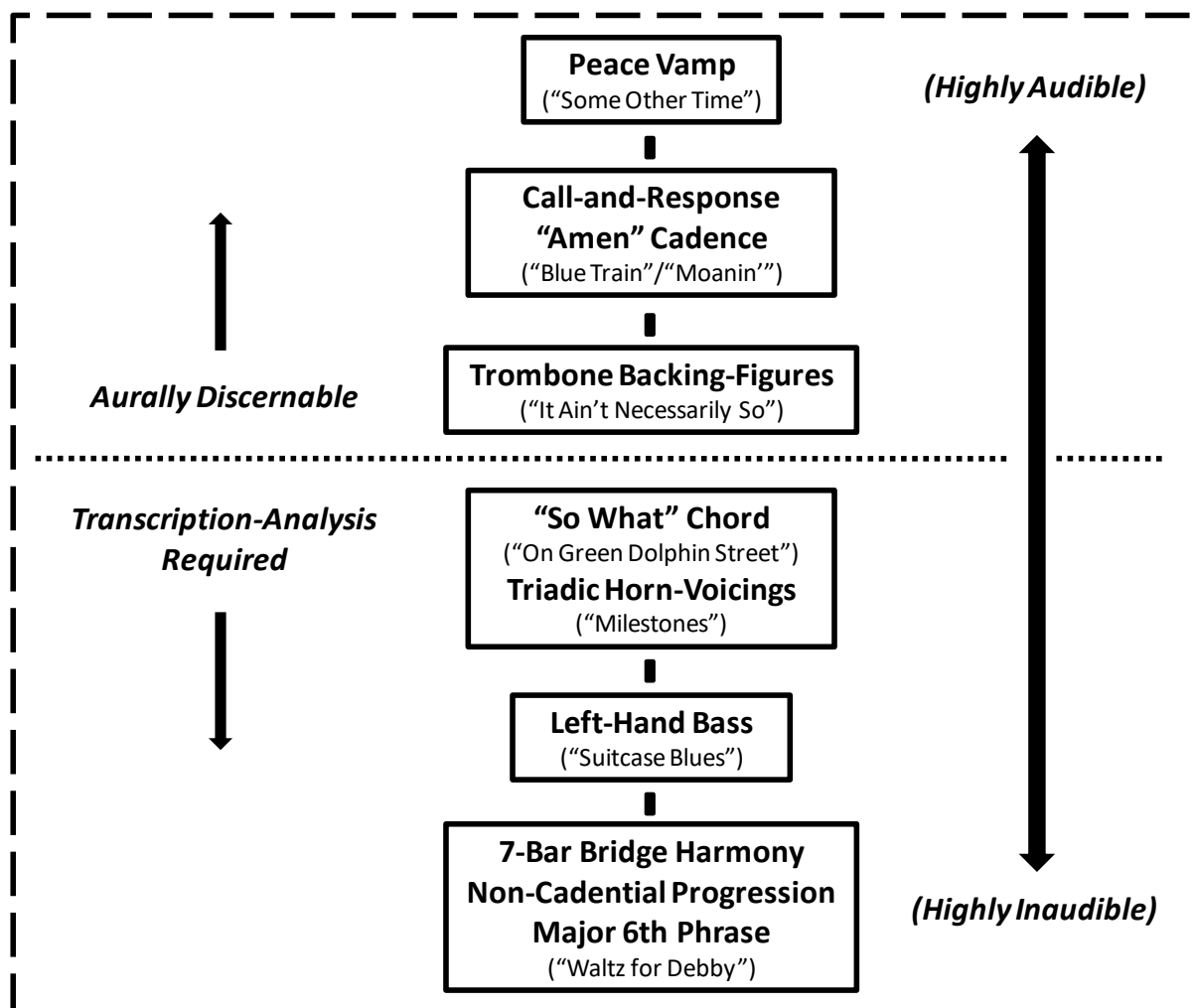
3) To what extent do the Significations of Davis direct listeners towards shared knowledge?

Chapter Two introduced the idea proposed by Mitchell-Kernan that apparent meaning within a Signification directs listeners to shared knowledge, which is considered essential to decoding the figurative. While the first level involves a realisation that Signification is occurring, the second is concerned with the identification of an appropriate silent second text. According to Mitchell-Kernan, “it is in the cleverness used in directing the attention of the hearer and audience to this shared knowledge upon which a speaker’s artistic talent is judged.”¹² However, as Gates informs us through accounts by ex-slaves Wash Wilson and Frederick Douglass (see Chapter Two) some “speakers” may not wish their Significations to be decoded by every listener.

The Significations described throughout Transcription-Comparisons 1-5 illustrate a broad range of audibility, represented at its extremes by two predecessors – the much discussed “Peace Piece” and the previously unidentified “Waltz for Debby.” **Diagram 7** lists musical items repeated-with-difference in *Kind of Blue* in terms of audibility from top (audible) to bottom (inaudible). The dotted line splitting this diagram in half indicates at what point Significations were aurally indiscernible, since tracks below the line required transcription to access shared knowledge.

¹² Quoted in Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 94.

Diagram 7: Audibility of Musical Items



The thesis deems that it is possible to access shared knowledge in some cases (i.e. discern the revision of an earlier text), but argues that the disparity evident in **Diagram 7** is a reflection of Davis's varied modes of revision, not how cleverly he Signifies. This section will now focus on three specific points. First, that the mixture of audibility/inaudibility observable within *Kind of Blue* serves the music; secondly, that Davis appears to become more prudent at Signifyin(g) less audibly; and thirdly, that it is possible to discern an element of "protectiveness" within some Significations.

Audibility/Inaudibility

From the very first chord performed by Bill Evans, the introduction to “So What” begins *Kind of Blue* with a clear musical statement. His “octaves with inner voice” (see Chapter Five) commence Davis’s impressionistic prelude with structures imported directly from European piano repertoire.¹³ This is followed by the minorised left-hand bass of bar 7, which as we can see from **Diagram 7** is reserved for post transcription-comparison ears. Bars 10-12 are also evocative of European piano repertoire in their Debussy-like chromatic parallelism (see Chapter Five) meaning that impressionistic gestures are presented on either side of the boogie-woogie figure. Yet, because of the disguised nature of this central figure, there is no mixed musical message for the listener.

Likewise, one of the reasons the central theme to “So What” sounds so effective is because its gospel-blues elements are clearly identifiable. Although the voices of the “congregation” respond with resonant harmonic structures, this musical effect is not crowded out by intertextual associations since both predecessors remain inaudible (“Milestones” and “On Green Dolphin Street”). Once again, these silent second texts only become shared knowledge post-transcription-comparison. Thus, it is the audibility/inaudibility of Significations present within “So What” that permit it to make such a comprehensible statement, of a gospel sermon reinterpreted by musical devices belonging to contemporary jazz.

Signifyin(g) more Prudently

One paradoxical element of Transcription-Comparison 5 concerns the similarity of approach but difference in audibility between the Significations “Walkin’” → “Sid’s Ahead” and “Waltz

¹³ I do not include these on **Diagram 7** because they are an additional layer of Signification courtesy of Bill Evans.

for Debby” → “Blue in Green.” More specifically, I have argued that these Significations share “Davis-like” techniques, such as the deletion of undesirable materials to create gaps filled with altered chords. However, despite this mutual approach, the former is a highly audible Signification whereas the latter is the least audible on *Kind of Blue* (despite 90% of its harmony and 50% of its melody deriving from “Waltz for Debby”).¹⁴

This apparent anomaly can be explained by observing that the audibility of a Signification is largely dependent upon the location of repeated materials and the degree/type of difference applied, rather than volume of materials. For instance, materials repeated from “Walkin’” derive from prominent locations (bars 1 and 5) and are only lightly varied by simplifying the pickup (see **Appendix Four**). To compound the issue, “Sid’s Ahead” maintains the 12-bar blues format of “Walkin’” meaning that these materials reappear in precisely the same location. In contrast, Davis Signifies “Blue in Green” by repeating materials from the inconspicuous centre section of the bridge of “Waltz for Debby” and varies them more dramatically. While a displacement note reclassifies basic chord tones into extended tones by pushing them into new locations in relation to the bar lines, the circular form of “Blue in Green” disguises its harmonic progression to the ear.

Thus, Davis appears to repeat methods of Signification apparent within “Sid’s Ahead” more judiciously in “Blue in Green.” Rather than reduce the amount of materials repeated-with-difference, he draws them from a less conspicuous location and transforms them more powerfully. The notion that Davis might desire his compositional process to be less audible is explored within the following section.

¹⁴ Trio version of “Blue in Green.”

Protectiveness in the Significations

One cannot help but wonder whether Davis sought to conceal the process of Signification in *Kind of Blue*, since it was not in the trumpeter's interest that listeners be aware of his methods. For example, minorisation of the left-hand bass ("Suitcase Blues") in bar 7 of the introduction to "So What" disguises it as a multiple Signification, creating an inaudibility that ensures there is little possibility of listeners making an aural association with the "All Blues" bass-vamp, despite their shared predecessor. The idea that Davis might want to hide his Significations is illustrated by the trumpeter's use of testimony within his autobiography to account for the gospel influences of *Kind of Blue*. As noted in Chapter Five, the trumpeter shares a nostalgic childhood reminiscence ("bad gospels" heard walking home from church in Arkansas) that flies in the face of a clear trend within recordings of the day to employ call-and-response and "Amen" cadences.

Gates touches on Signifyin(g) protectively through the accounts of Wash Wilson and Frederick Douglass (see Chapter Two) who describe the use of codes and reversed meanings by slaves in the company of their disapproving masters. In *Kind of Blue*, Davis was producing his first album of original materials, one that proved lucrative in the form of extensive royalty payments. Good sense likely ensured that he did not advertise repetition-with-difference within his work, a practice that institutions such as Columbia Records and Federal/State copyright law might deem illegitimate, as an infringement of the intellectual rights of others.

4) Are Davis's Significations motivated or unmotivated and in what manner does he revise musical tradition?

Research Question 4 explores the rhetorical strategies evident within Transcriptions 1-5, employing existing frameworks by Floyd and Gates. The former stresses that musical Signifyin(g) is rhetorical revision (not simply repetition-with-difference) "a means of demonstrating respect for or poking fun at a musical style, process or practice." His division between respect and poking fun, corresponds with Gates's distinction between unmotivated Signifyin(g) – i.e. pastiche – and motivated Signifyin(g) – i.e. parody – (see Chapter Two).

Chapters Four to Six did not identify motivated Signifyin(g) in *Kind of Blue*, of the type Gates exemplifies in jazz through bandstand quotations by the Oklahoma Blue Devils ("They Picked Poor Robin") and John Coltrane's version of "My Favourite Things," a formal parody on the Julie Andrews version. Davis's Significations are similar to the unmotivated Signifyin(g) of Count Basie within his recording "Signifyin'" and its recapitulation of the solo piano tradition – yet in the case of *Kind of Blue*, tradition is renegotiated rather than recapitulated.

In comparing Transcription-Comparisons 1-5, the first noteworthy point is in the way some of Davis's Significations carry African-American traditional devices forwards – they are "kind-of-blue" – whereas others imply a break with musical tradition. In the former, we see a boogie-woogie left-hand bass and Gospel-derived figures (call-and-response/"Amen" cadence) reworked using the devices of contemporary jazz. While the left-hand bass is relocated into another time signature ("All Blues") and sewn into an impressionist prelude

("So What"), Davis scores his "call" for double bass and "response" as a "So What" chord, all set against a backcloth of modality.

Transcription-comparison permits us to access shared knowledge, revealing silent second texts that relate to particular tracks on *Kind of Blue*. This reveals a musical dialogue, which in the cases of "All Blues" and "So What" concerns the continued relevance of traditional devices and the need to reinterpret them within a modern musical context. In the cases of "Blue in Green" and "Flamenco Sketches," this dialogue concerns the renegotiation or abandonment of melody, harmony and form.

As the most discernible Significations on the album, Transcription-Comparisons 3 and 4 confirm what, on some level, we already suspect about those pieces. In other words, the depictions of "So What" as contemporised call-and-response and "Flamenco Sketches" as an ejection of traditional content are near-surface level in a critical listening experience. In contrast, "All Blues" and "Blue in Green" display a tendency to say one thing but mean another on receipt of shared knowledge, as indicated by their surprising predecessors.

These pieces respectively affirm the blues tradition and modern jazz in equal measure, through bluesy licks and circular form/extended tones. Yet, revealed through transcription-comparison, another narrative becomes apparent. That is, a clear discourse about the mutability of musical style and tradition, through transformations between the blues and modality ("All Blues") and traditional/modern composition ("Blue in Green"). One becomes the other through the simplest of means – a raised or lowered third to switch between minor-seventh/dominant-seventh and the addition of a single note or chord to change basic chord tones to extended tones or an 8-bar bridge into a circular form.

Contribution to the Literature

Having established findings across Transcription-Comparisons 1-5, the thesis now considers the contribution it makes to the literature and suggests possible directions for future research. This section addresses key issues raised in the Literature Review by revisiting existing musical analyses of *Kind of Blue*, re-examining how Davis is portrayed in books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants, and assessing what we have learned within the broader context of Signifyin(g) in jazz.

Existing Analyses of Kind of Blue

Kernfeld contends that Davis's search for melodic coherence was a compositional (as opposed to improvisational) issue, tackled through the design of vamp-style settings. This thesis adds fresh dimension to his argument, since the trumpeter would appear concerned with more than melodic coherence in designing his compositional settings for "Blue in Green." Transcription-Comparison 5 resituates this piece as part of an intertextual chain spanning from Davis's 1954 Quartet to his Quintet of the 1960s. Davis honed his editing tools within this compositional setting, Signifyin(g) less discernibly than in "Walkin" → "Sid's Ahead" and reapplying his techniques to generate a circular composition, a form he would return to several times during the following decade (e.g. "Drad Dog" → "Circle").

The thesis also challenges Barrett's argument about transformed blues language in *Kind of Blue*. First, the intertextual strands of his argument are shown to be too narrowly focused on the blues when compared with a more inclusive debate. For example, rather than being a "blues figuration"¹⁵ as Barrett contends, the harmonised melody of "Milestones" derives

¹⁵ Barrett, "Economy of Modal Jazz," 186.

from a modal setting (“It Ain’t Necessarily So”). The association he draws between “Milestones” and the “All Blues” horn vamp is not wholly incorrect, since it transpires both are derived from the same predecessor. However, Barrett’s argument that “modal jazz is rooted in the blues”¹⁶ becomes problematic, since according to this study modality is “rooted” in modality:

“It Ain’t Necessarily So” (trombone backing figures) → “Milestones” (triadic horn-voicings)

And the blues is “rooted” in modality:

“It Ain’t Necessarily So” (trombone backing-figures) → “All Blues” (horn-vamp)

One aspect of Barrett’s article not yet discussed is his examination of *Kind of Blue* against the socio-political forces that were taking place during the period in which the album was recorded. He observes that despite legislative advances achieved by the Civil Rights Movement, in practice African-Americans faced ongoing discrimination. Barrett contends that this tension between social idealism and material reality is echoed within the reception of *Kind of Blue*.

The musical language of *Kind of Blue* provides a utopian vision specific to the late 1950s and early 1960s; a moment of hope in the possibility of integration of traditions of high and low, classical and vernacular, black and white.¹⁷

In his view:

The ultimate failure of the integrationist movement...is concealed by the opportunity afforded the individual consumer to buy into the dream-like image of integration afforded by the co-existence of European-American and African-American musicians and musical traditions.¹⁸

Barrett’s description of integration as “dream-like” engages with the pun embedded within the word Utopia by Sir Thomas More, which plays on the almost identical Greek words *eu-topos* meaning “good place” and *ou-topos* meaning “no place.” Thus, while Utopia may be

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 196.

¹⁸ Ibid.

thought of as a *non-existent* place viewed as considerably better than contemporary society, for Barrett *Kind of Blue* presents an “other-worldly image of harmonious integration.”¹⁹

However, this study questions whether the integration of European-American and African-American musical traditions within the Sextet is Utopian. Barrett’s description of *Kind of Blue* as “less an integration of musical styles than a *bricolage* of elements”²⁰ is not borne out when it is considered how seamlessly Davis inserts a minorised boogie-woogie figure into bar 7 of the introduction to “So What.” This is so neatly embedded that even Barrett does not spot its presence, despite bending his analysis to the task of reinforcing the blues credentials of *Kind of Blue*.

Another example of integration within the album’s compositional settings is that while the “All Blues” horn-vamp derives from a Dorian modal setting, its bass-vamp is a Signification upon a traditional boogie-woogie left-hand bass. Yet Davis combines both vamps to form a coherent musical statement that defines the blues waltz as a form in jazz, despite these items deriving from different musical traditions. Rather than the musical language of *Kind of Blue* acting as a Utopian vision to disguise ongoing social prejudice, it seems more likely that Davis Signified protectively to conceal his own Signifyin(g) voice.

Davis and Evans

It was the conflicting accounts between Miles Davis and Bill Evans as to who wrote “Blue in Green” and “Flamenco Sketches” that first piqued my interest in Davis the composer. As Chapter Two revealed, in dealing with this discrepancy, books about *Kind of Blue* and biographies concerning its participants rely heavily on testimony, which inevitably results in

¹⁹ Ibid., 197.

²⁰ Ibid., 196.

a heavy emphasis on Davis's questionable track record and inconsistent testimony, thus inviting criticism of his character and actions.

This study presents a more rounded account of Davis, by illuminating his creative process in designing the compositional settings for *Kind of Blue*. It offers an alternative account that presents the trumpeter as a Signifyin(g) force, capable of identifying the potential within musical items of interest and transform them through the simplest of means. This interpretation is very different from Carr's use of the term *droit du seigneur* to describe the practice of bandleaders who seize the rights of their sidemen (see Chapter Two).

Transcription-Comparisons 4-5 present strong evidence that Davis began "Flamenco Sketches" and "Blue in Green" by Signifyin(g) on recordings by Evans. However, while repeated materials originated from Evans, the difference encountered points squarely at Davis. Crucially, the most distinguishing characteristics of each work appear to derive from this difference (Davis) not from those materials repeated (Evans). Although this has been discussed in relation to "Blue in Green" and its use of circularity and extended tones, the same argument might be made for "Flamenco Sketches." Although the piece was likely inspired by Evans recordings that employ the peace vamp ("Peace Piece" and "Some Other Time") "Flamenco Sketches" is named after its most distinctive section, the "Spanish" sounding Segment 4. Davis had been planning his album *Sketches of Spain* since the beginning of 1959²¹ and as Kernfeld observes, the track "Solea"²² contains a very similar I-bII vamp to Segment 4 (see Chapter Two).

²¹ Carr, *Definitive Biography*, 157-158.

²² Kernfeld, "Melodic Coherence," 165.

Overall, transcription-comparison throws a very different light upon this authorship dispute. By re-examining these creative processes as Significations, Evans becomes recast as an author of silent second texts and Davis as the creative force in reshaping these borrowed materials. One fascinating observation to add is that having reached its conclusions, the testimonies of Davis and Evans appear to correlate with the findings of this thesis. For example, the way in which Bill Evans describes himself as composer of “Blue in Green” and co-composer of “Flamenco Sketches” reflects the proportion of materials derived from the pianist’s recordings.

I sketched out “Blue in Green” which was my tune and I sketched out the melody and the changes to it for the guys. “Flamenco Sketches” was something Miles and I did together.²³

90% of the harmony and 50% of the melody (trio version) of “Blue in Green” appears to derive from “Waltz for Debby,” whereas “Flamenco Sketches” only borrows the A-Section vamp and bridge key of “Some Other Time.” Thus, it is conceivable that Bill Evans might regard the former as “my tune” and the latter as “something Miles and I did together.” It is equally fascinating that Davis stresses his conceptual input to *Kind of Blue*.

Some people went around saying that Bill was co-composer of the music on *Kind of Blue*. That isn’t true; it’s all mine and the concept was mine.²⁴

His emphasis on “the concept” complements the argument, presented in Chapters Five and Six, that it was Davis’s creative use of difference that reshaped repeated materials into new works and forged their most distinctive characteristics. Thus, the findings of this thesis throw new light on testimony by the album’s participants and Davis is portrayed more fairly through Signification, contributing to a more balanced account of his character and actions.

²³ Bill Goldenberg and Eddie Carp, *Interview with Bill Evans* (tape recording), Fort Lee: WKCR, 1979. Quoted in Kahn, *Kind of Blue*, 98.

²⁴ Davis and Troupe, *Autobiography*, 224.

Signifyin(g) in Jazz

Chapter Two introduced Tomlinson's idea that Davis possesses a "Signifyin(g) voice" – one derived from social ambivalence (Davis was both African-American and middle-class) and "refracted through the unique lens" of his psyche.²⁵ This was incorporated into the title of this thesis to imply that there is something idiosyncratic about the creative process Davis employed to design the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue*. Having explored Davis's "unique lens" it is now possible to reflect on Tomlinson's words, not primarily to critique his remarks but to measure the level of insight granted through Transcription-Comparisons 1-5.

Tomlinson's description of Davis's Signifyin(g) voice as "powerfully synthetic"²⁶ seems apt given the trumpeter's transformative energy – his Significations demonstrate the mutability of musical items, as stylistic boundaries fade and previously disparate materials are juxtaposed. The thesis locates the source of this power within the trumpeter's responsiveness to the creative potential implicit within musical items, resulting in varied modes of revision that nevertheless are marked by Davis's "fingerprints."

The latter prove Tomlinson part correct in his description of Davis's Signifyin(g) as "complex and eloquent," since one of the commonalities observed within his revisions is simplicity. There is certainly a state of grace in the ease Davis transforms materials that could easily be described as eloquent, but not complex. Once again, this is not a critique of Tomlinson's remarks as such, but an opportunity to weigh up the deeper insight presented by this study.

Although the thesis throws much light on *Kind of Blue*, there appears to be more to discuss than the intertextuality of one album. Since the study traces the power of Davis's

²⁵ Tomlinson, "Cultural Dialogics," 257.

²⁶ Ibid.

Signifyin(g) voice to his ability to identify musical potential, it might be rewarding to take a broader look across several albums to illuminate further examples of this creative process. While each one enriches our understanding of Signifyin(g) in jazz, there is also the possibility that Davis's editing skills developed over time, or that similar musical contexts reoccurred eliciting either a similar or different response. Broader still, Davis might be contrasted against other Signifyin(g) voices in jazz, to establish common traits and/or idiosyncrasies.

One important design in the methodology of this thesis was to extend Walser's idea that Davis might Signify on his own preceding recordings during improvisation, to include composed materials. This permitted an investigation into whether the trumpeter Signified upon his own original works and arrangements to form the compositional settings of *Kind of Blue* (**Diagrams 3-6** indicate how fruitful this strategy has been). One reason commentators may not have investigated this aspect of Davis's work previously might be rooted in the misunderstanding Gates raises concerning "insult" – that although vital to the *Monkey Tales*, "linguists have often failed to recognise that insult is not at all central to the nature of Signifyin(g)." ²⁷ Thus, while it might seem unlikely artists would wish to deprecate their own work, once associations such as trickery and insult are deemed nonessential, there remains no reason why musicians should not rework their own materials. This study underscores the point made by Gates that it is repetition-with-difference that is "fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g)" ²⁸ permitting a shift in emphasis from trickery (although this may well be present) to creativity.

The central theme of Walser's article is the dialogue he identifies between Davis and his audience, as they are invited to experience the drama of daring lip bends and use of half-

²⁷ Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 64.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

valves beyond orchestral trumpet technique. It is interesting to contrast this against Davis's Signification of compositional settings, in which many predecessors remain indiscernible to the listener. This is an excellent illustration of Signifyin(g) as a multifaceted concept (described by Gates as his "trope-of-tropes") since these examples are so dissimilar in audibility.

While the term Signifyin(g) can be employed in the broadest possible terms, such as when Tomlinson's article states "all texts Signify upon other texts,"²⁹ it assumes greatest meaning when commentators ascertain what is being repeated and how materials are made different. Signifyin(g) in jazz is rhetorical revision and this thesis presents a series of exemplars to add to those provided by Gates.³⁰ These illuminate creative process by detailing Davis's Signifyin(g) and his rhetorical revisions throughout *Kind of Blue*. Yet these exemplars also form much needed points of reference, in relation to which future work may be situated, and explicate how Davis works within a tradition, thus illuminating Signifyin(g) in jazz.

Kind of Blue and the Signifyin(g) Voice of Miles Davis

In forming his compositional settings, Davis Signifies on inconspicuous objects from "close to home" gravitating towards existing vamp-style settings and compositions by sideman Bill Evans. The power of his Signifyin(g) voice is in recognising the musical potential implicit within each musical item. Davis designs varied modes of revision in response to these

²⁹ Ibid., 229.

³⁰ Floyd's most detailed example of rhetorical revision is his description of "shuckin' and jivin'" figures in Jelly Roll Morton's "Black Bottom Stomp." These Signify on "the musical values and expressions of the ring and its musical derivations." Here, he is referring to the "ring shout," an early Negro holy dance in which participants shuffle round in a circle making jerking motions, hand-claps/knee-slaps and vocal interjections in response to a sung spiritual. The piece "is fraught with funded meanings from the Afro-American musical tradition" and for Floyd, "all the defining elements of black music are present in the ring." Floyd is referring back to broader African-American traditions of music and dance, not specific predecessors. See Floyd, "Ring Shout," 275.

insights that share a fundamental simplicity/neatness of approach, economical use of materials and transformative instinct.

Varied modes of revision lead in turn to disparities in the discernibility of these Significations. This often serves the music, facilitating clear musical statements uncluttered by excessive intertextual associations. Despite this natural disparity, there is the sense that Davis does not wish to reveal his compositional process, evident within his use of testimony to disguise a clear trend in recent recordings to employ Gospel-blues devices, prior to *Kind of Blue*.

Transcription-comparison reveals silent second texts that lend tracks from *Kind of Blue* a dialogical quality. From this perspective, it is possible to observe Davis revising tradition, most clearly through “So What” with its renegotiation of traditional Gospel-blues figures, and “Flamenco Sketches” with its rejection of melody, harmony and form. *Kind of Blue* also exhibits indirection, through tracks that say one thing but mean another. While the vamps of “All Blues” explicitly affirm the blues tradition, the circular form and extended tones of “Blue in Green” exemplify the modern jazz tradition. Yet, decoding these Significations reveals the mutability of style and tradition, as musical items traverse boundaries with ease, courtesy of the Signifyin(g) voice of Miles Davis.

Appendix One: Predecessors and Repeated Materials

Diagram 3: "All Blues"

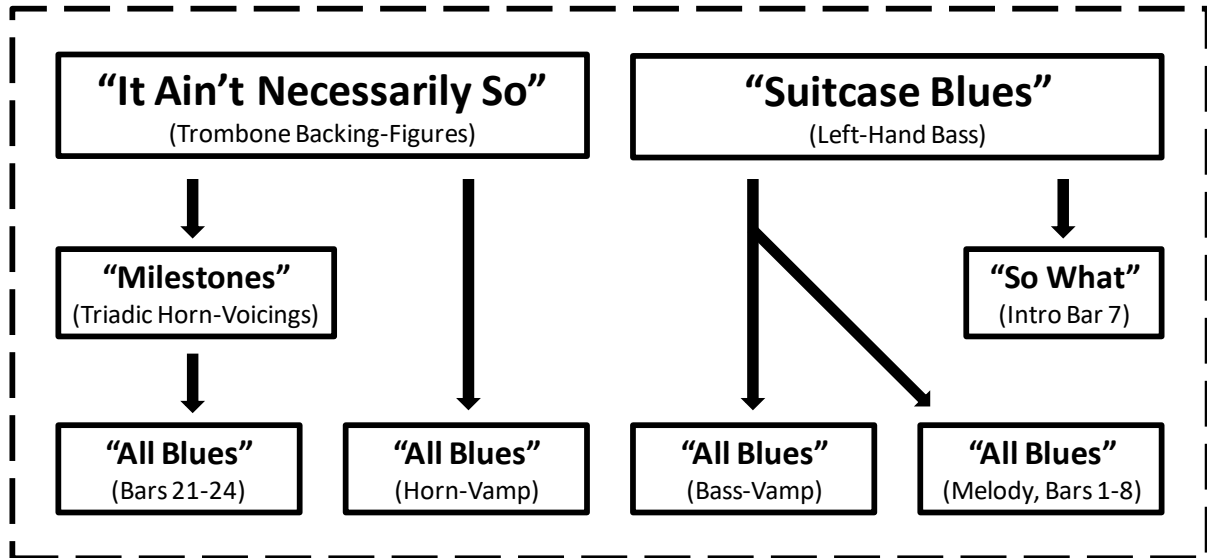


Diagram 4: "So What"

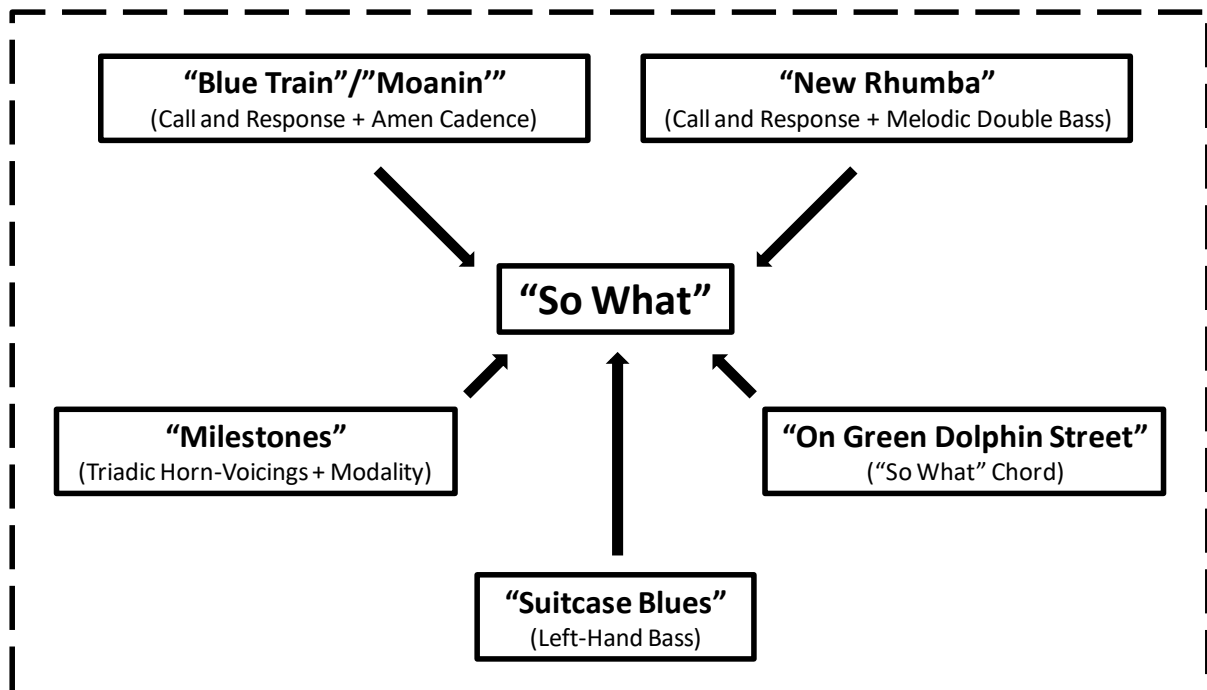


Diagram 5: “Flamenco Sketches”

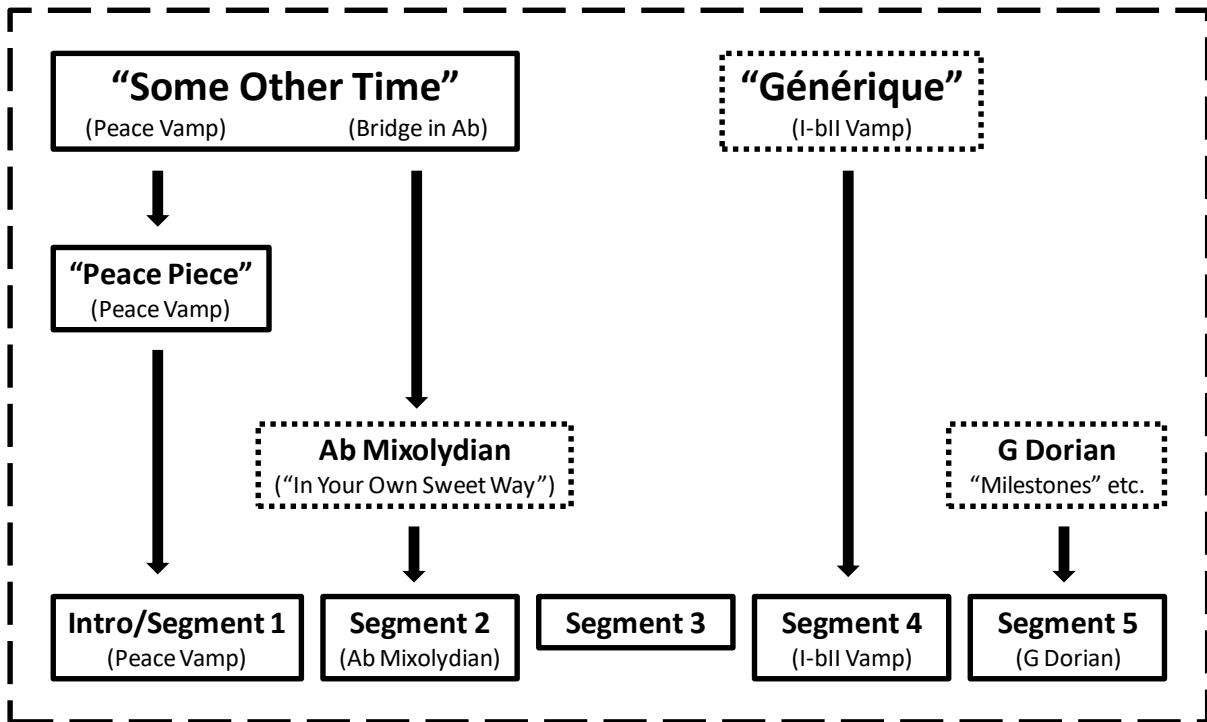
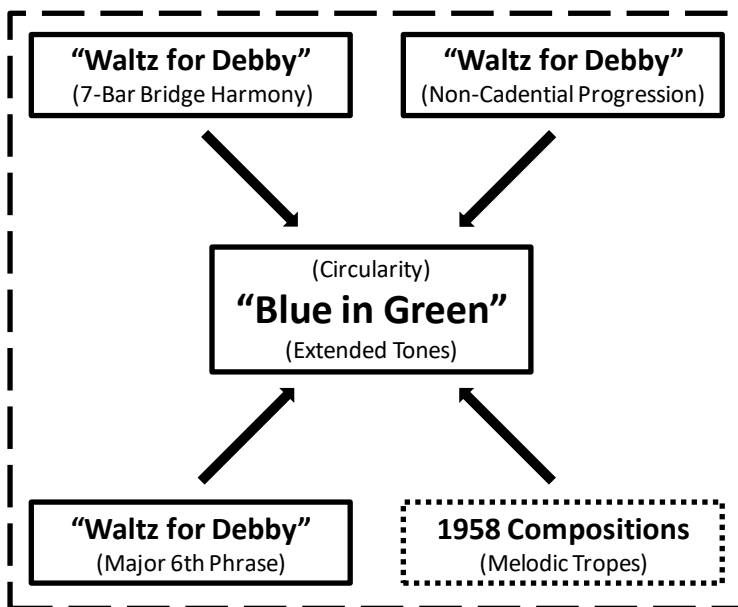


Diagram 6: “Blue in Green”



Appendix Two: Jamal and Davis Repertoire

	Jamal	Davis
"Surrey with the Fringe on Top"	Oct, 1951	May, 1956
"Will You Still be Mine"	Oct, 1951	June, 1955
"Ahmad's Blues"	Oct, 1951	May, 1956
"Gal in Calico"	Oct, 1951	June, 1955
"But Not For Me"	Jan, 1954	June, 1954
"New Rhumba"	May, 1955	May, 1957
"All of You"	May, 1955	Sept, 1956
"Autumn Leaves"	May, 1955	March, 1958
"Love for Sale"	May, 1955	March, 1958
"Green Dolphin Street"	Sept/Oct, 1956	May, 1958

Appendix Three: Melodic Statements ("Blue in Green")

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Blue in Green" in G major, 4/4 time. It is organized into four systems, each with four staves. The first system is marked with chords D and C, and the second with E and C. The third system is marked with A G, and the fourth with C, B, A, and E. The score features various melodic lines, including triplets and slurs, with dashed lines indicating connections between notes across staves. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

Appendix Four: "Walkin'" – "Weirdo" – "Sid's Ahead"

The musical score is organized into three systems, each with three staves. The first system contains the first two lines of music, the second system contains the next two lines, and the third system contains the final line. Chord symbols are written above the staves, and some are enclosed in boxes. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1:

- Staff 1: "WALKIN" (boxed), F7
- Staff 2: "WEIRDO" (boxed), F7, D7^{ALT}, F7
- Staff 3: "SID'S AHEAD" (boxed), F7, D7^{ALT}, C7^{ALT}

System 2:

- Staff 1: Bb7, F7
- Staff 2: Bb7, D7^{ALT}, F7
- Staff 3: Bb7, D7^{ALT}, C7^{ALT}

System 3:

- Staff 1: A7#11, Ab7#11, Db7/Ab, C7/G, G7, Gb7, C7, F7
- Staff 2: C7^{ALT}, D7^{ALT}, D7^{ALT}, F7
- Staff 3: C7^{ALT}, D7^{ALT}, D7^{ALT}, F7

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