



Voiceing the Unvoiced: Hip-Hop Graffiti and the Art of Tagging Hogan's Alley in Selected Poems of Wayde Compton's *Performance Bond*

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Abstract:

In *Performance Bond* (2004), Wayde Compton (1972-), builds a relationship between graffiti and poetry. The researcher expounds the literary significance of the diverse forms of hip-hop graffiti found in selected poems of Compton. In "jinx," Compton manipulates encrypted codes which are meant to create a language that is similar to the art of monikers or the codes written in tags. Moreover, in "Wild Style," Compton documents the movement of hip-hop graffiti in America. He presents pieces which highlight places that were in Hogan's Alley. Compton emulates Brathwaite's concept of tidalectics. Therefore, there is an analogy between the dispossession of the black slaves from Africa and the displacement of the younger generations from Hogan's Alley. Consequently, Compton creates a hegemony between verse, graffiti and the beats of hip-hop music.

Keywords: Cultural / Textual Hybridity – Displacement – Hip-Hop Graffiti – Sampling – Tidalectics – Turntablism

In fact, it is precisely in its illicit aspect that graffiti presents its most useful facet for social analysis. It creates intersections where legitimate and illegitimate meet and enables cultural groups to give themselves solidity and definition. Because it is so easily produced, graffiti is often adopted by those without power, to negotiate relationships with both the society from which they are disempowered and others within their own groups.... (Phillips 20).

1. Introduction

Wayde Compton (1972—) is a black Canadian poet, critic, graffitist and hip-hop musician whose verse volumes include *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) and *Performance Bond* (2004). Siemerling discusses some of Compton's literary contributions. Being “[a]member of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project” (Siemerling 337), Compton protests against the removal of this region which the Canadian state officials claim to be necessary as part of the city's expansion. Compton emulates Brathwaite's concept of tidalectics, therefore he believes that there is a symmetrical repetition between the history of the black slaves and their descendants. Thus, he creates a hybrid text relating the diverse forms of graffiti, historical repetition and hip-hop beats to verse. The researcher expounds the aesthetics of hip-hop graffiti that constitute a graffito of Hogan's Alley.

2. Some Basic Information About Graffiti

In the *Encyclopedia of Graffiti*, Reisner and Wechsler give information about graffiti, referring to some of the diverse types of the art. They state that “[g]raffiti[are] – Inscriptions of figures, designs, or words on rocks or walls or sidewalks or the like, or on artifacts made of plaster, stone, or clay. The singular form is graffito” (Reisner and Wechsler V). Tracing graffiti back to the creation of man on earth, the art appears in the forms of pictography and fingerprints which can be related to Compton's portrayal of signs or the transcription of hip-hop beats. Murals are one of the current trends of graffiti which are related to commercial advertisements. Graffiti flourish in protests and proclamations. Therefore, these arts are always fought against by the state officials. Graffiti are found everywhere either in the form of pictography or word writing or as a combination of both. Some of the places where graffiti exist include street walls, and walls of public and private places, such as public bathrooms, yards, universities and government buildings. Though analyzing graffiti is controversially argumentative, the common motif of each graffito is to give voice to all humans.

Reisner and Wechsler differentiate between conversational and communal graffiti. The first reflects the socialist sense of the art as a graffitist writes a comment then a passerby may react to it, while the second is practised as a profession. Conversational graffiti distinguish the framework of Compton's verse volume. Consequently, Compton emulates the works of other black writers like Brathwaite's *The Arrivants*.

2.1. Graffiti; A Life Art

In *Two Thousand Years of Wall Writing Graffiti*, Reisner enumerates some of the current graffiti movements. Graffitists belong to different trends. One of them is the "gossip columnists" (Reisner 8) who spread rumours about fictional characters to attract the public attention. For instance, "Cinderella (she married for money) or Mickey Mouse (he's a homosexual and never cared for Minnie)" (Reisner 8). Though none of these graffiti is true but we find in the majority a sense of black comedy. Ethnic graffiti revolve around racial oppression which is directed against those who are considered as inferior races like the blacks and the Jews. Political graffiti foreshadow the defiant voice of the revolutionists. Studying the political statements fortell the names of the politicians who will win or lose at any election. What is known as "politics of confrontation" (Reisner 92) stands for the audacious graffiti written or drawn on walls of the establishments in the midst of the organized riots. All the mottos of graffitists have a tone of protest similar to that of political graffiti.

"Walking graffiti" (Reisner 17) is the final trend which is discussed. Between 1966 and 68, there has been a mania for what is known as "button wall or wall button" (Reisner 18). Slogans written on buttons are likened to poetic puns as their meaning is indefinite. One of them is "GIVE THE GRASS A CHANCE" (Reisner 19) which the reader can misinterpret as a call for having a better environment. However, its connotative message is a defence for the spread of the drug addiction of marijuana.

Reisner discusses the criteria which distinguish each graffiti and shape its message. He stresses that "[t]he true graffiti has style, a surrealistic, imaginative quality, a spontaneity you can feel even though the topic itself may now be stale ..." (Reisner 21-22). All persons can practise graffiti, such as bourgeois members, workers, gangsters, and revolutionists, therefore there are differences in the aesthetics, language and the cultural background of a graffiti. Hence, graffiti can be a medium of communication. For instance, graffiti are used as a language between hoboes. They relate pictography to symbols in order to give warning messages about the places and the factors which they should avoid so as to keep their life safe. Some graffiti statements reach universality and become slogans that defend freedom. A notable one is "Kilroy was here" (Reisner 13) which revives the memory of the tyranic kilroy.

2.2. Graffiti in Art and Literature

Reisner discusses the relationship between literature and graffiti as a street art in France which acquires recognition due to the photographs collected by Brassai. A graffito can be related to the literary theme of innocence versus experience. This is because graffitists are usually children. Many graffitists paint graffiti that are full of cartoon figures and mythical characters. According to Reisner, the “capricious graffitist” (103) is the one whose graffiti reflect the most literary language. Writing short statements that are humorous and satirical, he/ she has a critical view about society. Reisner cites Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* as an example of a literary work whose mythical story drives a group of American graffitists to transform their own viewpoints of it into a graffito known as “FRODO LIVES” (Reisner 104). In this way, the relationship between graffiti and literature is complementary due to the interaction between them.

2.3. Graffiti; Some Research Points

In *Wallbangin'*, Phillips studies gang graffiti, therefore she chooses this title for her book. She states that “‘Wallbangin’ is a gang term that means, roughly, ‘gangbangin’ on a wall” (Phillips 21). The term has two meanings. The first stands for the tendency to scratch graffiti on wall as part of the rivalry between gangs while the second is related to the nature of the life of a graffitist. Graffitists act as if they were thieves who impose their art on walls which they do not own so as to revolt against well constituted norms.

Phillips classifies the study of graffiti into different approaches. The first one relates the analysis of graffiti to Freud’s psychology. Among those who belong to this trend are A. W. Read, A. Dundes, and R. Reisner. The second approach is “[t]he Silva School of Ephemerality” (Phillips 29) which is represented by Armando Silva. Phillips shares with Silva the belief “that graffiti [as an art] comprises: marginality, anonymity, spontaneity, elements of the setting (space, design, and color), speed, [and] precariousness (the use of cheap, easy to obtain materials) …” (29-30). A graffito revolves around a sense of transience. This is because it can be removed by the state authorities or by a graffitist, wiping the work of another. Even the motives behind a graffito are changeable. Ferrell and Spitz are among the names who share with Silva this vision. The researcher believes that this ephemeral nature of the art drives Compton to manipulate hip-hop graffiti to dramatize the transient establishment of Hogan’s Alley.

2.4. The Conflation Between Gang and Hip-Hop Graffiti

Phillips introduces a main image of the American art of hip-hop graffiti which was born in New York in the 1970s. The art is also given other names which are “(‘graffiti art,’ ‘New York-style graffiti,’ or ‘subway

art')” (Phillips 53). In Los Angeles many gangsters become hip-hop graffitists. The media as in the film *Bombing L.A.* and the graffiti collections like *Bomb the Suburbs* drive the public to believe that there are no differences between gang and hip-hop graffiti. Phillips adds that “[b]attles, for example, are competitions through writing; killing means crossing out someone's name. To ‘bomb’ an area is to put up a lot of work there ...” (311). Hip-hop graffitists lead the same tough life of the gangsters. They are chased by the state officials and exposed to death while staging hip-hop graffiti on walls of the high way tunnels, trains and buses. However, this does not mean that they practise gangster activities. Hip-hop graffitists work in groups as part of a learning acquisition between children and those who are more experienced. They belong to three different levels. The highest one is the “[w]riters” (Phillips 312) whose graffiti relate drawing to writing. The researcher remarks that Compton initiates a crew with Jason de Couto for the production of hip-hop music in the manner of the crews of hip-hop graffitists. Many researchers have traced the shift of this street art into New York's art exhibitions towards the end of the 1970s.

Compton establishes a relationship between his verse and all the aesthetics of hip-hop graffiti. As mentioned by Phillips, they are “DJS and rappers, scratching and break dancing” (327). Compton creates a recorded hip-hop DJ of “The Reinventing Wheel”. He raps the hip-hop beats inside his verse and transcripts them into signs. He also scratches the white pages of the volume and the spaces within the verse lines with tags, throw-ups and pieces. Compton's manipulation of turntablism and sampling so as to write about historical repetition can echo the process of break dancing.

2.5. Tags, Throw-ups and Pieces

Tags are the first form of hip-hop graffiti. Tagging is a self-reflection of identity as tags usually indicate the names of taggers. Many of them can be comprehended only by members of the same group like the ones written among gangsters and Jazz musicians. In some tags, the letters of a tagger's name are united with those of a hip-hop graffiti group. Phillips adds that “[s]ometimes tags consist of numbered codes that ... [can include] the penal code for graffiti (594) or the 911 emergency code” (318). This leads to the inability of the public to comprehend their meanings. The two manifesto-like taggers who give tags fame are Taki 183 in New York and Chaka in Los Angeles.

Throw-ups and pieces are more developed forms of the art. Throw-ups are the second step in the career of taggers. They can be either unified in colour or a mixture of two colours, and the letters are splashed on the wall, having a symmetry of two directions. Thematically, this stage reflects Compton's call for racial hegemony between the coloured minorities and the white immigrants who inhabited Hogan's Alley. Unlike taggers, “piecers” (Phillips 322) choose to paint their pieces in secluded places like

courtyards as their work should reflect a peculiar talent. Piecers attempt to wave and interrelate the letters together in innovative ways, placing them in the midst of pictorial backgrounds.

2.6. Some Facts About Graffiti

In *The History of American Graffiti*, R. Gastman & C. Neelon tackle diverse topics, such as graffiti groups, some of the modern forms of the art, the attempts made to stop the widespread of graffiti, and the recent trends of the art in the 2000s. Graffiti are exposed to numerous state procedures to prevent their widespread. One of them is the complete process of the art removal in the 1980s which drives graffitists to turn to the railway cargo cars to maintain the continuity of the art.

One of the modern forms of graffiti is the monikers, being common among train workers. Monikers are the art of name inscriptions on the walls of trains that are either combined with symbolic language, dating back to the civil war or with drawings painted only out of fun. The artists sign each of their monikers so as to encourage new generations to follow them. BOZO TEXINO is a famous artist who practises the art in the period of the Depression.

There are few historical information which the researcher selects about graffiti. Among them are the establishment of the NOGA or the Nation of Graffiti Artists. Another important event is the emergence of the rebel art movement represented by a graffiti group known as the FABULOUS FIVE whose founder J. "Lee" Quinones used to cover all the outer walls of trains with painted pieces.

2.7. An Up-to-date Vision of Graffiti

Gastman & Neelon believe that the widespread of the art has started since 1990s due to a number of publications like *Ghetto Art* and *Flashback* and the internet. Piecers such as TWIST, COST and REVS- revolutionize graffiti, uniting a graffito with posters and computer graphics. Between 1990s and 2000s, S. Fairey has been relating graffiti to pictography and murals. Nowadays, graffitists face the same fate of their forefathers as their art is criminalized, and they are imprisoned or forced to pay charges.

3. The Art of Monikers and the Lit-Hop Text of "Jinx"

The title of the poem "Jinx" is a tag which refers to the African god Xango or Shango as implied by the letter X. The verse language forms a graffito which reflects Compton's status of being a "halfrican" (15) or a person whose race is mixed. Therefore, there is an integration between Standard English and the use of symbols that is, in a way, similar to the linguistic sign systems of the Hobos:

) í%+\$ “ä ^“çp¼≈½ Ü‰or[n Ü-”ò=perched on my shoulder whispers in my ear funky vespers like , “Who is youχ- ç,-ü s-q{ø..#p-h- wΞ!ì_C± _tryin to fool?”~Å_Ü-}*Đ‰o_8 g-šc-_!ÑC'iæo ·€H_¾b;_>-But don't}~ZÄ□7boe_”R ALz;-the hip hopism go: “Act like you know”?½œùý3}>çU ý€’.X.V¢Å6í‰ö°ç_í-mÐ�nÄ±But that's neither here nor there. @_è½□ç_, #□€_-→8w>qû6O2 Ó/¼‰Öa¼_õ€“°š^-..¶Through this vale of vinyl, II[§eß_õ3Q8 g-š!'iæo·ea revelation was kind enough to come to me. let¾÷^Ø'Gs= - }*Đ‰ _8Å7x}□þme break it ^_§Å£“ð_P‘^D(`ùþ°çQ£ §Ü~à_¼O_7Ø°□_u³³1/3down to you: One day God was bored and decided he would fuck with His old school partner Jazz Itself.^»?;Ä°!6Ö†‰ >-çŒÍ Y±á_ç‘š¢õ€“°-“Yo,” God said, “Jazz Itself, you think you're so cool, but what do you think you'd do if I made it so that there were no instruments left in the world except the bagpipes? You think you so bad, but what would you do if I did you like that?”/_;/»^a7œ_j□s{í\^a_-šø XΞ_Š¥6í‰ö°μ□£Ôf€>zfμ|Then God laughed His in-our-image ass off. ¶„Ä§á4=|-_7í/±ûf5í [Á_“Ain’t nothing,” said Jazz Itself like it weren’t nothing.#j_\$;â<“ÇðË6O2/, _õø>_>í._} And that’s when Jazz Itself’s Children spoke up.3 \Qö8↑¢]Íñt3ñ±íØNÄl±ýþ°[& __%jq[7Øù_B_%o “That’s no kind of question, God,” said one of the Children, “Jazz Itself would know exactly what to do.”{.º, Ä²É³í†9Φ_y*Ú‰o ‘íËðíæý€eÆb’_¹Æ|³ºAnd that child answered plain, right up in God’s face, “We’d just shift its name around. Instead of bullshit ‘bagpipes’ we be calling those things ‘skin boxes’ or some shit. That’d make that corny shit sound better, word is bond.”

Fig. 1. An excerpt from “jinx,” Wayde Compton, “jinx,” *Performance Bond*, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, ARSENAL PULP PRESS, 2004, 25-26.

In “jinx,” Compton focuses on two of the four elements that constitute hip-hop graffiti. As a rapper, his use of signs presents a transcription of the hip-hop beats. These signs can also resemble the art of monikers or the

encrypted codes which stand for the wireless waves of the radio as a medium, transmitting the African culture. Break dancing is related to Compton's manipulation of turntablism and sampling. The latter are used to revive certain incidents from the African history and relate them to present situations in the life of blacks.

Compton calls for a cultural interaction between the blacks and the whites inspite of Canadian racial despise. He is rapping a significant part of the history of the British Columbians, the migrants, who were exposed to racial legislations in California⁽¹⁾. The insertion of symbols within language shows how the coloured minorities are still struggling to impose their existence. The hegemony between Standard English and the use of symbols stands for the unwelcomed voice of the African dialects⁽²⁾. Compton's focus on "jazz" (25-26), as a keyword, stresses that he raps the hip-hop beats in his verse to predict the birth of new generations of coloured blacks. The textual hybridity of the poem foreshadows Compton's implicit call for ethnic hegemony. In this way, this graffiti reflects a picture of the multiracial community of Hogan's Alley. Being compared to mere signs, their existence and dialect are unwelcomed by the white culture.

4. The Existential / Non-Existential "Rune" / Ruins of Hogan's Alley

In part III of *Performance Bond* or "The Reinventing Wheel," Compton's verse is at a crossroad between the music of the electric sound systems and graffiti. The researcher has chosen certain lines from "The Reinventing Wheel" so as to show how the recorded hip-hop beats revive the past in the present history of blacks:

The rupture is the inscription, the brokenness the tradition,
the repetition the affliction, the body the preserved fiction.
The script the friction.
It's Xango who performs in RCA the peristyle,
his arms reaching, pointing: *Remember*. It's Damballah too,
dialing, fixing me, (604)-specific. Matsushita crossed the Pacific,
and that's where we're taking it. You can blame
all ignorance on the failure to feed
the ghosts in these Technics. There is immortality
in the track. A snake
chasing its tail. The groove
moving the text. The descendant's speak
unsheathing the record. The beat (Compton 76-88)

Tialectics or the cyclic "repetition" (Compton 77) of certain historical incidents is a crucial point in this lit-hop verse. Graffiti are cohered with the beats of hip-hop in the two tags, "RCA³" and "Matsushita" (Compton 79-81). The "beat" (Compton 88) is generated by the syllabic

repetition of the /tion/ so as to refer to the motion of history. Hence, Compton's repetitive focus on the consonant “/F/” between “affliction” and “friction” (77) creates a unified “fiction” (78) or graffiti of the diverse voices of blacks.

Compton acts as a tagger who paints tags and attempts to “[r]emember” (80) the past history of black slavery. The turntable “record” (Compton 88) of the hip-hop beats revives the memory of the transportation of black slaves to Europe and relates it to the displacement of the black British Columbians. The surname Damballah is used as a tag, representing an African god. The metaphor of the “snake” (Compton 85) refers to the role played by Damballah who regenerates the spirits of the ancestors. Shango's character is introduced by the tag “Xango/ ... (604).” (Compton 79-81). In “The Reinventing Wheel,” the two African gods stress that “[t]he descendant's speak unsheathing the record” (87-88). In other words, the metaphor refers to a modern, repetitive transportation of blacks, migrants and other ethnic minorities to Hogan's Alley. Hence, “in this enabling tidalectic mixing of voodoo mythology, black history, and electronics ... Shango, the loa [is] associated with thunder- and hence with the African resistance to enslavement – and with drums and music, dance and art ...” (Siemerling 345).

Compton believes that the changes that can occur to the recorded hip-hop beats echo the sound variations of the diverse African dialects that are verbalized in the use of symbols and the letters of tags. He uses symbols that have significance to the community of blacks. Therefore, Shango unites his soul with those of the “musical innovators like Kool DJ Herc (aka Clive Campbell) [who introduce the process] operated by cutting and mixing available record tracks to produce what became hip-hop” (Siemerling 341). The code symbols of the tag “SL 1200” (Compton 151) stand for Shango the Loa whose spirit is regenerated so as to help Compton to be in communication with his African culture and the community of black writers.

Compton relates “the four corners” (158) that constitute hip-hop graffiti to the structure and the themes of his lit-hop text. The hybridity of hip-hop graffiti is due to the union between the aesthetics of drawing and the hip-hop beats. Therefore, Compton relates this hybridity to the four levels of language, text, culture and history. As an instance of linguistic hybridity, Compton uses “here” (158) to stand for hear. Moreover, in this verse context from “The Reinventing Wheel,” the reference to the Egyptian myth “of Osiris” (Compton 155) stands for the multiracial roots of Compton and others:

The word is the body
of Osiris, it's spliced. A communion
is happening worldwide, a whirlwind

of performances, black English, black expropriation
scattered to the four corners. Every ear shall here. (Compton 154-158)

In these lines from “The Reinventing Wheel,” Legba points out that ethnic discrimination is a common dilemma shared between the previous residents of Hogan’s Alley and the black slaves, on the one hand, and the Black British Columbians and the Jews, on the other:

Where my unreal niggas at? Accented evaporation. Virtuosos
of the used record. In the out there, somewhere,
drifitng,
dreaming,
backcueing,
hacking
the jingle of this Germanic chain. It’s a thin lane
between Hogan’s Alley and self-hatred.

.....
*How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!
Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned;
renew our days as of old.*

(Lamentations 1:1; 5: 21) (Compton 198-210)

Hip-hop beats, which echo the sound of thunder and lightening, are used as a medium to call upon Shango and Legba⁴ and to narrate a series of repetitive historical events. Turntablism helps Legba to relate incidents in the history of Jews to those of blacks. Legba has two roles, acting as the prophet Jermeiah who laments the loss of Jerusalem and as an African idol, mourning the deconstruction of the Canadian mosaic or Hogan’s Alley. Reviving the memory of the Jews who were exposed to the Holocaust and the oppression of the Nazi, Legba assimilates their feelings of pain to the inhumanitarian conditions which the black slaves suffered from in the slave ships.

In these lines from “The Reinventing Wheel,” Compton stresses that he is a hip-hop graffitist who will tour New York, the birthplace of graffiti, so as to scratch his art on the city walls:

Act like you know.
I take my cue out of crates and boxes,
speak by outfoxing rock. That’s hip hop
in the boondocks,
the relief package
drop zone. I echo New York back
like a code-cracker.
Reality hacker. A Crusoe.

Cuts cued.
 I intervene
 by plugging in
 Code, tapping
 Babylonian routes. My cuneiform.
*Starting all over again
 is gonna be rough*
 (Mel and Tim) (Compton 211-225)

Cultural hybridity echoes a textual one. Another example of linguistic hybridity is obvious in Compton's use of "Cuneiform" (223) instead of uniform. Compton stresses that he operates the "crates" (212) producing the beats of "hip hop" (213) so as to maintain historical repetition. Defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as a "Wooden protective case or framework for shipping" ("Crate" def. 1), the word connotes the shipping of the black slaves to Europe. As an African American sitcom comedy, *The Boondocks* stands for Compton's attempt to act as a modern hip-hop graffitist who unites his graffiti with multimedia and graphic effects. This "boondocks" (Compton 214) is also defined in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as "a rural area: STICKS" ("boon docks" def. 2). Therefore, it can also stand for the small multicultural community of Hogan's Alley. Intertextuality is obvious in citing statements said by representatives of black American music, such as James Brown and Mel and Tim and lines from the book of *Lamentations*. This is part of Compton's call for a cultural communication between the different generations of blacks.

In these verse lines from "The Reinventing Wheel," Compton states that he is "bangin" (242) hip-hop graffiti on the imaginary walls of Black Vancouver:

It's the white page
 versus black finality, vinyl
 versus anthropology,
 bangin on wax. Auto-ventriloquism
 and tribalism gone Osirian. The importation
 of broken English, open, north.
 Griftin.
 And no trade tariff on riffin.
 No law against trafficking tradition,
 or trading on insider's nihilism,
 or bullets-to-water crypticism. All this and still
 riven. Translation:
 His master's voice
 biting the air. (Compton 239-252)

Bangin is a term which Phillips discusses in her book *Wallbangin'*. Compton chooses the word to stand for the rivalry to paint graffiti or the

“black” (240) letters of verse on the “white” (239) walls of the text. The choice of “Vinyl” (Compton 240) has different meanings. It can indicate the recording system which operates to generate the beats of hip-hop. *Vinyl* is also an American musical series about graffiti which was popular in the 1970s. Compton refers to it as a model for his lit-hop text. In “The Reinventing Wheel,” the sound of the hip-hop beats “or bullets-to-water crypticism …” (Compton 249) echoes that of the waves which hit the slave ships. Consequently, Compton’s lit-hop text revolves around the motif of “trafficking tradition” (247) or the history of blacks and its tidalectic movement.

5. “Rune”: A Story of a People’s Voiceless “Blight” Scratched to Be Voiced on the Imaginary Walls of Hogan’s Alley:

In this verse from “Blight,” which is the opening poem in “Rune,” the subtitle of “The Reinventing Wheel,” Compton indicates that the nonexistence of Hogan’s Alley leads to the omission of a significant part in the history of blacks:

When ____ take ____ pictures of ___, there are no people there;
the decay will speak for itself. Nothing
in the city is older than space. Nothing
closer than time. Muted. Eight
balled, lo,
crisscrossed
and fameless, half-named,
Enghosted: False
Creek to
____ ? (Compton 1-10)

Linguistically, repetition functions at the three levels of negation, spaces and dashes. They are cohered with the other three levels of music, graffiti, and history. Compton manipulates a series of spaces in order to intensify his sense of loss due to the “decay[ing]” (2) of multiculturalism. The use of spaces is also part of his interest in the graphic and visual effects which complement his verse. Leaving spaces within the verse of “Blight” stands for the speechless situation of those “souls being captured ...” (Compton 26) and rebuffed. Compton’s feeling of “[n]othing[ness]” (2-3) is the keyword which “Blight” revolves around.

Hip-hop music and graffiti lead to Shango’s presence in order to unite the history of the blacks. Hence, the tag “[e]ight / ... lo,” (4-5) stands for the Loa Shango. The blacks of Hogan’s Alley suffer from racial discrimination due to their ability to culturally interact with the other white and Asian migrants. Similarly, the presence of the black slaves and the Black British

Columbians threatened the white culture with the idea of intermarriage. Placing the essay / the poster of “Whither Hogan’s Alley” beside the verse lines of “Blight” stresses Compton’s role as a modern graffitist like Fairey who constitutes a relationship between graffiti and murals or the art of pictography.

In “Vèvè,” Compton blends the drawing of hip-hop graffiti and the overflow of the hip-hop beats which are taking place simultaneously. In order to reconstruct the walls of Hogan’s Alley, Compton unites his verse with the use of tags. By the end of “Vèvè,” he also presents the graphic section of the “Lost-Found Landmarks” which includes pictures of four places that existed in this community. Moreover, in this section, Compton forms tags which consist of street names and their numbers. He introduces Analogue and Digital whose nicknames are two tags so as to act in the manner of Taki 183 and many other hip-hop graffitists. They defy the Canadian state authorities, calling upon Legba / Vèvè whose African supernatural power can help them to regain Hogan’s Alley and to tag and draw pieces on its walls. “Vèvè” / Legba appears from “[a]bottle in a brown paper bag ...” (Compton 3). The repetition of the consonant /V/ in the constant reference to “Vèvè” is one of the devices used to generate music so as to maintain the presence of Legba. In this context, the two personified media Analogue and Digital are in a conversation about the roots and the significance of the tag “Vèvè,” representing Legba:

ANALOGUE

I was reading a book called *The Arrivants* the other day. Towards the end the writer suggests that Voodoo is the beginning of an Afro-Caribbean language. You know, after the Middle Passage blotted the African languages out.

DIGITAL

You don’t say?

ANALOGUE

It got me thinking. He concludes on an image of a *vèvè*. Do you know what a *vèvè* is?
.....

ANALOGUE

Anyway, a *vèvè* is part of a Voodoo ritual in Haiti. The person doing the ceremony takes a handful of something and draws an image on the ground or on the floor of the temple.

DIGITAL

what do you mean “draws with a handful of something”?

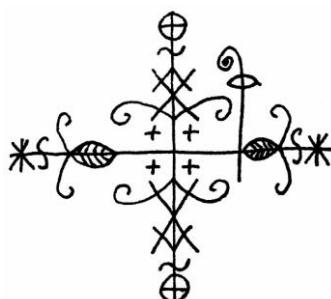
ANALOGUE

Well, they use different things. I think it depends on the particular spirit you are meaning to address. They use different granulated things: cornmeal, gunpowder, chalk, flour, sand. They pour the stuff on the ground in the shape of the vèvè. (Compton 6-30)

Analogue and Digital manipulate a “trail mix” (Compton 5) in order to maintain textual hybridity and playback recorded versions of the history of blacks. Compton forms the tag “BC” (2) to assimilate the displacement of the Black British Columbians to that of the previous residents of Hogan’s Alley. He indicates that the history of Hogan’s Alley is as old as the movement of graffiti. Therefore, Analogue and Digital mention a variety of elementary materials used to scratch the tag and the throw-up of Vèvè on the walls of Hogan’s Alley. This recalls what Reisner mentions, concerning the first man’s use of a wide range of primitive materials like chalk in painting graffiti. The cyclic motion of the text is mainly due to the stylistic symmetry between Brathwaite’s poem ‘Vèvè’ and that of Compton.

In “The Black Atlantic Meets the Black Pacific,” H. Smyth discusses multimodality, standing for the use of diverse elements and signs to help the readers to realize the textual hybridity of “Vèvè”. Therefore, verse is cohered with graffiti and the hybrid music of hip-hop and thereby language. Siemerling comments on the roots and the meaning of Compton’s graffiti drawings which “belong to far-flung diasporic archives and displacements, such as voodoo, Caribbean (here Bajan) exilic writing, or hip hop with far-away origin” (349). Manipulated as two signs, Analogue and Digital stand for the two musical techniques of turntablism and sampling. All the used signs analogize the past traumatic loss of the African culture to the present deconstructed dream of affiliation between cultures. Thus, hip-hop graffiti can help blacks to fight against their ethnic exclusion and to document their call for coalition with the whites. Hence, Compton / Analogue draws a throw-up / the “symbol” (41) of “Vèvè,” which can belong to the art of monikers, on an imaginary wall / a white space created within the following verse lines:

ANALOGUE reaches into DIGITAL’S bag of trail mix and, taking out a handful, writes on the sidewalk:



He hands the bag back to his friend.

DIGITAL

Holy! That's something else. What does it mean?

ANALOGUE

It's Legba's symbol. (Compton 37-41)

Compton introduces to the readers and to Analogue and Digital the new character of *coyote* whose presence can be interpreted in different ways. In "Vèvè," he states that: "[a] coyote walks by. They see it as a dog and so give it no remark" (Compton 71). Having a cultural connotation, the tag *coyote* stands for the ethnic exclusion of the multiracial citizens of Hogan's Alley. The Canadian state authorities do not pay attention to their rights and even their presence has "no remark" (Compton 71). The meaning of *coyote* can also be understood in the light of history and tidalectics. Hence, *coyote* represents the dehumanized image of the black slave who writes and speaks in black English in order to counter-resist the oppression of his slave master. This echoes the present tendency of Analogue and Digital to paint the walls of Hogan's Alley with a series of "Vèvès" (Compton 79). Defined in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as a "one who smuggles immigrants to the U.S." ("coyote" def. 2), the word also refers to the abuse of power by the men of authority. Finally, *coyote* plays the role of a GPS which Analogue and Digital use in search of the lost borderlines of Hogan's Alley.

THE CITY is the last tag introduced to represent a new character whose voice has a different, authoritative tone. Sampling rehearses the musical overflow of history and tidalectics. At the end of "Vèvè," it appears as if Digital and Analogue were playing parts of a song of ethnic oppression that is recorded before and entitled as "THE CITY":

THE CITY

Now move along, both of you.

ANALOGUE and DIGITAL exist north. THE CITY watches them for one Pacific minute, his baton aloft and resting against his shoulder. Then he

slowly exists south, walking backwards. (Compton 115-118)

Compton manipulates a series of signs which connote a culture clash and have a reflection upon the counter-revolution of blacks. Therefore, THE

CITY tends to put an end to the operation of the hip-hop music which carries the beats of this revolution. He reacts against all the attempts made by Analogue and Digital to counter-attack the past dehumanization of the black slaves and the present ethnic cleansing of their community. However, the dominative power of THE CITY as a slave master and a representative of the Canadian state officials will be overpowered by Legba and by a regeneration of the black culture. The movement of Analogue and Digital to the “*north*” (Compton 116) is a sign which refers to the journey of the black slaves from Africa to Europe through the “[P]acific” (Compton 117). Using a *coyote* or a GPS, the dominative power of the white culture moves “*backwards*” to the “*south*” (Compton 118). Hence, authority becomes again in the hands of Legba and the blacks.

“Forme and Chase” is a visual and a concrete poem whose lit-hop text shows a coherence between textual and cultural hybridity. Therefore, there is a hegemony between Standard English and black vernacular, starting from the choice of “Forme” in the poem’s title. The poem consists of two parts, uniting verse to hip-hop music and the art of pictography or murals. The first one consists of the verse lines whose structure takes the shape of the bridge “VIVIDUCT” / Viaduct while the second includes a poster of this bridge. This is to help the readers to visualize its construction upon the ruins of Hogan’s Alley. Moreover, the shape of the verse lines are also analogous to a ship. This is to recall the slave ships:

Forme and Chase

‘A spectre is haunting this font. In the attic
of speech, here, boxed up, is where accents
go when you migrate, marry, or while them
away. I am the shepherd in the yard
of mended inflections, the first
person buried under the plain
of sepulchral dictions.

My hands of breath

lift, transpose

lode letters.

I am (Compton 1-11)



Fig. 2. VIVIDUCT, photograph from Wayde Compton, “Form and Chase,” *Performance Bond*, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, ARSENAL PULP PRESS, 2004, 145.

Sampling is the medium which assimilates the loss of the motherland to the present demolition of Black Vancouver. The two poetic parts reflect the “Form[ation]” of Black Vancouver and its deconstruction as if the Canadian state authorities were “Chas[ing]” its residents towards the hole of a bottle. Therefore, there is an expansion of the verse lines towards the top of the page and a contraction towards its bottom. In the concluding lines of “Forme and Chase,” Compton states that “I mimic with lead / ABCs: This is a / Pearl that was / my tongue” (19-22). This metaphor analogizes the ruins of Black Vancouver to his uprooted mother language.

Named after C. Ahearn’s famous film, “Wild Style” is a documentary poem which dramatizes a concized account about the history of graffiti. The poem is a turntable record, analogizing the removal of Black Vancouver to the crossed out graffiti of the “[g]randkids of the bluesmen” (Compton 11) or the taggers and the graffitists. Compton starts the poem with statements by the Roman Philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero. It is as if he were disclosing a Greek prophecy which fortells that the fight of graffitists to protect their graffiti will drive them to act to regain Hogan’s Alley. The use of signs like the noun “*guitar*” (Compton 4) heightens the tempo of the poem and connotes a relationship between the history of New York’s graffiti and that of Black Vancouver. In the following lines from “Wild Style,” Compton is sampling significant events in the history of this subway art:

(Grandkids of the bluesmen)

s p r a y	paint	on	trains, then
on windows of trains	and	then	
walls and walls and walls	round	cities and cities	
and cities			
making nonblankness, signing, singing, singeing			
like they did in NYC in the seventies: script on walls			

.....
plain, pseduonymous, acronymous, vertical, writers
unholdable, purposeful, loseable, the audience, pieces,
commuters,
reading a mussed lucidity mutable ←
→ the train
a
new uncanny fluid through the concrete mimicking you (Compton
11-25)

Compton leaves spaces between the letters of the verb “s p r a y” (12) as if he were attempting to visualize the process of painting graffiti on a wall. This pivotal sign maintains the circular action of the poem which centers around the repetitive attempt of Compton and the other graffitists to practise this art. The African world of voodoo will support Compton and the other graffitists in a way similar to that of a GPS. Therefore, the arrows will direct them to the ways which they should go through in order to paint graffiti. Moreover, the use of arrows has other connotations. One of them is to refer to the diverse lines of trains. In order to spread their art, graffitists should tour the different cities of New York, sharing their experience with others.

These arrows also highlight a coherence between cultural and textual hybridity. In order to emphasize the textual hybridity, Compton writes the verb “singing” in the black vernacular or “singeing” (15). By using arrows, Compton emulates one of Brathwaite’s stylistic techniques of writing. The latter is referred to by Smyth as “the Sycorax video style, which names both an invented typeface and a format for visualizing – through changing typefaces, font sizes, and word placement ...” (394).

Compton mentions “the train” (23) as the second major sign which he or the camera man pictures in order to remind the readers of the rebel art movement or the whole car movement of the 1970s. Hence, Compton refers to the “plain, pseudonymous, acronymous, ...” (20) or the tags and the throw-ups that are scratched inside the trains of “NYC in the seventies” (16). Being affected by the Roman prophecy that is mentioned before in the beginning of “Wild Style,” Legba predicts “a / new uncanny fluid [of graffiti] through the concrete ...” (Compton 24-25) walls of Black Vancouver.

“Ozymandias” (86), “OZ.” (64) and “Oswald” (55) are the three main keywords which Compton’s “Ghetto Fabulous Ozymandias” revolves around. Compton relates verse to multimedia in his analogy between the dilemma of a family split that is addressed in the American series

Ozymandias (Breaking Bad) and the plight of the residents of Hogan's Alley. Moreover, in a sarcastic tone, Compton likens the image of Black Vancouver to the city depicted in the American cartoon "Oswald". This is as if he were drawing a caricature about the displacement of the blacks of Hogan's Alley. *OZ.* is the title of another American series. As implied from its events, Compton also likens the residents of Hogan's Alley to a number of criminals who are either jailed or set free by the state authorities.

Compton scratches the throw-up of "Rev. OZ." (70-76) or "Revolutionary OZ" (48) in the font of "Oswald" (55) on an imaginary wall beside the verse lines of the poem:



Fig. 3. "Rev. OZ," photograph from Wayde Compton, "GHETTO FABULOUS OZYMANDIAS," *Performance Bond*, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, ARSENAL PULP PRESS, 2004, 154.

This is to revive the spirit of IZ "'The Wiz'" (Compton 63) as one of the prominent artists of throw-ups in the 1970s. Significantly, he urges the coloured minorities to follow up his steps, practicing graffiti in order to bespeak their revolution. Therefore, in "Ghetto Fabulous Ozymandias," Compton "could just now comprehend the tag" (30) which stands for the past and the present history of black resistance. Painting this throw-up also indicates an implicit use of turntablism to stimulate Legba's presence.

Legba maintains a sound interference between the voices of black slaves and those of the two black American comedians, Nipsey Rusell and Richard Pryor. Therefore, Compton makes an allusion to Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" in order to assimilate Legba's supernatural power to that of Ramses II. This representative of the world of voodoo is also sampling some accounts about slave resistance. Being given many fictitious names, the true identity of "Rev. OZ." is hidden and unknown. This recalls the tendency of the white masters to give black slaves new Anglo-Saxon names in order to sever ties with their African culture.

Consequently, in "GHETTO FABULOUS OZYMANDIAS," names are used as signs that have a historical connotation:

... well, 'Rev.' stands for a bunch of things:
Reverend Oz,
Revenant Oz,
Revolutionary Oz,

Revisor Oz,
Revisionist Oz,
The Reinvented OZ,
Revanchist Oz and
Oz Reversed. And
'Oz' itself is short for 'Oswalled.'"
"Okay, right," the narrator said, "that's your last name:
Oswald."
"No, it's 'Oswalled.'" (Compton 45-56)

Compton or "the narrator" (17) indulges in a conversation with "Rev. OZ," the representative of the lost community of Black Vancouver in order to choose a name for him. As a cameraman he attempts to picture him, though he is visible and invisible at the same time. This transparency connotes the absent and the present walls of Hogan's Alley.

In another verse context from "GHETTO FABULOUS OZYMANDIAS," intertextuality is Compton's main concern; therefore, he refers to Shelley and his poem:

"There's something I don't understand," the narrator said.
"What?" said Rev. Oz.
"Shelley's poem was about arrogance."
"Yes."
"But this place," he said, swinging his head side to side like a horizontal gyroscope, the camera at his face still, now settling its lens back on the man, "this place – the community that was here – they were driven out. Their neighbourhood was flattened by the City. There's nothing left here because of an injustice. It doesn't make sense to call the targets of this unfairness 'arrogant,' to put them in Ozymandias's shoes."
"Sure it does," said the image.
"How does it makes sense?"
"It is arrogant to disappear."
The narrator realized. His index twitched. It clicked. He lowered the camera and looked: (Compton 73-91)

Racial prejudice and the haughtiness of the whites are the main points discussed in the concluding lines of the poem. Therefore, Compton refers to Shelley as a white man whose poem represents this "unfairness" (85),

placing the ethnic minorities under “Ozymandias Shoes” (86). The two keywords, “arrogance” (77) and “injustice” (84) ironically stage a reverse image. Black comedy leads to the unresolved climax of the poem. Compton stresses that though the people “were driven out” (82-83) “because of an injustice” (84) they are, strangely enough, considered to be ““arrogant to disappear”” (89). Inspite of being displaced from their “community” (Compton 82), the blacks are considered to be the ones who refuse to racially communicate with the whites. The narrator ends the poem with a pause as if he were asking the readers which one should be thought of as arrogant?

6. Conclusion:

In this paper, the researcher studies the relationship between graffiti or hip-hop graffiti and verse in selected poems of Compton’s *Performance Bond*. Reisner defines graffiti, tracing their history to man’s existence on earth. Phillips discusses the different schools and the diverse movements of graffiti. She also tackles the aesthetics of tags, throw-ups, and pieces. Besides she enumerates some of the hip-hop graffiti groups, pointing to the spread of these arts in the media like the films *Wild Style* and *Style Wars*. Gastman & Neelon study the minutiae details of the history of American graffiti. They also discuss some of the major forms of graffiti, such as monikers, and the union between pictography and graffiti.

Compton creates a historical unity between all the generations of blacks. He emulates Brathwaite’s tidalectics. Therefore, the circular action of the poems reflects historical recurrences. In Compton’s lit-hop verse, hip-hop graffiti are united with turntablism and sampling. This is to call upon the African gods in order to relate certain historical events together.

Multimodality is the by-product of the union between verse, the hip-hop beats and graffiti. In “Jinx,” the use of encrypted codes verbalizes some of the aesthetics of graffiti. As for “Vèvè,” the use of tags creates a black dialect. Moreover, in “Wild Style,” and “Ghetto Fabulous Ozymandias,” Compton refers to instances in the history of hip-hop graffiti. The structure of verse in “Forme and Chase” which echoes the picture of the bridge Viaduct and the pieces of “The Lost Found Landmarks of Black Vancouver” foreground a cohesion between textual and cultural hybridity. Thus, in “The Reinventing Wheel” and in the other selected poems, Compton manipulates *the wheels* or the sound techniques to transform the verse of *Performance Bond* into an art exhibition which displays tags, throw-ups and pieces of the lost multicultural society of Black Vancouver.

الملخص

"النطق بغير المسموع: الهيب هوب جرافتي وفن الوسم على جدران زفاف
هوجانز في أشعار مختارة من ديوان رابطة الأداء للشاعر وايد كومبتون"
نيفين ضياء الدين القصبي

تتناول الدراسة العلاقة التكاملية بين فن الهيب هوب جرافتي والشعر، وقد اهتمت الباحثة بتعريف فنون الكتابة على الجدران مع التركيز على دراسة فن الهيب هوب جرافتي بأنواعه الثلاثة المختلفة والتي تبدأ بالوسم ثم رشق الألوان وتنتهي برسم نماذج فنية. وعملت الباحثة على ربط تلك المعلومات النظرية بدراسة وتحليل مجموعة من قصائد ديوان رابطة الأداء (٢٠٠٤) للشاعر كومبتون (١٩٧٢). وتناولت الأساليب المختلفة التي استخدمها الشاعر لتكوين لوحة جرافيتية موحدة تعبّر عن مأساة السود المطرودين من زفاف هوجانز المحطم ومن بينها استخدام لغة الشفرة من خلال نسخ إيقاعات الهيب هوب كما قام الشاعر بنسخ جزء كامل يحتوي على أربعة ملصقات، هذا إلى جانب تضمين عدة شعارات بين سطور الشعر. كما عمل كومبتون على ربط ماضي الأجداد من العبيد السود بحاضر الأحفاد وذلك في إطار مفهوم ما يُعرف بالجدلية "المد - جذرية" دائرة المسار لدى براثوبيت والتي ترمز إلى إعادة التاريخ لنفسه. وتوصلت الباحثة إلى نجاح كومبتون في صناعة نص هجين يربط بين الشعر والجرافتي والأساليب التقنية لإنتاج موسيقى الهيب هوب ومن هنا تتصحّح أهمية هذه الدراسة لاسيما في عصر ثورات الربيع العربي.

NOTES

- ¹ In *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered*, W. Siemerling writes a brief account of the early black migrants who are encouraged by James Douglas to come and settle in British Columbia in the middle of the 19th C. (Read page 338).
- ² It reminds one of Canada's policy of the "colour line," referred to by Katharina Eder which sets the policy of racial exclusion. (see pages 17-18).
- ³ RCA: The initials stand for the radio corporation of America.
- ⁴ Legba: According to Siemerling, Legba acts as "the voodoo trickster at the crossroads who controls traffic between humanity and the Loa- the spirits of voodoo ..." (343).

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