



## Durham E-Theses

---

### *Musical value in the jazz tradition of the 20th century*

MARLOW-STEVENS, ELLIOT, JASPER

#### How to cite:

---

MARLOW-STEVENS, ELLIOT, JASPER (2023) *Musical value in the jazz tradition of the 20th century*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online:  
<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/15163/>

#### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

Musical value in the jazz tradition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Elliot Marlow-Stevens

Philosophy Department

Durham University

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Cultural Appropriation and Hegemony</b>	<b>6</b>
Cultural Appropriation in the 20th Century	6
Appropriation and its Consequences	9
Cultural Appropriation and Social Equality	10
Epistemic Problems Regarding Cultural Imperialism	11
Appropriation in Early 20th Century European Music	14
Conclusions	15
<b>Chapter 2: Aesthetics after the Harlem Renaissance</b>	<b>17</b>
The Harlem Renaissance	17
Kerouac and Gershwin	20
Appropriation and Offence	23
Authenticity and Aesthetic Value	23
The Blues Aesthetic	25
Social Roles of Performance and Expression	27
Performances versus Works	29
Performance and the Aesthetics of Imperfection	30
Locating Authenticity in Imperfection	33
Ontologies of Authentic Works	34
Authenticity in the Performance of Works	35
Issues of Authenticity and Imperfection	37
Problematic Views of Art and Authenticity	41
Conclusions	42
<b>Chapter 3: Adorno, the Aesthetics of Modernity, and Jazz</b>	<b>44</b>
Modernity and Adorno's Aesthetics of Music	44
Adorno, Authenticity, and Consistency	46
Adorno on Jazz	49
Adorno and Stravinsky	52
Adorno's Critique and Bebop	54
Bebop and the Authentic Work	57
Adorno, Beethoven, and Form	58
Conclusions	60
<b>Chapter 4: Charlie Parker, Bebop, and Jazz as Entertainment</b>	<b>61</b>
Parker, Composition, and the 'Standard'	61
1) The Use of Standards	63
2) Required Knowledge of the Standards	66
3) Expectations of the Standards in Performance	67
Bebop, Art, and Jazz's Social Function	69

	3
A Functional Definition of Bebop	72
Musical Expressivity in Bebop	77
Notions of Jazz Expressivity	78
Technical Development, Expressivity, and Spontaneity	80
Spontaneity and the Value of Improvisation	83
Conclusions	85
<b>Chapter 5: John Coltrane, Free Jazz, and Autonomy</b>	<b>87</b>
From Bebop to Free Jazz	87
Autonomy and Authenticity	88
Musical Tradition and Expression	92
Extramusical Associations	94
Coltrane's Expression and the Resemblance Theory	96
Community, Convention, and Meaning	98
Musical Profundity	102
Free Jazz and Art for Art's Sake	105
Free Jazz and Social Function	106
Art Status and Autonomy	108
Coltrane and Artistic Virtue	110
Conclusions	113
<b>Chapter 6: Frank Zappa and the Influence of the Jazz Aesthetic</b>	<b>114</b>
Music, Elitism, and Expression	114
The 'Frame', the Audience, and Engagement	117
Conceptual Continuity and the Project/Object	120
Referentiality and Expression	122
Expression, Xenochrony, and Impossibility	124
Zappa's Social Critique and the Role of Music	128
Conclusions	131
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Discography</b>	<b>145</b>

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my supervisor Andy Hamilton for his ongoing support and advice in my project, and without whom it would not have been possible.

Other people who have helped me during this process that I wish to thank for their discussions, suggestions, and encouragement are Richard Stopford, John Snijders, Jon Stewart, and Helen Julia Minors. I would also like to thank my examiners Clare Mac Cumhaill and James Parakilas.

I would also like to thank my family for their support throughout this process.

## Introduction

This thesis analyses the aesthetic values of jazz, with its underlying motivation being the question of how different cultural perspectives regarding music and art, and their boundaries and definitions, are combined. It is fundamentally interdisciplinary – a synthesis of musicology and aesthetics that addresses the following questions:

- What are the aesthetic values of jazz and its avant-garde in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- What phenomena have influenced the development of these values?

Through an extended examination of the relevant literature and a series of case studies, this thesis analyses the history of ideas surrounding aesthetic values, how they are linked to the jazz tradition, and their relationship with social and cultural influences. My research will serve as a corrective to the musicological exploration of specific socio-cultural phenomenon, which, while insightful, has lacked the inclusion of contemporary aesthetic analysis.

The first chapter addresses the main themes of the thesis, establishing a philosophical approach to the questions of culture that are at this project's core. In doing this, the premise of appropriation is examined and the effect it has on aesthetic value. Following this, in chapter 2, a close account of the emerging aesthetic ideals of early 20<sup>th</sup> century musicians in the jazz tradition is presented. In chapter 3, to address the nascent issue of modernity, an analysis of Adorno's critique of music is presented. The opposition he identifies between Schoenberg and Stravinsky helps explore the relationship between his aesthetics and his subsequent rejection of jazz, and how this informs the debate around art and entertainment. The three case studies are presented in chronological order, beginning with the emergence of bebop with Charlie Parker, followed by John Coltrane and the jazz avant garde, and finally Frank Zappa, in which we see the synthesis of musical traditions and influence of the aesthetic values we have examined.

The thesis posits questions regarding the reliability of Western aesthetic theory when understanding diaspora culture, particularly the view of non-western aesthetic values as ancillary to the development of contemporary musical aesthetics. Through the prism of post-colonialism, the aim is to understand the reciprocal relationship between the desires of musicians and how this manifested itself in contemporary practice, as well as the broader effect this had on cultural notions of art and music.

In concluding my thesis, I contribute to both aesthetics and musicology and the importance of the synthesis of both disciplines, as well as to the understanding of how aesthetic values of a genre are developed and disseminated.

## Chapter 1: Cultural Appropriation and Hegemony

The purpose of this chapter is to determine a philosophical approach to understanding *cultural appropriation*, using this to analyse jazz and examine how appropriation influenced its aesthetic properties. To begin this discussion of cultural appropriation, I detail philosophical theories of colonial discourse, beginning with W.E.B Du Bois. Following this, I raise some of the aesthetic qualities that emerged during the period surrounding the Harlem Renaissance, and associated theories regarding the development of African American vernacular and social discourse. Returning to the issue of cultural appropriation and its relationship with the blues and jazz, the subsequent effect on aesthetic value can be illuminated.

This chapter is essential to my thesis, as an accurate analysis of a cultural diaspora can only be achieved with an adequately balanced and comprehensive methodology that considers not only philosophical issues, but also sociological and cultural debates.

In concluding this chapter, we establish a philosophical approach to the questions of culture that are at this project's core. In addition, it is shown that while cultural material such as music is often shared and disseminated without negative consequence, the appropriation of cultural material without recognition of its origin and meaning can have damaging consequences for the originating culture.

### Cultural Appropriation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Of utmost importance in analysing cultural appropriation is a philosophical framework through which to understand notions of power and of cultural identity. To introduce this discussion, we can consider W. E. B. Du Bois' 1903 writings on the experience of African American people in America. Giving us insight into the discourses surrounding cultural membership, Du Bois writes that the desire of the African American man of the era was that 'he simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellow, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face' (2007, p.34).

Du Bois is articulating the difficulty in balancing two identities, the desire to be both simultaneously, and for them to be recognised equally without facing discrimination. Du Bois goes on to further state his wish to maintain African culture and its history within his identity and 'privilege the spiritual in relation to the materialistic, commercial world of white America' (Bruce, 1992, p.301). While not of direct relation to our examination of aesthetics, the purpose of the above quote is in helping us begin to approach philosophical questions of different perspectives on art, and how different aesthetic principles, as we will see, can exist simultaneously.

This Du Bois quote has become well known, and used by Levine when examining what he calls cultural 'marginality' (2007, p.138). Levine observes that for marginalised groups there is the need or want to 'absorb and emulate the culture of a dominant group', as the potential benefits of this are acceptance and attain equal social status, whereas on the other hand, there is also a desire, what he calls 'tension' (echoing Du Bois), to maintain and 'continue to identify with' its

existing culture and associated practices (2007, p.138). Applying this theory to the critique of cultural appropriation, and the use of material from beyond one's own culture, it is clear when the dominant strata of society appropriates, alters, or erases any of a person's culture, this threatens the very identities of those whose culture is appropriated.

Not only was the original African culture of African Americans something to be protected from appropriation and destruction, an 'excessive degree of assimilation' was also seen as a possible danger (Levine, 2007, p.151). It is argued that 'the primary moral issue of appropriation is the threat of cultural hegemony by a dominant group', and this is the crux of the issue presented here (Rowell, 1995, p.138). While there are many instances in which a person may identify with varying cultures and identities, the issue that Du Bois raises is one in which the identities of a person were not treated equally, with one being the subject of extreme marginalisation, to the point of total destruction in favour of the other. We can now approach cultural marginalisation and its social consequences, in order to better understand its aesthetic ones.

Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* studies the hegemonic relationship between Western society and its view of East Asia. Said examines the Western narrative of Eastern society and culture, and how it contributed to a biased and warped understanding that was far removed from reality. Stuart Hall's analysis of Said's book expands on the premise of 'Orientalism' as itself a 'discourse', presenting it as a useful analytical tool, as a way to understand systems of behaviour, and as a lens through which modes of culture and representation can be examined. Hall draws on Foucault's definition of a discourse, and the significance of power in deciding how information is interpreted and essentially, what is or isn't true and how, quoting Foucault, 'power produces knowledge' (2018, p.88). Considering 'discourse' as a tool through which to examine cultural marginality and appropriation, we must better understand its mechanisms.

Discourses work on the 'production of knowledge through language' and exist on both the conscious and unconscious level (Hall, 2018, p.86). The generation of any information on the 'Other', be it true or false, feeds into the discourse, whether it regards opinions on social superiority, misinterpretations of cultures, or basic prejudices. In Said's work, this is reflected in the observation of how an enormous confluence of information regarding Eastern culture contributed to what became 'the European idea of the Orient' (2003, p.16). Therefore, the dominant society has the ability to rewrite, alter, distort, or control the appearance and even the existence of another group. Hall summarises that 'those who produce the discourse also have the power to make it true – i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status' (2018, p.89), and there are numerous examples of this in Western culture extending to many other subjugated cultures, and accounts of the consequences of cultural marginalisation illuminate its devastating effects. One notorious and pertinent example of this is how, in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which saw African Americans legally freed from slavery, there nonetheless continued an active disenfranchisement of African Americans through methods such as racial segregation and Jim Crow laws. As these attitudes persisted, ultimately 'the founding principles of civic and political equality' only benefited white Americans (Bateman, 2018, p.25). So, while through the Emancipation Proclamation Abraham Lincoln freed the majority of slaves and stated that the US government 'will do no act or acts to repress such



persons' (1863), there maintained what Bateman calls the history of 'a longstanding denigration of persons of African descent in Anglo-American culture', which continues today (2018, p.26).<sup>1</sup>

The premise that both Said and Hall examine through Foucault's theory is how essentially, hegemony, meaning social dominance, has the ability to make information seemingly true via acceptance in society due to frequency and availability (Hall, 2018). Through the distribution of information in the ways that are possible through the networks and institutions of the dominant society, a discourse is formed that is based on bias and misrepresentation (Said, 2003, p.94):

Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.

The role of cultural appropriation within a discourse is quite clear. Any representation of a person or persons by the dominant group will contribute to their perceived image, however erroneous. The dominant culture legitimises and reifies the discourse, whatever the representation of the other culture may be, not only losing the original meaning of the cultural material, removing its original ownership, and taking any economic or artistic benefits, but also contributing to the 'Othering' of the original culture.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of the 'Other' is a widely discussed philosophical premise, and has been interpreted in different forms by philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. In this case, we use Foucault's definition, due to the emphasis on the relationship between power and how knowledge, and subsequently truth, are constructed. It is necessary therefore to first define power in Foucault's terms, which he states 'is conceived and exercised in terms of sovereignty in other social locations, wherever power is deployed to restrain or punish what escapes the bounds of a unified scheme of what is right (Rouse, 1994, p.101). To understand how power is exercised over the marginalised or oppressed it is important to note that in Foucault's terms, 'sovereignty', or the ownership of power, is not related to any physical existence, but to the 'theoretical construction' of the dominant power and its extended systems of control (Rouse, 1994, p.101).

This theory is pertinent because it can explain how, even when exercised in a well meaning manner, can still negatively affect the agency of the original culture. This is because, for Foucault, 'power is not possessed by a dominant agent', but is exercised instead through the dissemination and acceptance of its discourse, and via institutions and networks (Rouse, 1994, p.106). This reading also lends a better perspective on how appropriation is a consequence of systemic control rather than the actions of an individual. For an individual to be accused of

---

<sup>1</sup> Even today, the mass incarceration of African American males is seen as the continuation of this disenfranchisement, an issue explored in Ava DuVernay's documentary, *13<sup>th</sup>* (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Another example of 'Othering' is the use of stereotypes, which divides groups via the reducing and simplifying of identities (Hall, 1997).

appropriating the culture of another would in many cases be a very complex claim. The experiences of the individual such as their relationship to the culture who's material they are using, the debate between influence and appropriation, and a person's right to incorporate anything they have been exposed to in their work, will likely be too unclear to ascertain a definitive answer to whether they have appropriated another's culture or not. While an individual may contribute to the wider appropriation of culture material, only in some cases could it be argued that they are influential enough to contribute to a systematic adoption of the same.

An example may be useful here. An amateur painter who is influenced by art from another culture, who then goes on to draw on this influence in his own work, while running the risk of misrepresentation or simply poor taste, has probably not contributed to a wider damaging of the image of the original culture (as long as they are not depicting a negative representation of the given culture). That the painter's motives are unclear means that it is difficult to discern whether what they have done is appropriation in the harmful sense that we are dealing with. Instead, the accusation is better levelled, and more useful, when applied to cultural institutions and those who seek to profit from the cultural artefacts of another. An example of this would be the institutions of Hollywood that disregard cultural sensitivity in aid of drama and storytelling, representing a variety of peoples in often crude, stereotypical, and thoughtless ways. They appropriate the traditions and identities of cultures to paint inaccurate and often harmful depictions. We will go on to look at George Gershwin and Jack Kerouac as examples that sit somewhere between the two given here, creative decisions made by individuals that have, however, a side effect of questionable representation. So, while the actions of an individual may be, and in many cases have been, harmful to the culture from which they are taking, the main perpetrators of appropriation will be the structural institutions that not only misrepresent, but that perpetuate and capitalise on this.

### **Appropriation and its Consequences**

To examine the effect of hegemony, and therefore appropriation, we must first define it. In the Gramscian sense it refers to the structures that contribute to social control, termed 'soft power'. For Gramsci, a hegemony encompasses all the apparatus that influence society, such as 'the church, the educational system, the press', with emphasis on 'institutions which helped to create in people certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order' (Cox, 1993, p.51). In the Western artworld, cultural hegemony will be largely disseminated through institutions that are in agreement, consciously or subconsciously, with established artistic values, or what Cox calls 'expectations' (1993, p.51). For example, galleries, educational establishments, printed and broadcast media, will all conform in some way to the perpetuation of these expectations. Appropriated material, therefore, will be shaped to fit into these accepted parameters. While there is space for experimentation, there is still a historical system of 'art', through which new arts are evaluated and assessed, providing the lens through which material is understood. It is clear then, that cultural appropriation contributes to the removal of agency as the appropriated material is absorbed into the hegemonic cultural discourse.

One argument mitigating this would be Young's; that the representation of a culture may bring opportunities to the 'Other', and aid in the progression of the acceptance of their culture, resulting in appropriation having 'redeeming social value' (2005, p.139). However, postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that in fact, the members of an oppressed and marginalised culture, who she refers to as 'subalterns', cannot have a voice, as systems of oppression will always restrict the agency of the subject. Spivak argues that it is the goal of the subaltern 'to rewrite the development of the consciousness' that has led to their oppression, and while Spivak is referring to oppression in India, we can apply the same theory to any society under imperialism (1988, p.27). Spivak agrees with Foucault that systems of power can be confronted by altering social discourse and that 'to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history' (1988, p.27). In other words, by drawing attention to neglected cultural products that 'had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value', the oppressed group can begin to elevate its social influence and standing through the introduction of its own cultural material into mainstream society (1988, p.27). However, it is the representational possibilities for the subaltern where the quest for autonomy fails. This is because any attempt to realise one's own autonomy will be restricted by hegemonic discourse, arguing that "the subject' implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counterpossibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups' (Spivak, 1988, p.28). In other words, all hegemonic systems have the ability to control modes of representation, and it is not possible to represent oneself if the apparatus of representation is institutionally biased or controlled by a dominant power. The distinction is not that the subaltern cannot 'speak' at all, but in doing so must be within 'the dominant discourse that provides the language and conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p.201).

The relevance of Gramsci, Spivak, and Foucault to this thesis is that if we are to understand something aesthetically such as jazz which contains both western and non-western influences and a complex social history, then it is necessary to analyse the surrounding socio-cultural environment. The discourses of cultural institutions, and the creation of aesthetic value, relate back to how groups are able to represent themselves, if at all, within the confines of a specific culture. It is here that we can begin to understand how an oppressed culture may seek autonomy and distinguish itself, and how this can be achieved from within the existing social confines. I now turn to the issue of how cultural appropriation and marginality can contribute to the loss of agency, and ultimate assimilation with the dominant culture.

### **Cultural Appropriation and Social Equality**

It is necessary to consider the assertion that any form of representation by the dominant group will have a negative effect on the agency of the original owners of the appropriated culture. Spivak's distinction that it is 'the dominant discourse that provides the language and conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks' suggests that, when used, cultural material will be forced through this same filter, removing original meaning and significance (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2000, p.201). This is the basis for an objection to Young's analysis of cultural appropriation and subsequent offence, who argues that as long as representations are not

wrong, in that they do not misrepresent or distort the appearance of a culture, then they are not offensive. In his own words, Young states that ‘one cannot reasonably be offended by the mere fact that an outsider has represented some aspect of one’s culture, so long as the representation is not inaccurate’ (2005, p.145).

This claim omits the nuance of how accurate a cultural representation can be when made by an outsider. It may not be grossly false, but it is reasonable to expect that an outsider will be unable to totally convey the complex cultural meanings of a product that may be tied to socio-historic context, which gives us the primary objection to Young’s claim. If cultural appropriation is an exercise inherent to a hegemonic social system, then any form of appropriation is merely an extension of colonial discourse. Representations may in many cases be inaccurate even if not deliberately, as the full cultural significance of the appropriated material may be difficult to accurately represent, or may not be fully understood when exhibited in another cultural environment. If we consider observations mentioned earlier on Western cultural hegemony, appropriated material can and often will lose its original meaning as it is reshaped by Western ‘expectations’ of art (Cox, 1993, p.51).

In Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, first published in 1952, he examines how the demand for cultural assimilation threatens the cultural identity of the marginalised group (2008, p.9):

Every colonized people— in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality— finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.

The dominant culture demands assimilation, which subsequently permits greater access to its own social benefits and privileges. The real world examples of this are extensive, not least the fact that the first African American millionaire, Madame C . J. Walker, made her wealth through cosmetic products, which included those used for the straightening of hair and bleaching of skin (Sollors, 2006, p.157).<sup>3</sup> There is beginning to form what we can best understand as an epistemic problem regarding cultural appropriation, and the effect it has on cultural agency and representation. The significant questions here are how different forces act upon the understanding of marginalised cultures, and subsequently how cultural identities are formed and maintained.

### **Epistemic Problems Regarding Cultural Imperialism**

---

<sup>3</sup> Emma Dabiri examines the historic treatment of African hair (and hairstyles), the European ignorance toward their particular cultural significance, and their complex social role in the face of overwhelming, institutional demand to conform to white expectations (2020).

By examining appropriation as an epistemic issue, we can understand the varying effects of cultural representation. In light of this, we will be in a better position to analyse aesthetic qualities and consider how they gained recognition over others, and what influences this. Said defines imperialism and colonialism as being underpinned by 'ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination' (1994, p.9). To expand on this, understanding how discourses are perpetuated through representations helps illuminate why cultural appropriation can be so problematic in its validation of cultural imperialism when a work is removed from its cultural context.

Poststructuralist theory argues that inherent in the text are references to a discourse, being that of the established socio-cultural tradition, and as such, there is always 'a communication or intertextual relation between poetic words and their prior existence in past poetic texts' (Allen, 2000, p.39). Therefore, the work and its canon are linked to representational meanings in the relevant societies' culture, and every work holds meaning beyond that deliberately intended by its author (Allen, 2000). However, when representations are made by the dominant groups, and other groups not 'equally empowered within the language game', there occurs a 'clash between dominant and repressed discourses', as a result of this we find what Homi K. Bhabha terms 'hybridity' and the 'double-voiced' nature of postcolonial discourse (Allen, 2000, p.165). Before examining this, however, it is important to consider that the phrase 'language game' refers to Wittgenstein's theory of language as 'a form of human rule-governed activity', which contains its own systems of understanding and interpretation that must first be known before being engaged with (Hacker, 1995, p.461). This aspect of the language game, that is, the required understanding of the specific rules, is crucial.

The notion of the 'double-voiced' text and its semiotic nature has a direct relationship to Gates Jr.'s 'Signifying' theory, which, as a language game, he explains as shifting 'attention from the semantic to the rhetorical level' (1988, p.58). The use of language, particularly the emphasis on rhyming and word-play, generates what Gates calls a 'redirection toward sound', and in the language game of signifying, playing on the vertical, 'paradigmatic axis' of language affects the horizontal, 'syntagmatic axis' (1988, p.58). This forms the fundamental basis of signifying, as a discourse of subversion and revision of the rules and norms of language as they are understood by the dominant group. Using language to 'baffle, circumvent, and even subdue agents of oppression', signifying situates itself as a form of resistance (Floyd, 1995, p.94). Through the constant revision of language and grammar, the linguistic process, combined with storytelling and narrative, the signifying poems manifest and dissect real-world issues (1988). Describing the dream-like quality of the poems and stories as 'fantasies of reversals of power relationships', Gates writes, 'to dream the fantastic is to dream the dream of the Other' (1988, p.59). As established, colonial discourse can produce and disseminate an understanding of marginalised cultures that establishes a hegemonic bias above any objective accuracy or legitimacy (Said, 2003). If we view appropriation as a postcolonial intertextual practice, where the dominant ideology controls the textual meanings, then however much a representation of a culture may attempt to be authentic or genuine, it will be viewed through the lens of the historically dominant culture, at the expense of its original cultural meaning. To further explore the question of cultural

appropriation and whether it can have a redeeming value (Young, 2005), we must examine this more closely, specifically the potential epistemic consequences of appropriation.

In treating appropriation as an epistemic issue, we can draw on a variety of theories. Miranda Fricker's work on how to understand discursive phenomena in which a person 'is ingenuously downgraded and/or disadvantaged in respect of their status as an epistemic subject', gives us the term '*discriminatory* epistemic injustice' (2017, p.53). One aspect of this is called 'testimonial injustice', which regards an individual's 'spontaneous assessments of their interlocutor's credibility', when engaging with others, and the effect this has on the subsequent discursive relations (2007, p.17). It is the lack of intention inherent to testimonial injustice that must be considered here, because this will help explain how cultural appropriation can have a negative impact on the identity and agency of a subject, even when that is not the intended purpose. The nuance is that testimonial injustice involves 'discriminatory but ingenuous misjudgement', and is not deliberate (Fricker, 2017, p.54). However, as Fricker succinctly writes, 'non-deliberateness does not entail non-culpability' (2017, p.55).

While not intentional, there is still responsibility in the dissemination of prejudicial judgements and misrepresentations. In my own conversation with Miranda Fricker, she explained that the occurrence of testimonial injustice may arise as once a subject is wilfully misrepresented, this can cause others to give the subject 'a deficit of credibility owing to prejudice mobilized in them' (2019). If we consider the hegemonic misrepresentations that will occur in the colonisation of another land or people, such as Said examines in *Orientalism*, after misrepresentations are disseminated and established, the subsequent attitudes toward the culture and its people will too be prejudiced.

Returning to cultural appropriation, acts of misrepresentation leading to epistemic injustice are not always accidental, but may also be caused by ignoring the 'epistemic tools' of the marginalised group (Polhaus, 2012, p.715). Social stratification and an individual's 'lived experience' and 'common challenges', will lead to the development of epistemic resources through which the individual approaches and understands the world (Polhaus, 2012, p.717). Ultimately, as echoed by Spivak, the dominant group decides which epistemic resources are maintained and shared and which are ignored. As Polhaus writes, there is a reason for this, as in recognising the epistemic tools of the marginalised, would move 'epistemic power away from dominant situatedness' and potentially 'make clearer the injustices that maintain dominant privilege' (Pohlhaus, 2012, p.721). Reanalysing an example used by Fricker, the court case in Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mocking Bird*, Pohlhaus observes that the jury commits a 'past and continuing failure to enter into cooperative epistemic interdependence' with the accused Tom Robinson, and due to the jury's prejudice against those 'outside dominant social positions', in this case an African-American male, they commit this form of epistemic injustice by wilfully failing to understand him or take seriously his defence (2012, p.725).

The distinctions between the different ways in which a subject can be epistemically wronged can be examined more deeply, and widened to include other issues such as the hermeneutical consequences (Catala, 2015). However, what we have demonstrated so far is how the

hegemonic institutionalisation of art, and the appropriation of other cultures, can perpetuate the marginalisation of a group. This is, in part, due to the group's epistemic tools, fundamental to the comprehension of their culture products, being disregarded. For example, Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of 'Signifying' can be viewed as an example of an epistemic resource. Gates documents a vast and complex cultural artistic and linguistic discourse which, while being actively understood and engaged with by cultures of African heritage, remained unconsidered in the Western art tradition. Therefore, a work in which 'Signifying' is a fundamental element of its creation, or rather, if it is an epistemic resource that must be known to then understand the artists' intention, it will not be fully appreciated if this resource is not considered by the culture to whom the work is presented. However, there are other, perhaps less obvious, examples throughout the European musical tradition of the same principle occurring in the use of appropriated material.

### **Appropriation in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century European Music**

There are several examples we can use to examine the appropriation of African and African American culture in European music in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. We shall explore these here as a precursor to the more in depth analysis of jazz which is this thesis' central focus. Let us consider the sixth movement of Claude Debussy's *Children's Corner* suite, "Golliwogg's Cakewalk" (190. The 'cakewalk' is a reference to a dance historically performed by enslaved people as a form of entertainment whilst living on American plantations, that portrayed a 'stately and fancy mimicking of Master and Missus', which after emancipation became performed for both white and black audiences (Floyd, 1995, p.67). There is an identifiable act of rebellion in the mocking of the 'master and missus', a resistance to their oppressors through dance, and the use of parody and pastiche is interpreted by Gates to be a fundamental of signifying and the 'black literary tradition' (1988, p.94). Debussy's use of the term 'Golliwogg', however, references the use in the colonial and early post-colonial era of what can be termed 'minstrel imagery'. A key feature of Western 20th century romanticisation of slavery, it was a part of commonplace racial stereotyping and depiction throughout the era (Sollors, 2006). Debussy combines the musical stylistic qualities of the cakewalk, at least as he had experienced it via performances in Parisian entertainment, and incorporates motifs from Richard Wagner's 1860 *Tristan und Isolde* (McKinley, 1986).

The musical features of the cakewalk, and other forms of musical and performative expression of African origin, were influential to the development of later African-American musical genres after emancipation and beyond (Floyd, 1995). However, the cultural meaning and significance of the cakewalk is lost in Debussy's appropriation. As a result, audiences whose initial exposure to music of African origin was through Debussy's composition, may result in a prejudicial view of their music. Equating the culturally complex form of the cakewalk with minstrel imagery, its presentation as being for children and not 'serious' music, and in combination with Debussy's influential status, results in a highly damaging representation. We have addressed the misguided view that as long as an accurate representation is made, then the resulting product is not offensive, but in this case, even if the music and associated dance were faithfully portrayed, it is its dissemination without context or original cultural ownership that presents the issue.

The main, complex contention when assessing offensiveness, is determining on whom the decision rests to decide what is or isn't offensive. Within artistic practice, it seems that we are more likely to encounter an unintentional misrepresentation, as rarely is art created to deliberately attack a person's identity. Of course there are examples of this in history, such as propaganda and politically motivated works, but I believe it is correct to say that the majority of art does not concern a decidedly deliberate attack on a culture or social group. As we have been examining, cultural misrepresentations, intentional or not, which are then perpetuated and disseminated through structural institutions, can go on to have a significant effect on the mainstream view of the original culture, and can therefore be said to be in some capacity offensive.

Bearing this in mind, it follows that there are other musical works which, while not being explicitly derogatory, offer a distinct lens through which to view African culture, and as a result exemplify appropriation that is offensive. Later 20<sup>th</sup> century compositions such as Darius Milhaud's 1923 *La Création du monde* (1929) and Stravinsky's 1945 *Ebony Concerto* (1946) both drew on the composers' own experiences of African-influenced music, with the latter drawing more directly from American jazz. What these works represent is the more nuanced issue of representation, within, but not totally comprising, a work. These works are not 'symphonic jazz' like the work of Paul Whiteman, which we will examine shortly, nor are they based entirely on representations of African culture. However, they are influenced by jazz, with the specific musical features used to portray certain emotions or metaphors, and this is where the importance of intention reveals itself. It could be argued that an unintentional misrepresentation of a culture that comprises a small part of a creative work is not 'appropriation' in full and destructive sense, but it is important to consider the structural nature of hegemony, and how individual acts, however small, contribute to the greater issues within a system such as the art establishment.

## Conclusions

We can conclude that cultural appropriation in any form has the potential to perpetuate and exacerbate cultural division, as well as stripping important cultural material of its original meanings, as it contributes to the loss of cultural agency, regardless of the specific representations that are made. This position is more sympathetic to the effects of the discourse of cultural appropriation than the specific nuances observed by Young, who argues that if a certain type of content or subject appropriation is 'widely tolerated' by a cultural group, then to be offended by it is 'unreasonable' (2005, p.145). This cannot be a solid defence of appropriation, because there are many instances in which appropriation can be normalised to the degree that it does not cause widespread offence. Nonetheless, its existence is rooted in a systematic denial of agency to a marginalised group, and is harmful and restrictive to social equality. As such, we can also reject Young's claim of 'redeeming social value'. The Oxford English Dictionary defines appropriation as to 'take for one's own use without permission' (2004, p.64), and therefore the very definition of cultural appropriation echoes the colonial discourse through which cultural agency is removed. If there were to be any benefit of cultural



appropriation that were to outweigh the negatives, it would cease to be appropriation at all. As appropriation is a pejorative term, in the cases of artists being influenced or inspired by cultural material, another term should be used.

The reason for this exposition of appropriation is that we can now look at examples closer to the music we are examining, and understand how specific musical features developed, and how aesthetic values took their shape in light of the musical culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question we can now begin to answer is what effect did cultural appropriation have on jazz, in particular the work of Jack Kerouac and George Gershwin, and in the wake of modernism.

## Chapter 2: Aesthetics after the Harlem Renaissance

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Western aesthetic values in the early 20th century and their influences. In assessing the varying cultural influences on the construction of aesthetic value, we can see how different cultural events such as the Harlem Renaissance and the rise in popularity of swing music, offered competing concepts of aesthetic value. Therefore, in understanding the different values these phenomena embodied, we can then begin to see how they came together to influence the development of jazz in the mid 20th century.

In conclusion, we see how the most substantial influence in jazz was the blues, and that other cultural movements, such as modernism, while still influential, were less significant. We also see that in jazz, the premise of *authenticity* regards a different concept than the one presented in the aesthetics of perfection, and begin to examine how this impacts the relationship between works and performances.

### The Harlem Renaissance

We must begin our discussion with an overview of the aesthetic values and ideals that were prominent in the early 20th century. Of particular importance is the influence of modernism, and the understanding of how it intersected with other cultural movements, for example, the Harlem Renaissance. One insightful analysis of the development of modernism within African American culture is Houston A. Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987). His critique is that historically the assessment of the cultural success of the Harlem Renaissance has rested on a Western, bourgeois framework, which is a criticism that has also been extended to all African-American culture (Jackson, 2000). In his assessment of the cultural significance of the Harlem Renaissance, Baker identifies several key aesthetic features of the movement.

One feature is termed the 'deformation of mastery' (Baker, 1987, p.49). This term refers to the use of 'allaesthetic characteristics', which are biological qualities that are used to distinguish an animal within its own ecosystem, with Baker giving the example of a peacock, with the distinguishing characteristic being its tail, and the purpose of which being to stand out and increase attractiveness (1987, p.50). Baker sees this as part of 'diasporic expressivity', and summarises its effect as 'both a metadiscourse on linguistic investiture and a lesson in the metaphorical "worm holing"', which he describes as 'the tunnelling out of the black holes of possession and "tight places" of old clothes, into, perhaps, a new universe' (1987, p.56). Baker's exposition is complex, but the key element of this theory is that it offers an explanation of how, in an environment dominated by a white, bourgeois society, African American art was able to manifest itself faithfully as well as achieve success in the marketplace. When faced with the artistic choice of whether to blend in, or stand out, Baker argues that both methods were used by African Americans, so they could survive culturally in white America. As such, Baker rejects as a criticism the view that African American art had been forced to bend itself to fit into that which would be accepted by white America. His reasoning is that this was a necessity, and that some characteristics already accepted in mass culture needed to be present, stating that 'if the

younger generation was to proffer “artistic” gifts, such gifts had to be recognizable as “artistic” by Western, formal standards’ (1987, p.86).

Following this Baker rejects the typical Western definition of authenticity, and offers one that is inclusive and relevant when applied specifically to African American art, with the difference being that this definition does not suggest ‘a *raffiné* ARTWORLD projected by institutional theories of expression’, but instead ‘an everyday world’ (1987, p.100). Authenticity in the form that Baker offers does not require the institutionalised qualities of art that are only accessible to the elite, but includes creative practices accepted in African American culture that are considered ‘efficacious in the office of a liberating advancement of THE RACE’ (1987, p.100). In rejecting the Western definition of authenticity, Baker’s definition is more inclusive, and places emphasis on the recognition and celebration of cultural history. For example, Baker uses Alain Locke’s collection of essays *The New Negro*, first published in 1925, as an example of the celebration of African culture within the Harlem Renaissance. Locke details a wide variety cultural pillars, including spiritual songs, poetry, and discussion of historical artefacts, which Baker sees as being fundamental to the modern African American culture of the 1920s, and demonstrating a belief in ‘*change* qualified by *traditional* expressive possibilities’ (Baker, 1987, p.72). Locke was keen to remove academic standards applied to African American culture, and include a wider variety of creative discourse, and through resisting academic restrictions, Locke hoped that there would be ‘common cause between white modernists and Harlem writers’, although North argues that this was optimistic in the reality of a still extremely divided nation outside of the creative sphere (1994, p.146).

Another example that also shows the difference between views of the relationship between African American and white American culture in the 1920s, can be seen in the comments made by the writer Gilbert Seldes in an essay from 1923, and the poem ‘Shoot It Jimmy’ by William Carlos Williams. It was Seldes’ position that ‘before jazz can amount to much as an art form it must be appropriated by white musicians with conventional training’, whereas in Williams’ poem, where he writes from the perspective of a jazz musician, he appears to believe the opposite, referencing improvisation through a remark on written notation as ‘sheet stuff’, and emphasising how ‘nobody else but me’ can play the music, concluding with the line ‘they can’t copy it’ (North, 1994, p.153). Seldes’ writing echoes Baker’s defence of the Harlem Renaissance and the necessity for African American art ‘to be recognizable as “artistic” by Western, formal standards’, although in more severe terms, and exemplifies how there was demanded of jazz a conformity to the accepted musical practice of white American society (Baker, 1987, p.86). Williams’ comments on the other hand, reflect a sentiment more in keeping with what Baker identifies as ‘authenticity’ (1987, p.100).

Authenticity in African American creative practice can be understood in part as linked to the emergence of ‘Pan-Africanism’ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, through which those of African heritage sought to celebrate and propagate their culture (Floyd, 1995, p.100). Like Baker’s ‘renaissancism’, Pan-Africanism maintains the celebration of culture and values central to African American modernism, similar to Locke’s belief in the removal of academic standards that restricted African American culture, and Baker’s emphasis on ‘*traditional* expressive

possibilities' (Baker, 1987, p.72). As such, the authentic creative product was one that maintained some link with the history of African American culture, however much it may also conform to other artistic or creative standards.

A pertinent example of the manifestation of a traditional cultural discourse in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of 'Signifying' and *The Signifying Monkey* (1988). The Signifying Monkey is a literary figure whose origins can be traced from African folklore and Yoruban mythology, through to its specific emergence in the era of slavery (1988, p.51). Gates explains the linguistic role of the Monkey, and the rhetorical nature of its language as existing 'as a sequence of signifiers', which consequently effect 'meanings through their differential relation', drawing attention to itself through 'rhyming, repetition, and several of the rhetorical figures used in larger cultural language games' (1988, p.53). As a linguistic tool, Gates writes that 'he exists to embody the figures of speech characteristic to the black vernacular', which indicates its significance when employed in creative forms (1988, p.53). Appearing in poems, stories, and songs, the premise is to use language and language games as a form of what Floyd calls 'psychological self-defence and self-empowering strategies' (1995, p.92).

In jazz, Gates suggests that signifying can be seen in the 'repetition and revision' of existing musical compositions, and in the referencing of other African American musical styles, such as Oscar Peterson's 'Signify' and Count Basie's 'Signifyin'" deliberately drawing on 'boogie-woogie, stride, and blues' (1988, p.63). Fundamental to signifying and its relationship with music is the referential treatment of other works, and Floyd gives the following examples (1995, p.95):

In African American music, musical figures Signify by commenting on other musical figures, on themselves, on performances of other music, on other performances of the same piece, and on completely new works of music.

Gates' theory has been explored in relation to a wide variety of African American culture, and to do this further is not my intention. Instead, I believe the work of Gates, Floyd, and Baker helps elucidate key aesthetic principles beyond traditional Western theories of art and culture, and how traditional theories of art may not fully encompass the artistic products of diaspora cultures.

In my own conversation with Houston Baker, he identifies his and Gates' theories as efforts to correct 'conscious and unconscious biases vis-a-vis African American life and aesthetics' (2019). To develop a more accurate and culturally relevant framework would not only result in more comprehensive and illuminating conclusions, but would also undo prejudiced interpretations constructed under historic institutional elitism (Baker, 2019):

We needed a black blues, academic theorization of our beauty as a covert action to put ourselves in adequate logistical formation to challenge (at least that) a colonial calculus.

Paul Gilroy also recognises lack of appropriate theory in the understanding of cultural identity, and the problematic nature of analysing African culture and its descendants whilst ignoring

'neglected modes of signifying practice like mimesis, gesture, kinesis, and costume' (1993, p.78).

Gates' and Baker's work can be read as connected, as they both maintain similar approaches to understanding the significance of traditional expressive techniques when understanding contemporary creative forms. However, another important aspect of their work is that they present theories that aim to correct misinterpretations and crude discussions of complex cultural history. The purpose of this exposition is, as we look closer at real examples of jazz aesthetics and their manifestation in creative practice, we will see how the misunderstanding of many features of the genre, via an effort to view them only through the lens of Western musical tradition, leads to a profound and enduring deficit in the recognition of its musical ideals and ultimate creative and cultural purpose. We can now begin to look closer at jazz in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the continuity and change of its aesthetic values. The next section will focus on how jazz existed alongside popular American culture, examining the way in which it was subjected to appropriation, and the ultimate consequences of the competing views of the genre, whether as art, or as entertainment.

### **Kerouac and Gershwin**

As jazz grew in popularity, and established itself as part of mainstream American music and entertainment, a number of changes took place regarding its relationship with the existing cultural landscape. The first, and perhaps most readily observable, is the appropriation of certain musical characteristics by popular composers and songwriters, with one example being the case of George Gershwin, Paul Whiteman, and what has been termed 'symphonic jazz', and in examining this we can begin to understand the impact that appropriation and popular reception had on the development of the music and on its progenitors.

In February 1924, Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue* was first performed in New York, bringing jazz, or at least elements of jazz, to what Peretti calls the 'classical elite' (1997, p.35). While Peretti notes that this work helped bring jazz to a wider audience, Lemke argues that in reality, what occurred was a sterilisation of an African American art form to make it acceptable to white bourgeois society (1998, p.69):

Turning down the African rhythms, he amplified the harmonies. This emphasis on the European tampered with the racial mix of jazz; attempting to undo its original hybridity, he created what we might think of as "whitened jazz".

In fact, such was the effect of this that African American jazz musicians recognised the appropriation of their music and sought to distance themselves from it, as shown in this conversation between Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson (Hentoff, 1976, p.257):

Much was being made at the time of Paul Whiteman bringing "dignity" to jazz, and Ellington said to Henderson, "Look, why don't we drop the word 'jazz'? Let's call what

we're doing 'Negro music' and then there won't be any confusion between what we do and what Whiteman and all the other white men do."

These quotes present the argument that Gershwin and Whiteman deliberately sought to take certain musical characteristics from jazz and make them more palatable to white American audiences, rather than be simply inspired by music that they had begun to hear more often, which is contentious. It is important to distinguish between Gershwin and Whiteman, as the former would compose many songs that would go on to be jazz standards, and can be said to have had a positive and constructive influence on the genre. However, here we are examining the consequences of the mainstream adoption of jazz, in which Gershwin was a significant figure.<sup>4</sup>

We can clearly identify the response by jazz musicians to this as a resistance to their music being appropriated, diluted, and repurposed, and appropriation as endemic of a colonial discourse in which cultural artefacts are taken from their owners, and specifically how, as Baker writes, the West has been 'pirates of black song through millennia' (Baker, 2019).

The second phenomenon that occurred, alongside appropriation as we have so far examined it, was the adoption and idolisation of African American culture, particularly by certain demographics within white audiences. Praising jazz for its authenticity and originality, they focused on and fetishised perceived characteristics of African American socio-cultural life. Writers like Jack Kerouac saw jazz and African American culture as an exciting and intriguing alternative to bourgeois, middle-class society, and this passage from *The Road* exemplifies his attitude (1972, p.169):

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27<sup>th</sup> and Welton in the Denver coloured section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.

In this passage Kerouac's desire is to experience a more authentic culture, finding this in his perception of jazz as an art form that had escaped the confines of mass culture, which was a view shared by other young white Americans. However, he erroneously conflates this with social marginalisation.

Young's philosophical enquiry into cultural appropriation proffers a useful theory for this type of behaviour, one he calls 'subject appropriation' (2000, p.7). Through this type of appropriation, 'outsiders represent the lives of insiders', and although Kerouac's account is not directly in the first person, he takes upon himself the ability to define African American culture as though were an insider (2008, p.7). Young's observation is that through this form of appropriation, 'outsiders draw upon their own experiences of other cultures', and there is a danger of misrepresentation due to a lack of understanding (2008, p.9). Ultimately, in the evaluation of artistic merit, Young

---

<sup>4</sup> Gershwin's compositions would continue to be influential in jazz, particularly *Summertime* and *I Got Rhythm*, which would become influential standards.

suggests that if a work is morally flawed, then it is also flawed aesthetically (2011). In the case of Gershwin and Whiteman the situation is more complicated. Young's interpretation of the jazz-influenced work of Gershwin is as a 'hybrid', in that there is appropriation of African American culture, but also use of his own in the creation of a multifaceted work. Young maintains that their work is still valuable aesthetically, which is a claim that requires closer examination (2011, p.180).

Young overstates the potential benefits of cultural appropriation, particularly perceived social and economic benefits. The term 'appropriation' would be inaccurate if the act was beneficial, and so to say appropriation can have a positive outcome is not the correct way of approaching the issue. In this specific case, Young argues that through cultural appropriation by white musicians, there was a benefit for the African American musicians whose music was being appropriated in that it 'made audiences aware of the music of African Americans' which subsequently 'helped open up opportunities for minority musicians' (2011, p.183).

This view is problematic, particularly when overstated. Whiteman and Gershwin's work may well have introduced white audiences to African American art, but if we take Lemke's contention into account, then what they also contributed to was further division between white and African American audiences and creative spheres (although Gershwin's later compositions such as *I Got Rhythm* and *Summertime* would go on in turn be adopted by jazz musicians as standards, and so his relationship with the genre is more complex). Aspects of jazz such as its unique approach to harmonic theory, did achieve acceptance in elite circles, arguable in part through use by white composers, but the original genre and its practitioners remained of a lesser artistic class, and so Young's claim that opportunities were afforded is contentious. Furthermore by reshaping jazz to fit a more accepted artistic standard, it removes the original cultural identity of the music, and subsumes it into the normalised dominant culture. It can be seen that by drawing on jazz and marketing it for white audiences, removing its cultural ownership and thereby promoting a particular diluted version of jazz, it is a convincing example of what Spivak terms the 'narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject' (1988, p.28).

One may adopt the aestheticist position; that the work has its own value independent of socio-political concerns. To address this claim as it directly relates to jazz and African American art in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, we must return to Baker's comments on authenticity. If the aesthetic value of African American art was in part related to cultural authenticity, then under the aestheticist view, while particular musical aspects may be praised, the full cultural significance cannot be grasped, and the work not fully understood. There may be qualities in which an aestheticist would find value, for example Gershwin's skill in composition and arrangement. Furthermore, one could argue that Gershwin's compositions are not jazz, but jazz influenced, and so the loss of cultural meanings do not matter as Gershwin's work does not lay claim to them. However, what we are examining here is how understanding the specific cultural aspects of a work contribute to its aesthetic value, and within this, the effects of appropriation. As such, whether the work does or does not attempt to be jazz proper, it requires a more engaged analysis than that of aestheticism, (which does not offer a proper treatment of appropriation), and one which considers the socio-political impact of these dynamics.

## Appropriation and Offence

If we pursue this line of argument further, we can again examine Young's argument that a defence of cultural appropriation can be made when there is evidence of the result having 'redeeming social value' (2005, p.139). The contention is that if there is great social benefit in the act of appropriation, as long as it outweighs the offence caused, it can be acceptable. One example Young gives is Shakespeare's portrayal of Jewish people in *The Merchant of Venice*. He argues that while great offence is caused by Shakespeare's depictions, his plays have 'a degree of social value that far outweighs their offensiveness' (2005, p.139). Another example Young gives in defence of offence being outweighed by social value is advertising and education regarding sexual health products, regardless of the offence this may cause those of particular religious beliefs. However, these two examples are entirely different, and one does not qualify the other. Primarily, regarding social impact, Shakespeare's caricature is degrading to a specific group, whereas in the example of the religious group, they are not being deliberately attacked.

Furthermore, there is no purpose to the offensive material, which simply presents tropes and stereotypes that are unrelated to the 'social value', which is found elsewhere and not dependent on the offensiveness. It should also be considered that the social value of Shakespeare in Young's example seems to be assessed through a Western viewpoint. For the dominant society to suggest that the offence is outweighed by the value misses the point that for those offended, the product may have no value at all. Forgiving the offence should be done by those who are offended in the first place, rather than outsiders who already value the work and are not in a position to understand the extent of the offence caused. This is not to say that there is no value in *The Merchant Of Venice*, but that the decision of whether the value outweighs any offence caused is highly subjective, and likely better answered by those to whom it may be offensive.

A similar objection is that Young's interpretation regards the depiction of a culture, rather than its appropriation, and so his examples do not actually provide evidence for his conclusion (Rudinow, 1995, p.138). As indicated above, a further argument against Young's position would be the question of how 'offence' is quantified, and by whom should the notion of offence be measured. If we take his example of Shakespeare, the value of *The Merchant Of Venice* may outweigh the offensiveness of his depiction of Jewish persons when being viewed by a Western audience, but then it is not the Western audience that the offence involves or is aimed at. We can now return to the debate outlined at the beginning of this chapter regarding aesthetic value, and how appropriation and notions of authenticity affected the development of particular characteristics within musical discourse.

## Authenticity and Aesthetic Value

In the construction of aesthetic value in jazz, the role of authenticity is highlighted when examining whether white musicians playing music of African American origin is, or should be, viewed in the same way, and how significant this is when assessing the value of the music. In



asking whether white musicians can perform African American music authentically, Rudinow presents two arguments.

The first he terms the 'proprietary argument', which regards the ownership of blues music as intellectual property and the subsequent performance as appropriation of this property, and the issue he raises with this position is that it 'obscures crucial facts about the social circumstances of the music's production' by focusing on the ownership of a style (1994, p.132). The second is the 'experiential access argument', which argues that there must be a firsthand experience of a culture by someone who then goes on to create its art, and in relation to the present question 'posits the experience of living as a black person in America as a precondition of the felt emotion essential to authentic expression in the idiom of the blues' (Rudinow, 1994, p.132). Rudinow concludes that neither argument maintains that white musicians cannot play the blues with authenticity, with the distinction being that authenticity is based 'not on race but rather on ethnicity', in that one can present 'genuine understanding and fluency' of a culture without necessarily being directly related to it (1994, p.134).

These arguments are convincing, particularly the premise of experiential access, in a theory of authenticity and aesthetic value. Applying this to the case of Gershwin and *Rhapsody In Blue*, Amiri Baraka's critique would suggest that this was merely typical cultural appropriation. This does not mean that there was a purposefully sinister or calculated approach in the use of jazz as an influence in his music, and to claim a work features appropriation is not to condemn it in its entirety, however the premise of appropriation in the epistemic sense suggests that there are broader consequences to seemingly minor acts such as this. Through appropriation, agency is taken from those of the original culture, in this case, African American jazz musicians, and arguably, as Gershwin's music contributed in part to the remarketing of jazz for white, middle-class audiences, intentionally or not, jazz was moved further from the ownership of African Americans. If we consider the aesthetic value of authenticity, we can observe cultural appropriation and fetishisation, in the vein of Kerouac and his contemporaries. Authenticity as an African American cultural idiom has been used in 'marketing' African American culture to 'white audiences', for example in 'the distinction between rural and urban blues' with the former perceived as more authentic (Gilroy, 1993, p.99).

This further raises the question of Western, or Eurocentric, views of those of marginalised and minority cultures, and how the subsequent relationship is formed between this and the perception of creative authenticity, and its exploitation. For example, Monson recognises the problematic nature of authenticity being assessed on race. For example, in cases where whiteness is seen as 'a sign of inauthenticity', 'universalistic rhetoric' can be seen as a claim to authenticity by white musicians seeking to appropriate African American culture, rather than actually trying to bridge racial divide in musical practice (1996, p.203).

The question, then, is one that regards what we can term 'access' - there must be certain characteristics present for a person to be able to authentically perform a genre of music and to have access to jazz, the musician must demonstrate a number of qualities. The boundary of whether they do or not may be unclear, but as we will see, as jazz changed so did what it meant

to be a jazz musician. To continue to explore the specific aesthetic values and customs that were influential to a number of musical cultures in the early 20th century, and serves our discussion as an example of the relationship between appropriation and influence, we can now turn to the blues.

### **The Blues Aesthetic**

We have seen that in jazz's history, the cultural appropriation of African American music and culture routinely occurred. This must be reconciled with the fact that as the music became more popular and accepted, as with all creative phenomena, it was practised and enjoyed by other social groups. If we are to understand jazz's musical development and social role, we must examine the distinction between cultural appropriation and a genre's increasing popularity, and how and why particular musical characteristics came to be shared between musicians.

Jackson posits the blues as a direct aesthetic influence in jazz, and describes what he calls the 'blues aesthetic', which includes African American cultural elements such as creative practices and religious influences, and the blues aesthetic is learnt through engagement with these (2000, p.51). In Amiri Baraka's (cited as LeRoi Jones) analysis of the blues as the original source material for jazz, he identifies that during the 1920s jazz had made 'possible for the first time' access to 'the legitimate feeling of Afro-American music', which the blues had not (2002, p.148). In other words, where blues had been a solely African American art form, alongside white classical elitism, jazz had opened a platform for both white and African American musicians (Jones, 2002, p.148):

Or rather, jazz enabled separate and *valid* emotional expressions to be made that were based on older traditions of Afro-American music that were clearly not a part of it. The Negro middle class would not have a music if it were not for jazz. The white man would have no access to the blues. It was a music capable of reflecting not only the Negro and a black America but a white America as well.

The claim is that the reason both African American and white musicians shared jazz was because it had evolved as an amalgamation of both African American and white musical discourses.

The contention is that jazz could be accessed by white musicians through their own musical practice, through the paradigm of 'art', as that was 'the white man's only way into it' (Jones, 2002, p.155). In particular, Baraka gives the example of the white jazz musician Bix Beiderbecke, who was a celebrated soloist in the 1920s, and he states that 'the emergence of the white player meant that Afro-American culture had already become the expression of a particular kind of American experience' which was evidence that 'this experience was available intellectually, that it could be learned' (2002, p.155). Here we are reminded of the term 'access' - in Baraka's view, jazz was not accessible to those who did not have the cultural understanding, but as the musical culture changed, so did the parameters of who could perform it authentically.

The statement that it can be 'learned' suggests that accepted aesthetic principles were available, that required a less strict cultural background compared to the blues. For the blues to have been used by white musicians is seen by Baker to be symptomatic of white America's theft of the African people and their culture, with the blues specifically representing a form of expression that was unobtainable to white people (Baker, 2019):

Whites -- one hopes at some epistemological reservoir publically unacknowledged --  
\*know\* there is no beauty like the blues. After all, they have been rapacious pirates of  
black song through millennia, just as they have of black bodies and wealth.

In jazz however, it seems that the music is accepted as a reflection of both African American and white American culture, although this remains problematic. Returning to the writing of Kerouac and Young's theory of subject appropriation, this was still affecting white understanding of African American culture, in what was largely just a romanticised notion of what they perceived as 'abandon and hedonism' within African American culture (Sidran, 1995, p.54).

So, while the 'blues aesthetic' as described here requires a specific cultural background, for jazz the requirements are broader. To address Rudinow's claim, while he is correct that 'genuine understanding and fluency' of a culture can be achieved without necessarily having always been a part of it, in the case of the blues, it is so closely tied to the African American experience of America, an authentic blues music was largely inaccessible to white musicians (1994, p.134). However, as the blues has become such an influential music across the globe and has been instrumental in shaping other musical genres, this is perhaps no longer the case today.

So, if we consider Rudinow's 'experiential access argument', we can see that for jazz, the requisite experience was widened (1994, p.132). Instead of requiring a specific cultural background in order to achieve authentic musical practice, as Baraka writes, jazz was 'capable of reflecting not only the Negro and a black America but a white America as well' (Jones, 2002, p.148). Of course, this does not exclude the potential for cultural appropriation. As we have seen with Gershwin and Kerouac, forms of cultural appropriation certainly took place. The nascent point is that jazz was accessible to white musicians as it represented elements of their own experience of America, such as socio-economic marginalisation, shared by African Americans. Cultural appropriation, therefore, is better approached on a case-by-case basis, as the conditions of any creative practice, and subsequently the relationship between its creator and the sources from which it draws, will likely differ even when other circumstances are similar. This point is also made by Young, who sees cultural membership in what he calls the Wittgensteinian sense, as a 'family resemblance concept', meaning that there are not necessarily sole characteristics that enable membership of a culture, but instead the requirement is 'enough of some pool of characteristics' (2005, p.137). As we have seen, in the case of jazz, the prerequisites for a genuine authentic music or at least the perception of it, are accessible through a broader range of characteristics than its predecessor the blues, and even of European genres such as classical music. If we are to better understand how aesthetic value is constructed in jazz, via its specific qualities, and how these would then influence Western

musical practice, one key example is its unique social function, this history of which, including the blues influence, must be examined.

### **Social Roles of Performance and Expression**

It has been argued that, broadly, in the huge variety of different cultures across Africa, one reoccurring aspect of the oral tradition was the use of linguistic devices aimed toward 'mocking their rulers and reciting the injustices they had suffered' (Levine, 2007, p.8). This served several purposes, including conflict resolution and the overcoming of social and individual tensions (2007, p.7):

In Africa, songs, tales, proverbs, and verbal games served the dual purpose of not only preserving communal values and solidarity but also providing occasions for the individual to transcend, at least symbolically, the inevitable restrictions of his environment and his society by permitting him to express deeply held feelings which ordinarily could not be verbalised.

This tradition can also be found in many of the songs written and sung by slaves in the United States, and such was their cultural specificity and linguistic uniqueness, they were often 'incomprehensible to white listeners' (2007, p.11).

To state that there was an 'African tradition' seems like an extreme generalisation considering the hundreds of cultures and thousands of societies that have existed within the continent throughout history. However, if we are considering a broad set of artistic principles that were dominant in the creative practise of a given era, (like the European tradition that valued the individual composer, the concert performance, and the strict work-concept), we can highlight some recurring themes (Floyd, 1995, p.32):

Scholars seem to agree that the aim of African music has always been to translate the experiences of life and of the spiritual world into sound, enhancing and celebrating life through cradle songs, songs of reflection, historical songs, fertility songs, songs about death and mourning, and other song varieties.

This is not to claim the purpose of all African music is and always has followed certain values, but instead to give a general indication of the role music has traditionally played in society. Nonetheless, what must be considered is the relevance of a theory of aesthetic values inherent to not a national culture, but a continental one, and how the propagation of a theory based on this assumption affected the reception of African culture in Western society.

Appiah's analysis of 'Afrocentrism' makes the essential point of questioning how accurate a theory that is based on such a broad demographic can be, stating 'that a biologically rooted conception of race is both dangerous in practice and misleading in theory' (1998, p.116). Appiah's contention maintains that 'African unity, African identity, need securer foundations than race', and a view of the African continent as one singular entity is misguided (1998, p.116).

Appiah's observation must be considered against any theory that seeks to link together groups based on a singular characteristic, and that while this view of African culture may reveal some shared similarities, it is reductive to expect a universal affinity between those who share a continental identity. Appiah argues that 'Afrocentrism' chooses 'to root Africa's modern identity in an imaginary history', conveying the belief of African history 'as the moment of wholeness and unity', that subsequently diverts attention 'from the problems of the present and the hopes of the future' (1998, p.116).

While there may still be some value in analysing general aesthetic principles or themes, similar to the way the European classical music can be seen to maintain certain features throughout its history (as well as the significance of subsequent departures from these in later genres and movements), the point that must be considered is the relevance and accuracy of treating any culturally diverse and complex group as being somehow inherently linked due to geography. In terms of 'access' to a culture, the assumption that certain characteristics mean a person must have a particular cultural background is of course wrong. So, taking Levine and Floyd into consideration, there do seem to be shared aspects of the socio-cultural purpose to music, or at least, some found frequently throughout the continents' varying cultures. This may not actually be such a large claim as it first appears, as of course it is easy to see how cultural products share meaning in neighbouring cultures as they are transported and adopted through the movement of people, although, what must be held in mind is that a perhaps universal principle in one culture, does not translate into the next, however close in proximity it may be.

Returning to the linguistic device of mocking and satirising, this, as well as the broader role of secular music in African American antebellum culture was largely ignored and often missed by white listeners because of the emphasis on the perception of its religious aspects (Levine, 2007). As African American culture continued to change in the wake of emancipation, the theme of 'grievances against the master class' as a subject in their creative practice, continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Levine, 2007, p.193). In the appropriation by white musicians of traditionally African American antebellum songs, particularly through the use of the minstrel figure, this feature was often a part of the performance, and as a result, Levine remarks how for white audiences there was generated a 'relief for any repressed feelings of guilt and ambivalence' in regards to slavery, but none the less, the use of song continued to be a place for African Americans to 'vent their complaints about whites and the social system' (2007, p.194).

So, what can be identified here is not only the appropriation and misinterpretation of a cultural signifier, but also an active example of the epistemic issues examined earlier. In seeing the offensive racial parody of the minstrel performance, white audiences viewed the social critique as a form of entertainment, rather than its reality as a historically significant form of expression that had descended from African culture. As shown by Levine, what was actually being displayed was a complex aspect of an oral tradition, but in its appropriation its meaning was lost. The reduction of African influenced cultural expression to a form of entertainment for white audiences is only a part of the epistemic injustice committed against African Americans. Ramsey states how minstrel performances 'involved the public degradation of the black body in

the American entertainment sphere', and of course this degradation was not limited to instances of minstrel performance (2004, p.51).

The music we have examined so far is rooted in its social function, and indeed this is where its expressive capability seems to be based. Through appropriation, the social function and significance was lost in its representation to white audiences, and the cultural meanings, while still relevant to African American audiences, were not engaged with or preserved. As well as this, the label of entertainment led to any artistic properties being disregarded. Part of the issue here is the preference for an autonomous Western musical ideal, such as in classical music, and an absence of an understanding of *heteronomous* music. In the Adornian sense, it is music without direct social function that is autonomous, and for heteronomous music, Hamilton argues that the 'direct social function' is what must be known for 'the event or process' itself to then be understood (2007, p.182). *Autonomy* is the Adornian ideal, as through autonomy comes critical function as a result of the lack of social function, as no social conditions have influenced its creation (Hamilton, 2007, p.183). It is necessary that a 'primary function makes essential reference to a participant understanding', which enables an agent to understand the event and any secondary functions, whereas for autonomous music, 'music *is* the social occasion' (Hamilton, 2007, p.183). If, as Floyd states, the very core of cultural expression in African culture was that of communal relevance, in other words, any creative output was inherently bound to the community in both meaning and performance, then not only does the premise of autonomy fail, its application to the analysis of African American music is misleading and essentially meaningless. A separation from social function renders the expressive qualities of the work lost. This is why Adorno's own comments on jazz hold little meaning, a claim which will be examined in the next chapter. Following this observation, the question we must ask is what the musical work is in relation to its performance, how the two premises interact, and in what ways performance and expression are related.

### **Performances versus Works**

To understand the role of the performance of a work, we can begin by approaching it as distinct from the work. To make the claim that performances are artworks in themselves, Peter Kivy argues that if 'a performance has aesthetically important properties of its own' which are distinct from the properties of the original, quoted work, then 'it must be a work of art itself' (1995, p.118). An authentic performance, specifically what Kivy terms 'personal' authenticity, occurs when a performance presents 'the qualities of personal style and originality', which are criteria that also apply to works of art (1995, p.123). Kivy contrasts this category of authenticity with 'historically authentic' performances (1995, p.108). He also rejects that to define something as authentic requires some type of sincerity to be present, manifested in the 'assertion of some opinion or the expression of some emotion, or both' (1995, p.109). As Kivy rightly observes, for the audience 'it is very difficult to see just what the emotion is that the performer might feel' before judging whether this emotion has or has not been expressed (1995, p.111). Instead, Kivy examines the perception of authenticity as drawn from the understanding of performances as works of art themselves, and the subsequent expectations placed upon it. The issue this raises

is how performances can be considered works of art when they are not lasting products that can be experienced multiple times.

Kivy's defence of performances, or 'events' as artworks refutes the claim that 'artworks are things; things endure; performances are events; events don't endure' (1995, p.126). The problem with this view is that it seems to be restrictive to a traditional theory of art, namely one that relies on a preserved artefact to be worthy of the title 'art', something that has been created through a defined process with a clear beginning and end. Using what Kivy calls the 'work-opus terminology' propagates the belief that only things that endure are art. In the European tradition, to endure becomes a symbol of quality and significance, and it is the enduring artefacts to which the title of art is applied. Kivy notes that 'since the advent of notations and scripts, some of what were once ephemeral arts have become enduring ones' (1995, p.126). The counter argument is that works are repeatable and portable, and with the creation of recording technology, performances also gain those qualities, fulfilling the criteria.

If we take the view of an artwork having to 'endure', it can be seen how the notation and subsequent standardisation of performed pieces is part of a traditional European expectation, one ultimately applied to all creative products and their evaluation as art. This relates to the observation made by Floyd on how notation and sheet music led to the loss of the emotional content and a misplaced emphasis on 'sentimentality' (1995, p.86). Even though not considered in 'artistic' terms at the time, even as entertainment, the African American musical language was expected to be understood in these terms, and was marginalised as a result.

It is somewhat facile to consider at this point in too much depth the exact parameters of what is and is not 'art', due to the relativistic nature of this term, and we will explore the precise definitions and their development in our case studies, and see how these terms were understood and interpreted by musicians themselves. What is significant is that we can see a central component of a creative form not given the same significance in Western culture. The colonial ignorance toward the cultures of the oppressed and marginalised is no secret, so this observation should come as no surprise. However, what is shown here is a divergence of fundamental aesthetic values regarding the European artistic tradition and music that is, at least partially, of African origin. What needs to be considered is that the two alternatives presented here are not necessarily at odds with each other. Performed music and composed music do not stand at opposite ends of the musical spectrum, and this is key in our understanding of jazz as influenced by both the African oral tradition and by the classical European tradition. As such, in our aesthetic analysis we can now examine these shared values and how they were manifested in creative practice.

### **Performance and the Aesthetics of Imperfection**

At present, it seems as though performance as an art in itself is in contradiction with what is termed the 'aesthetics of perfection'. The aesthetics of perfection and imperfection have historically been viewed as opposites; a 'dichotomy' between features such as 'process and product; impermanence and permanence; spontaneity and deliberation' (Hamilton, 2007,

p.196). The artistic ideal of perfection is to achieve ‘timelessness’, and a singular, finished, enduring work, with the performance of the work subject to the direct demands of the composer, rather than the interpretative will of a performer (Hamilton, 2007, p.197). One suggestion is that performance and improvisation are both compositional methods, each with differing processes but with the same desired result, that being the creation of a work. However, Hamilton rejects the understanding of improvisation as a form of composition, instead arguing that it has its own aesthetic values related to alternate artistic goals. It is here we can begin to locate the misunderstanding of jazz as entertainment or non-art music, and the root of the disconnect between the European classical music tradition and alternative, non-Western forms of creative practice.

The perfect and imperfect dichotomy begins to fail as soon as we begin to examine what the artistic goals of the two are. Features of perfection and imperfection are present within each, and as Hamilton puts, they are in reality ‘interpenetrating opposites’ (2007, p.197). For example, the value of ‘timelessness’ as an ideal quality of the work for the aesthetic perfectionist can in fact be found in both approaches. Performance maintains the work as much as its notation, with its repeated interpretation and exhibition keeping it alive in the musical language of the time, and aiding its progression through generations. Of course, the extreme view of perfection defines timelessness in far stricter parameters (Hamilton, 2007, p.199):

The aesthetics of perfection perhaps implies a Platonist conception of the musical work as an eternally existing sound-structure detachable from its original conditions of performance, instruments as well as locations.

This argument is of course unconvincing, not least because the social conditions of a work and the material that influences its creation can not be said to exist externally from the composer’s own life experience. In other words, the conditions of a work’s creation are too personal to be separated from its founding circumstances.

The aim of ‘imperfection’ is not to solely create a final work, but to provide an experience, with there being a compositional element in the creation of new music. As Hamilton writes, ‘the aesthetics of imperfection embraces improvisation *and* composition; it is an aesthetics of *performance*’ (2020, p.291). This account of imperfection supports the view of music as an event in itself, with the performance valuable in itself beyond simply a recreation of a work (Hamilton, 2007). While a finished composition is not the central objective of imperfection, there is nonetheless the creation of something new. Whether this work exists beyond its performance is not necessarily its creator’s main concern, although it is often significant, particularly due to the recording, sale, and celebration of live music.

Where the more important difference lies, is in which aesthetic qualities are being valued, or prioritised, over others. Between perfection and imperfection, Hamilton’s answer to this lies in the response to ‘contingencies’, observing that ‘imperfectionism is a *constant striving for new contingencies to respond to*’ (2020, p.299). These include responses to other musician’s own actions, to the natural or deliberate changes in tempo or energy, and to other changes that may



occur during performance that encapsulate the ethos and importance of live music making. The dynamic of an ensemble or band is based upon the musicians being able to respond to each other's unique ways of playing, and the more able a group is to do so, the more effective the performance will be. Imperfection is therefore the ethos of liveness, of being present in the moment of music making, rather than recreating pre-existing music.

These are features that may not necessarily be desirable in a performance that emphasised the aesthetics of perfection, and we can see things like mistakes as positive features of imperfection rather than as negatives. Mistakes specifically are significant as they challenge presupposed ideas and expectations, in that it is thought that a performance should be free of mistakes, but are a part of live music making, and therefore a contingency to respond to during the performance. What must be avoided, is the conflation between mistakes and errors or accidents; a mistake is subjective, as they do not exist without reference to a norm or expected standard.<sup>5</sup>

A critical observation is that 'imperfection presupposes background order, functionality or even perfection, not the pursuit of disorder or anarchy', and is therefore a diversion from the norm rather than a complete descent into musically antithetical chaos Hamilton (2020, p.298). In understanding imperfection in this way, we can begin to sketch an alternate but comprehensive approach to music as a creative practice, rather than any particular dichotomy or antithesis with the tradition of perfection. If improvisational artforms are being inappropriately evaluated as compositional forms then, as David Lloyd argues, instead of seeking an unstable aesthetics of imperfection, one should 'fully recognise improvisation's distinctive features as virtues fit for aesthetic appreciation in [their own] terms' (Hamilton, 2020, p.299). Under imperfection, there still exists an artistic pursuit, with ultimate goals to be achieved, and a 'thing' to be created. The consideration is that if, as Hamilton writes, an imperfectionist aims to respond to contingencies, then how does this translate when we are assessing artistry and authenticity in an artworld in which the finished, completed work is the ideal? As we have seen, the answer is that historically, the imperfection has been dismissed as not art proper.

The question that follows is how authenticity is quantified in a creative practice based around spontaneity. It seems unrealistic to expect an entirely improvised performance, with every aspect not heard before by the audience or planned by the musicians, and so there must be a middle ground because, as Hamilton rightly explains, perfection and imperfection are interpenetrating opposites. Authenticity when evaluated through an amalgamation of both the perfect and imperfect aesthetics, will require both separate and shared criteria. While the expectation may be that under the aesthetics of perfection and imperfection, authenticity regards quite distinct concepts, we can anticipate some similarities.

---

<sup>5</sup> On the difference between the two, Hamilton writes (2020, p.296):

Being mistaken is like misremembering or misunderstanding – which involve remembering or understanding, and so are not cases simply of *not* remembering or understanding. Being mistaken – in contrast to making an error – involves getting things partly right: the archaeologist recognised a body-part with five digits, but mistakenly concluded that it was a hand, not a foot.

## Locating Authenticity in Imperfection

So, while it would seem that in an analysis of perfection and imperfection, authenticity is achieved through different processes and must be understood through separate and conflicting frameworks, we have shown that this is not entirely the case. Nonetheless, if the wrong criteria are used to examine a particular creative form then it will be misunderstood, as a work that is authentic imperfectly may not be authentic perfectly, and vice versa. As we have been examining, there are epistemic consequences to this, whether these be the misinterpretation of works or, in a more structural sense, definitions of art and aesthetic value ignoring certain forms. While there is shared ground between the perceived alternatives of perfection and imperfection, authenticity is assessed differently in the two aesthetic processes, which must be understood in order for us to understand a creative process that incorporates both, and how it is subsequently valued by those who experience it.

As already demonstrated, it is originality and individual style that can give a musical performance authenticity, via the personal interpretation through which a new instance or version of a preexisting work is created (Kivy, 1995). Viewing arrangement as a creative process parallel to performing, and both as processes in which one can be authentic, we see how originality is manifested, and Kivy finds that arrangers are akin to 'interpreters, and their performances interpretations' (1995, p.138). The process in creating an original arrangement or performance creates authenticity, and it is this view that helps us mitigate the perfect/imperfect dichotomy, as whichever aesthetic approach is being followed, or given preference or value, it is the existence of originality that creates authenticity. Whether in response to contingencies or in the creation of a strict compositional model, originality is a key component. One problematic issue here is that style and originality are subjective. For example, the performer may do something that they themselves have never done before, but that the audience has seen elsewhere. Similarly, the work may be original compared to the specific artist's own body of work, but not compared to other musicians. In fact, originality may not even be desirable, as is often the case when performers announce that they are going to play their new work rather than their popular and well known songs. This is what we must address, specifically, the ontology of style and originality. In other words, how much style and originality needs to be present to form an authentic musical performance.

In terms of what Kivy calls 'historic authenticity', this is almost entirely irrelevant when dealing with the artworld of imperfection that values performances that contain responses to contingencies that aren't predetermined (1995). However, as we will see, when value is placed on the performance as much as the work, aspects of its own history, associated practices, and surrounding cultural significance, do remain influential to its assessment. This is the middle ground that we must examine. The reason these observations are significant is that throughout jazz, the notion of the 'standard' plays an extremely significant role. Authenticity is found within both originality of style, but also in a historic and maintained premise of 'the work' and its versions, which demonstrates the interrelated nature of the perfect/imperfect dichotomy. First, we

can examine authentic performances, and the value of style and originality, in an ontological framework.

### **Ontologies of Authentic Works**

Considering perfection and imperfection as 'interpenetrating opposites', or as having a relationship in which there are shared aesthetic values, it is reasonable to expect that while different types of authenticity will be valued within a work that occupies this middle ground, there will be similar notions too. One primary question found in both regards how much a performance's quality is linked to the original material it is drawing from. In other words, there is an ontological problem of how a performance and a work are related in achieving authentic music. Even though our thesis is that the work and the performance are overlapping premises, for the purposes of clarity I shall refer to the written, predetermined pieces as the 'work', and the spontaneous piece, as the 'performance'. To address this question, Stephen Davies argues that, regarding the performance of works, 'authenticity is an ontological requirement', and is achieved if the performance 'faithfully instances the work, which is done by following the composer's work-determinative instructions' (2001, p.207). This is applicable to the aesthetics of perfection, as it regards the performance as being demonstrative of a work, rather than as the work itself.

For perfection, authenticity of this type is therefore a necessity, as the act of following the composer's instructions is what creates authenticity in the reproduction of a work, summarised by Davies in the statement that, 'if one is committed to playing the given piece then, equally, one must be committed to performing it authentically' (2001, p.208). As Davies writes, the 'ideally authentic performance is one that meets all of the composer's work-determinative indications', and this alone is generally a reasonable request for performances designed to directly recreate the composers' work, beyond further considerations (2001, p.221). Beyond this, in the paradigm of what Kivy terms the 'historically authentic' performance (1995, p.108), the instruments used, the technique with which they are played, and even the location of the performance, all contribute to achieving 'the fullest degree of authenticity' (Davies, 2001, p.218).

So, for example, Wendy Carlos' *Switched-On Bach* (1968) does not demonstrate authenticity in terms of recreating the precise reality of what Bach had originally composed as it would have been experienced during his lifetime, and it seems unlikely someone would disagree with this. However, Carlos' work still presents authenticity in a different sense, via Kivy's theory of style and authenticity, with Carlos' role being an arranger. Where Carlos' work may not be authentic to the performance of Bach, it is certainly authentic as defined under originality, and it is not viable for a work to be fully authentic in both the extreme senses of the term. It is necessary, then, to consider Davies' parameters of what he deems to be not necessary in an authentic performance of a work.

Firstly, one must reject the extreme view of authentic performance that requires an adherence to 'the social norms that applied to performances in the past', such as in the historically authentic performance (Davies, 2001, p.213). Davies argues these are unnecessary, as they have no bearing on the actual identification of the work being performed. Regardless of how prevalent or

common certain conditions would have been during a performance, Davies gives the examples of wigs and candles, they have no bearing on creating an authentic *musical* experience of a composed work. This criticism of what is called the 'authentic performance movement' and the insistence on the use of artefacts such as historically accurate instruments, is shared by Kivy, who, drawing on Arthur Danto, finds that in focusing on and overemphasised the conditions of the performance as the valuable element, it actually replaces the musical experience itself (1995).

However, for Kivy, this criticism also applies to performances of works that are deliberately outside the realms of how the original composition would have been experienced. Using the example of the substitution of electronics for the original acoustic instrumentation, the emphasised aspect of the performance moves away from the music itself to the instrumentation, becoming 'the novelty, not the authenticity' (Kivy, 1995, p.231). Carlos' arrangement presents an original way of hearing Bach's compositions, and this is what the experience is, or in other words, the emphasis is on the 'sound production', rather than the compositions themselves (Kivy, 1995, p.231). Therefore, the perceived authenticity in Wendy Carlos' work is found in its originality, not as an authentic performance of Bach's compositions. We can now examine the effect that these notions of authenticity have on the perception of works versus performances.

### **Authenticity in the Performance of Works**

In this view of perfection and authenticity, the suggestion is that the performance of the work, the 'event', is secondary to the work, the 'thing'. Referring back to Kivy's observations, the argument that 'artworks are things; things endure; performances are events; events don't endure' is not satisfactory (1995, p.126). These are markedly Western notions, regarding the 'enduring' work and the 'ephemeral', and limit our discussion as the resulting expectation is that the performance is always tied to a work, and should be evaluated against the work as the original and exemplary artefact. The performance does not contribute to the artistic value of the work, as its value already exists and is evaluated separately. The consequence of this view, as we have examined, is that the performance is only seen as authentic through its relation to, and the accuracy with which it demonstrates the original directions of, the work that is being performed. However, what we are attempting to understand is the aesthetic principles at play in a work that values both, such as one drawing on both the aesthetics of perfection and imperfection. The distinction we must make is that a performance can be both a performance of an existing work, and a work in itself. We can begin this discussion by looking at works that deliberately require ambiguity and a *lack* of instruction as a fundamental compositional feature. In fact, many works require some degree of interpretative skill. A composer's instructions may not detail every aspect of a performance, and therefore interpretation and personal decision making by a performer is, as Davies writes, 'essential and integral to producing a performance that is faithful to the work she plays' (2001, p.226).

Style and originality may well contribute to how we assess the authenticity of a performer's ability, although it will likely be limited to within the composer's directions. In works written for the purpose of performing, a musician's interpretation forms part of the authentic performance of the

work, and in fact, the performer 'can satisfy the composer's instructions only by making such decisions' (Davies, 2001, p.226). In other words, a degree of interpretation is a necessity. As Davies then suggests, the value is found in the 'performer's technical and interpretative skill', and it is a requirement that there must be both the elements of personal skill and interpretation, as well as an adherence to the composer's instruction (2001, p.226). In fact, when a work has determinative instructions that include some interpretation or personal creativity, then an authentic performance must include this, and both must be present for any attempt at an authentic performance, as both are required by the composer. In fact, 'personal authenticity' cannot be achieved without adherence to the instructions of the composer playing a significant role, if her aim is 'to express herself through the manner of her playing *the composer's piece*' (Davies, 2001, p.226).

What, then, of the performance of songs passed down, learned, and performed? While improvisation and interpretation may be an intrinsic element of part of a composition, if there also remains a composed or predetermined element, then how does the performer approach this when it is not expressly written or recorded? An important point that must be considered is that written instruction is not the only way in which directions regarding performance are given. As Davies rightly observes, in cultures which use 'systems of oral musical training', there is still the possibility of instructions being taught and learned, which can lead to a 'rigorous preservation of complex musical works and repertoires' (2001, p.227). This leads us toward a possible answer to how authenticity is achieved and understood in a system that values equally both the work as well as its performance, such as in the aesthetics of imperfection. There is a requirement for an understanding of the work and the canon from which it originates, and so where a composer's directions are not present, there is still an appropriate response to ambiguity. As contingencies are responded to (which is what Hamilton argues is the essence of imperfection), there remains a necessity for an understanding of the historically authentic material of which the work has originated (2020). In a work that is to be performed, and where directions are not present or sufficient, 'the emphasis falls primarily on performance skill' and it is therefore not difficult to remain faithful to the instructions of the work, thus maintaining an authentic performance (Davies, 2001, p.227). However, there is still a requirement for a reference or some relation to the original compositional style, and authenticity may therefore be located in an adherence to what would be expected during an original performance of the piece, and Davies argues that authenticity will therefore be located 'in terms of the styles of playing they exemplify' (2001, p.227).

Imperfection will still require an understanding and adherence to a degree of predetermination in the piece being performed, such as the original source material, basic directions or notation, or the understanding of a musical canon. Only in the more extreme aesthetic approaches, what we can consider in Western music as the avant-garde, and as we will see later, free jazz (although not entirely), will this be deliberately avoided. Responses to contingencies must still occur in a relatively strict format. For example, in the classical repertoire, if we consider a solo section in a piece by Beethoven, there are still several expectations of the performer and their solo, and this is still the case in improvised forms and in genres that embody imperfection. Ranging in necessity, factors such as style and technique, instrumentation, and even the composition and

structure of the improvised section itself are still considered important features. In this instance, the authenticity of the solo is assessed in both the perfect and imperfect quantities; as authentic compared to the composer's work, and authentic as in containing style and originality. The performer may be performing authentically, but the performance as an example of the work is not authentic, and so on one hand the assessment is 'authenticity of performances to persons and their characters, whereas the other measures performances against musical compositions' (Davies, 2001, p.225). What we are attempting to understand is an artistic thesis that places value on both, and one place we can locate this is the premise of the 'standard' in jazz, which is a musical example demonstrating how both a strict adherence to the composition as well as an ability to improvise both proficiently and with originality can be valued. First, however, we can examine some issues raised when interpreting improvisation and authenticity in a musical performance.

### **Issues of Authenticity and Imperfection**

As we have seen, under the aesthetics of perfection, there is a degree of ontological interpretation necessary when performing a composed piece of music in an authentic manner. Regarding Davies' argument that the 'ideally authentic performance is one that meets all of the composer's work-determinative indications', is generally correct, however, the reliance on this premise does not necessarily provide the degree of clarity that might be expected, as many other aspects of a musical work can be emphasised during a performance, and an authentic recreation of the composer's original requirements may not be the foremost objective (2001, p.221). If there is a question regarding how much of the original composer's directions and intentions must be present for an authentic performance of a piece, then the same question must be asked of the experience of imperfection, and of how much imperfection is required to achieve an authentically imperfect performance. One question that can be asked then, is how, under the aesthetics of imperfection, improvisation can be identified, and to what extent is it necessary. This appears as the flaw in the aesthetics of imperfection; how could a listener know whether the music they are experiencing is really improvised, or really imperfect. While it could be argued that it doesn't matter as long as the audience believes they are hearing improvisation, we must still attempt to delineate how particular improvisations come to be valued over others. To begin with, it seems fair to assume that most musicians will have learned musical phrases and motifs through their own musical development. How important then, is genuine improvisation compared to say, a large percentage of improvisation and a degree of prewritten, learnt phrasing.

In examining this, we must consider the objection that the experience of original improvisation can be an idealistic principle, and there is some precedent for this view. One response would be Philip Auslander's, who draws the convincing conclusion that the identification of improvisation during a performance is complex, not necessarily recognisable, and ultimately, 'only the musician can know for sure whether or not he is improvising' (2013, p.55). In regards to jazz, he argues that for the audience, the experience of improvisation is as a 'social characteristic of jazz performance rather than an ontological characteristic of the music' (2013, p.57). His reasoning for this is that there are ways in which the ambiguities of real improvisation are navigated by

deliberate physical actions during a performance that indicate the occurrence of improvisation. Auslander lists the physical expectations inherent to a jazz performance, such as performers changing their location on stage and approaching the microphone, or 'displaying effort and concentration through physical posture and facial expression', which contribute to indicating to the audience that a musician is taking a solo and improvising (2013, p.58). This is a fairly pessimistic view of improvisation in performance, however it should be mentioned that Auslander does agree that there will be some improvisation, and that the practice of suggesting improvisation does not mean that it is necessarily always an act. Nonetheless, there are several issues with this argument that need to be addressed.

This more sceptical critique made by Auslander is based on the assumption that musicians will almost certainly reuse musical material in their improvisations, and this undermines the spontaneous nature of true improvisation, as using previously figured phrases 'is not to act fully and exclusively in the present moment of performance' (2013, p.64). His solution to this issue is that improvisation should therefore be seen as a 'social characteristic', as between the musicians and the audience what actually exists is an agreement 'to act as if improvisation is taking place' (2013, p.64). The first objection to this view is that it presupposes that an audience does not have the capacity to identify spontaneous improvisation. This is difficult to prove either way, although it should be considered that the demographic of jazz for the majority of its history was that of a critical and engaged audience that sought originality and musical skill. Even if this is the case, in a creative discourse that values improvisation, it seems unlikely that a musician that did not actually improvise, while possibly remaining undetected by the audience, would not be critiqued by their contemporaries. If much of the value in being a skilled musician in most genres is to have developed the musical ability to be able to improvise, and one purpose of the performance is to demonstrate this ability, then it seems unlikely that a musician would be able to frequently reuse prefigured phrases without objection or protest from their peers. An aesthetics of imperfection is not necessarily based solely on the response from the audience, but from fellow musicians as well. The point could be argued that while this is the case in serious groups of musicians, it is not so in the wider experience of improvisation. This may be true, but our treatment of imperfection assumes an engaged audience, and Auslander's argument appears to regard an expectation of any and all improvisation.

Secondly, Auslander seems to overlook the value of improvisation and the dynamics of its appreciation. In his opinion, through the gestures that he identifies, musicians are able to indicate to the audience that improvisation is occurring or is about to occur, and subsequently 'the audience agrees to act as if something it cannot verify is taking place' (2013, p.62). While it is true that gestures may be used to indicate the occurrence of improvisation during a performance, they may also serve a less deceptive role. As a recognizable element of typical jazz performance, it is apparent that these physical gestures serve a similar purpose to the requirements of the historically authentic performance as critiqued by Kivy. They are aspects of a tradition, which add a perceived authenticity as a hallmark of the specific musical genre. Divorced from their musical function, actions, such as stepping closer to the microphone in order to be heard, serve to represent improvisation, but do not have any bearing on the musical experience itself. What these physical actions are part of is a tradition, a reference to a cultural

system, existing in the moment of the performance as a signifier for the audience and other musicians but their existence does not mean that the following improvisation is just accepted, without also being paid critical attention.

That there are rehearsed actions that musicians use to accentuate or introduce varying aspects of a performance for the audience's understanding relates more to a theory of entertainment than it does to a theory of art. Being able to communicate the occurrence of improvisation is not a substitute for improvisation itself. Auslander's strict definition of improvisation, in which 'improvisation is phenomenally inaccessible', is nihilistic, and seems to assume that whatever follows the given gestures is just accepted as being improvisation, but the reality is more complex (2013, p.65). While Auslander is right that it cannot be proven that the musician is genuinely improvising, as my initial objection argued, the musical culture surrounding the aesthetics of imperfection is such that a musician would certainly be expected to be improvising, and likely to be criticised if it were revealed that they were not. In fact, it could be argued that the performer under the aesthetics of imperfection does not need the approval of the audience, nor does it matter how one can be sure improvisation will take place because in short, *that is the point* of the performance; to play the music is to improvise. This of course becomes more complex when we start to examine cultural expectations and the marketing of authenticity, which perhaps gives some weight to the jazz-as-entertainment, Adornian view that we will examine later.

The third and final point that must be considered in addressing Auslander's critique is an ontological one. His view suggests that the use of prewritten material voids the label of 'improvisation', or in other words, improvisation cannot be verified because the musician may be using existing phrases and not creating them spontaneously. As a degree of predetermined musical material is unavoidable in reality, it is necessary to assess the ontological requirements regarding improvisation. My argument is that the aesthetic value of improvisation is inextricably linked to the genre of music, and therefore the ontology of improvisation will vary from genre to genre. In short, Auslander's claim is too broad. The inclusion of prewritten musical material does not mean that the improvisation loses its aesthetic value, as improvisation is not only a platform for demonstrating musical ability spontaneously, but also for demonstrating musical knowledge, and referencing other works is part of this. Reusing material can still contribute to successful improvisation, particularly in regards to its application in different compositions and key signatures, tempos, structures and so on. It should be considered that the use of prewritten material can itself form part of the improvisational process by which a musician's ability is evaluated. Ingrid Monson writes that improvisation as 'elaborating upon something previously known' is often forgotten, and this feature, and its pivotal role, will be examined later in this thesis (2002, p.114).

The observations Auslander makes do initially appear to limit an aesthetics of imperfection, as responses to contingencies cannot be verified by an audience. However, as he identifies and places importance on the social location of improvisation, we must consider the other social aspects surrounding the music we are observing. As I have mentioned, this reading of improvisation, and of jazz specifically, neglect that as well as being expected by the audience,



other musicians are also conscious of the quality of improvisation. Auslander's observations on the non-musical elements of a performance also indicate a focus on social convention that is found more prominently in debates regarding the dichotomy of art and entertainment. Gestures made by musicians regard the visual performance more than they do the musical. Referring to the work of Gould and Keaton, Auslander comments that his own interpretation of improvisation as a social phenomenon differs from their emphasis of improvisation's 'textuality' (2013, p.64). However, Gould and Keaton do offer a significant point regarding the social influence upon improvisation, that 'all improvisation in musical performance relies upon the foundations of the particular musical tradition in which the work exists' (2000, p.146). In arguing that all music contains some element of improvisation, the difference Gould and Keaton find between jazz and classical music is actually 'the degree of preexisting compositional material' instead of 'spontaneity of expression in performance' (2000, p.147). I shall examine this claim, and its flaws, more closely in chapter 4. However, it is a useful observation to consider here, and forms the basis of the final point that I posit against Auslander, namely that improvisation does not necessarily regard complete spontaneity of performance. In fact, the premise of entirely spontaneous improvisation is something of a romantic notion, similar to the premises of inherent musical genius, which we have seen as being European ideals rather than artistic realities.

It could even be argued that total spontaneity in improvisation is not the ideal musical experience for the audience. Referencing other works is a creative aspect of many musical genres. That this forms part of a musical tradition suggests that aesthetic value regarding ideal improvisation, as defined by Hamilton as 'responses to contingencies' does not indicate solely the formulation of original musical phrases. It can also mean seeing a musician perform reformulations of existing material. Take for example the phrase known as 'The Lick', which has been used by jazz musicians in their improvisation in many variants of the genre over decades. To know and use this phrase, and for the audience to recognize and appreciate its use, forms part of a cultural, intertextual identity and understanding.

This argument is also made by Dodd, who finds that in jazz, 'authenticity is not in itself a performance value', instead finding that it is the opposite that holds aesthetic value, what he calls 'imaginative, improvisational inauthenticity' (2014b, p.281). Faithfulness to the exact requirements of a composer's instructions is not a universal feature of music, and Dodd argues that adherence to the composer's original instructions is not a significant aspect of jazz performance (2014b). Dodd argues that authenticity in the sense of the direct recreation of a composer's work quantifies authenticity via a different metric, and that this definition is not found in the jazz tradition (2014b). In fact, Dodd goes as far to question whether the concept of art is a useful way of describing jazz standards, observing that this specific concept of authenticity and its parameters are 'a piece of philosophical artifice rather than a concept embedded within our critical and evaluative practice' (2014b, p.287). As we have seen, the performance of standards are deliberately inauthentic, in that they will stray from the expected norm of the original composition via responses to contingencies within the performance (Hamilton, 2020). A theory of art must include this, as improvisation and imperfection are demonstrable aesthetic values that composers and performers use. We have addressed the understanding of performance as the art, rather than as a representation of a work, as it has been in European tradition (Kivy, 1995). Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl argues that the 'preconceived structure' of composition

suggests planning, thought, and consideration of music in a way that is perceived as superior to improvisation, which is thought to be 'more craft than art' (1983, p.20). The issue that we are faced with is that theories of art and music have historically placed value on the work concept to the degree that our definition of authenticity emphasises the view of the performance as being an instance of a work, rather than as the valuable *thing* itself.

One way in which we can begin to explore this is by returning to the relationship between the varying evaluations of authenticity. Authenticity being solely located in 'the qualities of personal style and originality' that Kivy highlights is likely not exhaustive enough in answering what constitutes an instance of good improvisation compared to others (1995, p.123). However, as value seems to be placed on this quality, as we have seen through Kerouac et al, later we will give this premise further consideration via the music of Charlie Parker and the bebop subgenre may lend some insight into these questions.

### **Problematic Views of Art and Authenticity**

Before this, however, we must consider the issues of assessing authenticity, as a specifically Western aesthetic value, in a music with an intercultural locus. Considering Dodd's analysis of the value of 'inauthentic' performance, and that authenticity in relation to work-determinative instruction is a requirement specific to the Western classical tradition, its relevance to music of non-Western origin is arguable. To evaluate 'inauthenticity' as authenticity seems to be forcing an inappropriate label on a musical feature that should be assessed through different criteria. As Davies writes, even the notion of art itself 'imposes ethnocentric categories on cultures that have different, incompatible ones' (2001, p.257).

One immediate problem with any discussions of authenticity and its use regarding non-Western cultures, is its application to prescribe value, therefore giving a bias in favour of the Western tradition. In fact, so extensively have Western concepts been inappropriately applied to non-Western cultures, with little regard concerning whether they are appropriate or will provide meaningful insights, that the term 'authenticity' is now seen to be largely meaningless beyond western theories of art (Davies, 2001, p.257):

The accepted view now is that any concern with authenticity, however qualified and ameliorated, introduces Western values that have no proper place in the study of other cultures.

Another way in which authenticity can fail as a useful tool, is as an essentialist premise, or in its link to the assumption that members of a group have an inherent ability or insight, with the 'pejorative connotations' of terms like 'folk' and 'traditional' (Ramsey, 2004, p.39).<sup>6</sup>

However, it is not strict or traditional definitions of art that we are interested in here, but instead, a way of understanding how different musical practices were assessed by their audiences, and which aspects were valuable within a specific musical sphere. It is authenticity as assessed from

---

<sup>6</sup> Ramsey notes how 'folk authenticity' has been a romanticised notion, but that this does not entirely render useless 'vernacular-based criticism', which he explores as 'blues modality' (2004, p.46).

the point of view of the audience that will provide insight. As well as this, and possibly most significantly, we must try to understand the value systems within a genre that is an amalgamation of musical forms with contrasting aesthetic principles, and in which authenticity appears to play a vital role. As Davies himself succinctly puts, 'that a notion sometimes is misused does not show that it is meaningless' (2001, p.258). So far we have assessed some key aesthetic features of the antebellum music that influenced jazz, as well as the artistic ambitions of the Harlem Renaissance, such as performance, interpretation, and a continuation of cultural tradition and knowledge. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but we can begin to see the broad artistic ambitions of the different cultures that influenced jazz, and therefore, we can begin to develop an answer to what an authentic jazz performance will be expected to include. Both standards and the use of popular or traditional compositions, as well as improvisation, are valued, and both historically and musically informed improvisation, and spontaneous, original improvisation, are valued in performance. We can naturally draw a comparison between this expectation and that of both perfection and imperfection; a pluralistic appreciation of aesthetic features. Whether this came about gradually and organically as a direct result of jazz's multicultural influences, or as a more intended idiom propagated by certain musicians, is a complex question.

The role of authenticity, in its rejection as defined in the Western tradition, does not necessarily mean other influences from Western classical music were not significant, and while authenticity in this sense may not hold a significant meaning in jazz, that does not mean it was not present in some way, and retained value in some degree to audiences or other musicians during performance. The premise we are dealing with is that both perfection and imperfection are valued aspects of performance, and so it is important to answer in more detail the question of the relationship between the two.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter we have examined the differing ways in which aesthetic value can be constructed, and how this can vary across genres and musical traditions. In particular, we have seen how the influence of the blues and preexisting African American creative practices influenced the development of jazz in the early 20th century. Furthermore, we have seen some of the consequences that cultural appropriation had on jazz, and the consequential effect this then had on notions of authenticity and value. Finally, we have examined the role of the performance and the work-concept in jazz, and how understanding the aesthetics of imperfection illuminates our understanding of a performance as authentic in itself, as opposed to being qualified with reference to an existing work.

Before looking closely at the music of specific jazz musicians, we must consider another highly influential source of aesthetic value in the jazz era, that being the emergence of modernism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In understanding critical aspects of modernity and some of its enduring aesthetic principles that crossed into jazz discourse, its influence, and potential over or under estimation, we can attempt to quantify what can be understood as the Western influence in jazz. Taking one of its most committed proponents, and one who critiqued music and specifically jazz,

it is necessary to assess the writing of Theodor Adorno, and his view on the aesthetics of modernism.

### Chapter 3: Adorno, the Aesthetics of Modernity, and Jazz

This chapter argues Adorno's aesthetics of music, focusing on parallels and contrasts between his critique of jazz, or what he perceives as jazz, and the comparison with this and his broader writing on music and modernity. In particular, Adorno's writing on the work of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, exemplified in his *Philosophy of Modern Music*, reveals aesthetic criteria through which his writing on jazz can be examined (2016). In locating his position against jazz, Adorno's argument can be distilled down to one issue he raises in the music of both jazz and Stravinsky - the premise of authenticity, and what he sees as its absence in these works (Paddison, 2004). In light of this, a similarity between Adorno's analysis and anecdotal opinions of early bebop practitioners suggests an influence of the aesthetic values of modernity in jazz in the 1930s. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the influence of the European musical tradition in jazz is often overstated or inflated when compared to transnational influences, but nonetheless, while in many respects misguided, some salient points in Adorno's critique of what he understands as jazz appear reflected in the opinions of bebop musicians. Specifically, the regression of objectivity in form as praised by Adorno, and his emerging acceptance of repetition, revision, and irony, suggest consistency with an aesthetics of jazz. First, it is necessary to examine the relationship between the influence of modernity on jazz, and how Adorno's aesthetic theory fits into this.

In conclusion, we see how the difference Adorno identifies between Schoenberg and Stravinsky helps explore the relationship between his aesthetics and his subsequent rejection of jazz. Ultimately, while Adorno's account of modernism is shown to be of limited relevance to jazz's unique amalgam of influences, his broader writing on music does indicate a greater sympathy toward aesthetic characteristics demonstrated in jazz, particularly his eventual acceptance of the use of a broad musical language and the incorporation of a range of influences.

#### Modernity and Adorno's Aesthetics of Music

As can be expected, the development of jazz in the 1930s was influenced by the rise of modernism in Western culture, but the relationship between the evolution of the genre and modernism is more complex than simply a direct influence of aesthetic principles. The amalgamation of the jazz tradition and the changes in the parameters of art in the Western canon led to, in bebop specifically, what can be considered a 'kind of hybrid modernism when viewed within the framework of modernist narratives' (Ramsey, 2004, p.107). Aspects of modernism did not penetrate the jazz aesthetic, for example Ramsey argues that 'bebop resisted claims of autonomy', rejecting the consideration of 'its works to be self-contained artefacts', and calling them, in accordance with Henry Louis Gates' theory, 'signifying texts' (2004, p.108). This is the first principle that must be considered, in relation to Adorno's writing on jazz, and as a crucial and enduring aesthetic quality.

The following quote from Charlie Parker is used as evidence of Parker's view of bebop and his music as art in the modernist, classical European definition. Taken from a 1949 interview, Parker stated: 'They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to

art' (Stewart, 2011, p.332). Like Ramsey, Stewart interprets Parker as arguing against the belief 'that situates bebop as an autonomous modernist art form', instead referring to bebop as a product of 'Afro-modernism', following the Harlem Renaissance (2011, p.333). Drawing on Peter Burger, Stewart argues that it was through the 'abstraction' of popular music that bebop achieved this amalgamation of its own aesthetic and modernism (2011, p.336). It is the reformation of existing works, rather than their complete abandonment, that was aesthetically valuable for Charlie Parker, and the question of autonomy will be explored later in the work of John Coltrane. The influence of Western music, however, has historically been overstated in its influence. For example, Ramsey critiques the 1949 book *Inside Jazz* by musician Leonard Feather, that, while seeking to avoid racial commentary or theory, highlights the influence of modern European music to 'assure his readers that beboppers' musical tastes extended to the classical world' (2004, p.124). The propagation of this comparison was not uncommon, and other mid-century critics and authors, such as Winthrop Sargeant and André Hodeir, address jazz only in the shadow of the European canon (Jackson, 2002). While modernism will have certainly had a significant influence on all artistic output in Western culture when its ideas and values were at their most celebrated, the question we are seeking to answer is not a comprehensive account of jazz's various influences, but the most prominent aesthetic values, and what about the genre specifically received such acclaim across varying audiences.

First, it is necessary to examine Adorno's critique of jazz, the aesthetic values that he locates in the music, and how they fit into his wider theory of music. The reason this is necessary, and why Adorno's opinion is relevant, is because he not only commented extensively on the aesthetics of modernity and Western culture, but also posed several critiques of jazz. Through Adorno's writing on European modernity, we can interrogate his polemics on jazz. We have seen evidence that situates Charlie Parker and bebop as a form of hybrid modernity, so it is necessary to detail the tenets of modernity in detail.

First, a clarification must be made regarding the music that Adorno understood to be jazz, which was more accurately dance hall music, or popular light entertainment (Hamilton, 2007). Therefore, it follows that Adorno was largely dismissive of jazz, arguing that like much of the output of the *culture industry*, it was fundamentally a product designed to be consumed, regardless of how nuanced and refined the music presented itself as being (1936, p.48):

Through its intentions, whether that of appealing to an elevated "style," individual taste, or even individual spontaneity, jazz wants to improve its marketability and veil its own commodity character which, in keeping with one of the fundamental contradictions of the system, would jeopardize its own success if it were to appear on the market undisguised.

This critique is complex however, and so before doing this, an exposition of Adorno's theory is required, so we can better situate his critique of jazz.

My primary concern is with Adorno's theory of authenticity, as this seems to be where, in the above quote, the central criticism lies. The issue Adorno takes is in the absence of a genuine stylistic nature, and finds that jazz as he saw it was a music that sought to distinguish itself from

mainstream culture, but continued to function within the rules of the culture market in order to achieve economic and cultural success. In addition, emphasis is placed on authenticity as an aesthetic principle of jazz, as we have seen in the previous chapter in regards to the role of socio-cultural identity in the making of music, the appropriation and fetishism of this identity by other groups, and in demonstrating access to a perceived genuine cultural experience. For Adorno's aesthetics, Max Paddison's work is the authority, and he examines the nuances and contradictions of Adorno's writing on music, as well as his theory of authenticity.

### **Adorno, Authenticity, and Consistency**

For Adorno, authenticity is not found in the historically accurate performance; the composer's rules and instructions in the original composition, and the subsequent adherence to these rules by performers, do not quantify the authenticity of the work. Instead, Adorno's emphasis regards how 'the more authentic works of art are, the more closely do they follow the objective requirements of internal consistency' (Paddison, 2004b, p.205). It was his opinion that musical material was shaped by its previous usage, restricting its later use as it was inherently tied to other works, however originally the composer was able to employ it. In other words, musical material has meaning as a result of its historic use, and the inescapable problem for the composer is that this meaning is inseparable from the material itself. Adorno's view was that 'all that is meaningful in musical material is historical and social in origin', being therefore 'culturally preformed' (Paddison, 2004b, p.206). Adorno finds authenticity in how the composer addresses the 'culturally preformed' meaning of musical material, and as we will explore, it is through this that Adorno ultimately sees the musical work as being able to contain a critical function in society.

It was as a result of the influence of Nietzsche, that Adorno sought to incorporate in his critique the social role of music (Paddison, 2004b). This role, or 'function', was now hidden as the composer was autonomous from external influences, but existed in the work 'as residual gestures' in the material used (2004b, p.209). The premise of consistency refers to the way in which the composer uses musical material, and how its use relates to the material's pre-existing meaning, with Paddison explaining that a work's consistency is found in how it overcomes its previous function and resists the 'tendency to revert to its heteronomous origins', referring to how its meaning is defined by the surrounding culture and society, and its historical use (2004b, p.210).

This is where we can begin to locate one element of Adorno's critique of Stravinsky in *Philosophy of Modern Music*, in his use of musical material that does not resist social expectations, and through this, his critique of jazz. It is Adorno's opinion that Stravinsky was influenced too greatly by society in his compositions, and that meaning in his work is derived only from that which has been socially established. It is almost a superficiality that Adorno sees in Stravinsky's use of this material, arguing that in his compositions, 'the desire of the adolescent is ever stubbornly at work; it is the struggle of the youth to become a valid, proven classicist', and concludes sarcastically, referencing the historic cultural prestige of the romantic composer, 'not a mere modernist' (2016, p.96).

In contrast, his praise for the work of Arnold Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School was due to his belief that it did not seek to achieve authenticity through the preexisting meaning of musical material. Instead, Adorno argued that Schoenberg subverted the social meanings and compositional expectations inherent in musical material. In his critique of authenticity defined as the reliance on socially defined musical material, he argues that Schoenberg 'sacrifices the illusion of authenticity', which in Adorno's theory is what gives the work real, genuine authenticity (2016, p.147). However, regardless of the distinction Adorno makes, he finds that authenticity fails as a singular, achievable concept.

This is because, for Adorno, the historic meaning inherent in the material cannot be escaped, and that ultimately the perceived independence of the work cannot be fully realised, and 'consistency' as the reformation of historically situated material is unobtainable. In other words, the work cannot be independent from the social, however much a composer may try, and this is authenticity's 'ideological' nature (Paddison, 2004b, p.211). This seems to be a reasonable conclusion; once existing in a culture's musical vocabulary, it is impossible to divorce the material from its historical meaning when reusing it in a composition. Regardless of how much the composer strives for autonomy, by simply containing musical material, the composition situates itself amongst the music of the past. In addition to this, the dominating effects of the culture industry and the 'commodity character' that all art subsequently contains, means that art cannot achieve true autonomy and thus, for Adorno, 'autonomy is an illusion' (Paddison, 2004b, p.211).<sup>7</sup>

So, no music can fully achieve authenticity, but nonetheless Adorno values Schoenberg as a greater and more authentic composer than Stravinsky, and within this opinion is where we can locate Adorno's basic critique of jazz. In the simplest terms, it is Adorno's position 'that authentic music resists commodification while inauthentic music embraces it' (Paddison, 2004b, p.212). For Adorno nothing can completely resist the culture market, but nonetheless the resistance of the work can aid in the distinction between the authentic and inauthentic (Paddison, 2004b). What must be reconciled is Adorno's pessimism toward the inescapable confines of the culture industry and the illusion of authenticity, and the value he places on composers that nonetheless try.

Another form, or interpretation, of authenticity features in Adorno's theory that is achievable. Adorno's contention is that in all works there exists a 'critical commentary', regardless of the intentions of the composer, that presents musical material in a way that addresses or embodies the composer's desires. This forms the next stage of what Paddison sees as the 'levels' of Adorno's theory of authenticity, namely that authenticity can be found in the work's inauthenticity as it can act 'as a critical commentary on the real material relations of society, whether it wishes to or not' (2004b, p.211). Therefore, regardless of the composer's intention, inherent in a work is a 'critical reflection' on society in the way that it uses musical material (Paddison, 2004b, p.215).

This is the key issue that Paddison highlights in Adorno's writing; the contradiction between works being both 'ideological', relating to Marx's 'false consciousness', as well as 'authentic' in

---

<sup>7</sup> Like Adorno, Foucault also saw the homogenisation of culture as an example of the state's power being exercised over society (Cook, 2018).



the sense we have seen regarding the 'critical reflection' within the work (2004b, p.215). The ideal authentic work, for Adorno, is autonomous in its treatment and use of material, therefore containing a social critique, but without being influenced by society (Paddison, 2004b). However, as Adorno's pessimistic view of mass culture dictates, and as we have mentioned, total autonomy is not viable.

An autonomous work should have its own rules regarding its use of material, forming part of its autonomy, even though it is influenced by and is 'part of the dominant social forces and relations of production' (Paddison, 2004b, p.216). The problem is that even though a work is able to 'dominate the handed-down material' and allow 'the repressed social content of the material to speak again', this only happens within the work's own closed system (2004b, p.216). The material is still tied in meaning to society regardless of how composers integrate it into their own work. In attempting to negotiate a 'critical relationship' between the composed work and the material, the work fails due to the 'impossibility of succeeding in the task to be faced' (2004b, p.216). The failure arises because the autonomous work cannot divorce the meaning of its material from its position in the social world, and as Paddison explains, for Adorno, all works ultimately fail in this.

So, by virtue of trying, a work achieves authenticity, as it is in the attempt that the authenticity is found. This again forms part of his praise of Schoenberg; it is the attempt to reconcile the inescapable historical meanings of musical material, yet resisting what is described by Paddison as 'the attempt to stamp musical gestures with the authority of the past' (2004, p.204). In Adorno's own words, through the premise that the 'absolute renunciation of the gesture of authenticity becomes the only indication of the authenticity of the structure', Schoenberg is able to define his work in separation from the preexisting western canon (2016, p.147). On the other hand, if Stravinsky seeks authenticity through a heteronomous view of musical material, in that its meaning is socially defined, then it will always fail.

As Paddison finds, while Adorno amended his critique of Stravinsky in his 1961 essay 'Stravinsky: a dialectical portrait', he maintained his opinion that Stravinsky's use of musical material situated his work as relying on objective, socially defined meaning, instead of authentic, subjective truth (2003). Through progression and development 'music points beyond itself, and protests against the eternal repetition of myth', and in Adorno's view, 'repetitions and permutations negate the temporality and progression of musical events', essentially meaning that by relying on existing socially derived meaning, the work is stuck in the past (2003, p.199).

While for Adorno, by not confronting the absence of meaning, and working in terms of personal subjectivity, Stravinsky 'regresses into archaism and myth', as Paddison notes, the reuse and revision of pre-existing musical material can be seen as a modernist trait, for example its use in irony or juxtaposition, which is a point crucial to our discussion (2003, p.200). Adorno locates authenticity in the 'meaninglessness' of Schoenberg's use of musical material, but in comparison to Stravinsky, Adorno begins to recognise a similar authenticity in his reuse and revisionary handling of material (Paddison, 2003). That Adorno ultimately began to accommodate this in his theory of authenticity suggests that the reuse and revision of musical material that he initially condemns can actually give rise to a subjectivity that Adorno sees as

authentic, and if accepting of Stravinsky's ironic 'meaninglessness', perhaps this can also serve as a corrective to his condemnation of jazz.

### **Adorno on Jazz**

The relevance to this thesis of authenticity as defined by Adorno is a result of several factors. First, that much of his aesthetic theory regarding modernity pertains specifically to music; second, his work was highly influential; and third, as we have seen, that his limited writing on jazz is misguided. An exposition of Adorno is relevant because through his theory of authenticity, we can undermine his own critique of jazz, which seeks primarily to degrade it from its claim to the arena of serious music. Adorno's classification of music that is self aware and critical refers strictly to the music of late modernity, as we have seen through his opinions on the music of Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School. Before we continue, however, it should be noted that Adorno's reading of jazz seems to actually be focused on dance hall music, or popular light entertainment (Hamilton, 2007). Fumi Okiji writes that Adorno's failure to acknowledge African American history in his critique of jazz is 'excruciating' (2018, p.12).<sup>8</sup> A relevance persists because, as we will see, the bebop movement of the late 1930s was in part also a reaction to the music that Adorno critiques so heavily. The criticism of jazz as merely being music for enjoyment, and to be consumed in the culture market like all mass culture, is what leads Adorno to dismiss it so readily, and it is for this reason that Adorno's work may perhaps still be relevant in an analysis of jazz, specifically bebop and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

The heteronomy that Adorno identifies in jazz is in part related to how musical material such as standards and phrases are reused. However, in regards to improvisation and its relation to specifically *spontaneous* music making, it must be considered that 'the sense of improvisation as elaborating upon something previously known is sometimes lost', and certainly seems so in Adorno's writing (Monson, 2002 p.114). One reason for this may be due to an imbalance in what can be termed the 'syncretic process' between African and European cultures (Floyd, 1995). In this syncretic process - the process of cultures and traditions merging together - African American musical styles and genres did not join equally with the European musical tradition (Floyd, 1995). If this were the case, then it would be expected that the resulting discursive relationship between composed and improvised music would be more sympathetic, and the definition of improvisation as explained by Monson would be more readily accepted. Instead, the syncretic process was one that 'superimposed European forms' onto a music and culture that was of African foundation, leading to the misunderstanding and dismissal of certain aesthetic principles (Floyd, 1995, p.85).

The nuance of this appears lost in Adorno's understanding of jazz, as the following quote suggests (1991, p.71):

As the form which subsumed the heritage of impressionist music for the purposes of mass culture, jazz was never so faithful to that style of music as in this: that as has been noticed

---

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the compatibility of Adorno's critique and jazz, see Okiji (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Gioia argues that Adorno's elitism precludes his relevance in analysing jazz, instead recommending Satre, who has a jazz record sooth his protagonists existential angst in his 1938 novel *Nausea* (2016)

before in a jazz piece, all the moments which succeed one another in time are more or less directly interchangeable with one another, that there is no real development, and that what comes later is not one whit richer in experience than what has preceded it.

There are two critiques here that relate to Adorno's wider theories of mass culture. First, Adorno's observation on 'the heritage of impressionist music' refers to his ideological critique found in *The Culture Industry* of cultural products that conceal their consumer nature, and make easier for the public the consumption of the product. Adorno's argument is that Impressionism in music was an imitation of the variety act, in that it sought to utilise moments of a brief and partitioned structure, each presenting a simple form of entertainment, with little relation to its preceding or following context. In the variety genre, it is his opinion that 'something happens and nothing happens at the same time', arguing that the perceived value of the variety act is in the 'expectation' of something that the audience knows will happen, which is the same he finds in the predictability of Hollywood cinema (1991, p.70). As it is the expectation of the thing to come, rather than the actual experience of the work, Adorno's critique is that the 'thing' that the audience is expecting, never comes, as it is the *expectation* that is valuable. This is the very nature of variety and Impressionism as Adorno sees it; it is not necessary for the listener 'to concentrate upon anything other than what is presented to him in the given moment' (1991, p.69). His critique extends to the treatment of Debussy's music, that in listening to his 'Preludes' and 'Etudes', the audience are simply waiting 'for it all to begin' (1991, p.71). In giving the example of Debussy, it is likely his works such as his *Livres 1* and *2* to which he is referring. Made up of a series of short preludes, it is perhaps that each is treated individually rather than the book as a total whole composition where Adorno takes issue. There is some truth to this; individual preludes such as *La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin* from *Livre 1*, are notably more popular and more frequently performed than others, exhibited as a singular piece than as part of the original series.

It is again in a critique of structure that we locate the second aspect of Adorno's argument against jazz, specifically the shortening and degradation of form. Similar to his statements regarding variety performances, Adorno claims that the individual features of jazz are not significant on their own, and that the various elements of a jazz composition 'are more or less directly interchangeable with one another' (1991, p.71). This critique of composition and lack of structure or development extends beyond jazz in Adorno's writing to the late-Romantic compositions of Tchaikovsky and Dvorák, who he claims 'weakened symphonic form by turning it into a pot-pourri of melodies arbitrarily connected with one another' (1991, p.72). The objection here is that there is a lack of connectedness between the elements of a work, and that in jazz, the structure is such that compositional progression is avoided. The assumption here is that Adorno is referring to elements such as solo sections, reliance on the recapitulation of melodic and harmonic material, and perhaps the reuse of defined chord progressions inherent to the genre. However, this is unclear, as Adorno makes limited definitions of the music to which he is referring.

Similar critiques are also found in Adorno's 1936 essay, *On Jazz*, which posits several dismissals of jazz as 'serious' music, instead finding its use of musical characteristics as being

superficial and designed to achieve attention from an audience. One observation of jazz that Adorno makes is that 'its vital component is the vibrato', and it is Adorno's opinion that the function of jazz 'is determined by the possibility of letting the rigid vibrate' (1936, p.46). This remark suggests that the principle of the music is to lend exciting musical characteristics to a form that, as we have seen, he sees as being constructed of homogenous, interchangeable elements. Adorno argues that these musical characteristics demonstrate that 'the form is dominated by the function and not by an autonomous formal law', or in other words, that the *experience* of this style is the leading principle of the music (1936, p.47). Despite this, however, jazz nonetheless lays claim to a desire for serious consideration as music which, for Adorno, is indicative of products in the culture market that situate themselves as above popular culture, but also rely on popularity to succeed, as shown in the quote given earlier that refers to jazz veiling 'its own commodity character' (1936, p.48). In doing this, it is Adorno's opinion that jazz sought to distinguish itself as a more refined, complex art form as opposed to music for entertainment or dance. In keeping with Adorno's more general critique of mass culture, as the product itself achieves greater popularity and acceptance, it must conform further to the hegemonic rules of society. As this occurs, the music's original culture, while losing ownership of the product, gains access to a higher social standing. So, as jazz became accepted and by the dominant class, its creators, in this case historically working class, 'can take some solace in the fact that they can also partake of the commodities of the dominant class' (1936, p.49). This is part of the systematic subjugation of culture by the dominant class, and as a result, the 'lower classes identify themselves with the upper class through their reception of jazz' (1936, p.50).

Adorno's critique is accurate in several senses, particularly the reception of a form of jazz by certain audiences such as the European middle and upper classes. It should be considered that for many performers of the music, the music industry and the necessity to capitalise on their success, naturally led to the need for the music and its performance to be a marketable product, with popular, desired characteristics therefore becoming mainstays of the genre, for example, swing music and its 'orientation toward providing accompaniment to social dancing', including 'simple riffs' and 'accessible vocals', although this was to change in the late 1930s with the advent of bebop (Gioia, 2011, p.187). Amiri Baraka observed how the commercialisation of the genre 'threatened to efface jazz's black cultural roots', and while Adorno does not recognise this specifically, in his analysis he finds the use of jazz in media and its dissemination as a marketable product as totally undermining to its autonomy (Laver, 2014, p.201). However, as Okiji observes, Adorno's emphasis on understanding jazz via class above any other factors, results in a failure to recognise the unique position of African American culture within America, and that 'black expression cannot be understood solely (or primarily) against the backdrop of the tragedy of the bourgeoisie' (2018, p.13).

For Adorno, the cultural value of jazz for its audience comes in part from the division in its appreciation, and 'the lack of understanding among the majority who are shocked by this music' gives those who do consume and engage with it, 'the vague satisfaction of being themselves "up-to-date"' (1936, p.51). Nonetheless, Adorno maintains that regardless of how complex or nuanced the music appears, the characteristics that gave it popular appeal and value are, like the variety performance, the brief moments of material that are interchangeable with one

another, rather than the wider structural characteristics as a whole, and in support of this, Adorno argues that it is only the simple melodies that are remembered by the public (1936).

While this may be the case, as Adorno writes, jazz seeks to hide this quality and appeal stylistically as a more complex and refined musical form, and part of jazz's hidden 'commodity character' for Adorno is the belief by the audience in extra-musical characteristics that contribute toward its style. These include 'inspiration, the concept of genius, creativity, originality, mysterious forces, and other irrational justification', which form part of the identity of the music, with these perceived qualities contributing to jazz's success in the culture market (1936, p.51). Of course, the criticism here relates more to the popular culture surrounding jazz, and not the intentions of the musicians whose aesthetic values defined the progression of its musical discourse, but it is an important discussion pertaining to a sociological issue rather than an aesthetic one. What Adorno touches on here relates to two concepts. The first is the Western romantic ideal of the composer/genius, who is naturally gifted and divines influence from intangible musical insight. The second is more specific to jazz, and is the colonial view of African culture as being inherently related to a less academic or intellectual approach to music making or any cultural practice in general, known as 'primitivism'.

Primitivism perpetuates the condescending and prejudiced summation of cultural products of African origin, and in the case of jazz, it can be seen in the view of the musician 'as a "noble savage" who maintains a pure, emotional, and unmediated relationship to his art' (Monson, 1994, p. 286). Beyond music, mythologisation and fetishisation of any cultural product is problematic. As discussed in the previous chapter, jazz and its surrounding culture was often portrayed by white commentators through racial stereotypes, and even in instances of praise or reverence, such as the writing of Kerouac, there is still an undertone of a warped and fetishized view of racial identity. The commercialisation of these perceived qualities is perhaps part of what led Adorno to make his somewhat generalising remarks of the 'veil' of jazz's 'commodity character'; part of an extra-musical identity that contributed to its appeal to audiences. Jazz musicians, however, did not necessarily propagate this, but instead it was the promoters, managers, and broader media that used this imagery as a marketing tool. For example, a criticism echoing Adorno's was levelled by Charles Mingus in regards to the use of jazz in the media, and the subsequent effect of commercialisation as having removed his agency over how his music was experienced, instead giving this control to the apparatus that disseminated jazz as a cultural commodity (Laver, 2014). The problem with Adorno's observations is that he does not make the distinction between the musician and those marketing the music, and so, while he does make some relevant and not inaccurate criticisms of the socio-cultural discourse surrounding earlier jazz styles, he does not separate in his critique the intentions of its practitioners and the music's reception that was beyond their control, and therefore, his ultimate conclusion is misplaced.

### **Adorno and Stravinsky**

We can further relate Adorno's opinion of jazz to his wider aesthetic theory in that his position seems to be rooted in the same critique he makes of Stravinsky; that the influence of preexisting music and the use of a historically conditioned canon in the composition of new

works, in order to bestow upon the new composition an authority or identity inherent in the material, undermines the work itself. Adorno's comparison of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in *Philosophy of Modern Music* (2016), first published in 1948, finds ultimately that the distinction between the composers is in how meaning is constructed in their works, and from what aesthetic locus this meaning is drawn.

As we have established, in Adorno's view it is Stravinsky's reliance on, and manipulation of, the historic meaning of music that is the conduit of authenticity in his work. Stravinsky voids his claim to true authenticity as Adorno defines it, because in using musical material in this way, the composer's impetus is instead 'to give the work 'the character of outside conformation' (2016, p.95). In other words, the composer can strengthen their work with a meaning that comes as a result of its historic use, giving their work an objective and historically informed position. The reason for using musical material in this way is to ensure that the work has a discernible meaning, with Adorno claiming the motive is that the composer is 'inspired by the dream of authenticity, by a fear of emptiness' (2016, p.96). If the question that we have asked is what constitutes true authenticity for Adorno, and how he locates it, as Paddison finds, this is the first part of Adorno's definition; his rejection of the use of referential material in composition.

However, as his critique develops, Adorno argues that Stravinsky's use of musical material in constructing authenticity is more nuanced, as he avoided 'the academic way, the restriction to the approved inventory of the musical idiom' (2016, p.97). Rather than relying on a direct, referential expressive capability achieved through the use of musical material, Stravinsky sought to revert to some sort of objectivity, a meaning inherent to the material. For Stravinsky the 'precision of musical language' stunted the authentic work, and therefore it was through the dismissal of this precision that there was to be found an authenticity (2016, p.97). Nonetheless, this is the same principle that undermines authenticity in the first sense – the work is bestowing upon itself an identity related to pre-existing conditions. For Adorno, in ignoring subjective reality, the composition lays claim to a truth content that is in fact, non-existent (2016). Adorno terms this 'misleading hypostatization', meaning perceived objectivity, which in the case of Stravinsky, he locates in the rejection of the refined and precise compositional methods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (2016, p.97). Rather than employing its own subjective rules, Stravinsky's work reaches toward a perceived identity.

While Adorno critiques Stravinsky, he does find that his 'regression to archaism is not totally alien to authenticity, even if authenticity is completely destroyed by it' (2016, p.149). This is because for Adorno, the attempt to resist the historically and culturally defined meaning of the material is at least a step closer to authenticity.<sup>10</sup> However, the reason that authenticity is still lost is because through this archaism, and the seeking of objectivity, there is a reliance on the qualities of myth, and it is this that returns his work to the inauthentic (2016). Interestingly, in Adorno's opinion, there are points in which Stravinsky achieves authenticity, such as in his *Symphony in Three Movements*, with Adorno arguing that 'it is cleansed of antiquated

---

<sup>10</sup> Adorno would later write in *Aesthetic Theory* in 1970, referring to Stravinsky, 'realistic artworks in the nineteenth century on occasion proved to be more substantial than those works that paid obeisance to the ideal of art's purity' (2013, p.48).

components', presenting 'contours of cutting sharpness', and subsequently demonstrating 'the ideal of authenticity' (2016, p.145). Despite this, however, these features are superficial, and 'the reduction of all thematic material in the work to the most simple primitive motives' ultimately, 'has no influence upon the structure' (2016, p.146). So, while Stravinsky develops the musical material in a way that resists its socially dictated meaning, these are fundamentally just augmentations over a composition that is still based on a desire to 'stamp' the work with authenticity.

In contrast, Schoenberg's use of material, and the more abstract treatment he affords it, such as serial and 12-tone techniques, gives his work a quality divorced from the musical canon on which Stravinsky relies, thus affirming for Adorno 'the liberation of ever broader levels of musical material' (2016, p.145). It is Schoenberg's resistance to musical canon that is what led Adorno to praise the serialism and the dodecaphonic technique and even more so the use of atonal composition in Schoenberg's early works; he rejected the Romantic ideals of composition and musical meaning, and resisted reverting to early musical reference, archaism, or myth. As Paddison finds, it is this level of authenticity that Adorno critiques, and in the rejection of this form of authenticity, true authenticity can be attained. In Adorno's words, only through 'the absolute renunciation of the gesture of authenticity' can the composer escape, and this renunciation 'becomes the only indication of the authenticity of the structure' (2016, p.145).

We can now return to the criticism that Adorno makes of jazz. Considering the opinions given in his essay *On Jazz*, we can begin to see where his judgement is developed. Not only does he find that, like all mass culture, the fundamental substance of jazz was 'uncritical and unreflective', Adorno sees that stylistically and structurally, jazz sought to distinguish itself through perceived relationship with a claim to an authentic identity, similar to Stravinsky (Paddison, 2004, p.87). Adorno's view that Stravinsky 'stamps' his music with a 'folk' or traditional style in an attempt to authenticate the composition, is reflected in his critique of jazz. Furthermore, it should be noted that Stravinsky's relationship with jazz does in part support Adorno's critique; as mentioned in chapter 1, his composition that has the most pronounced jazz influence is *The Ebony Concerto* (1946), composed for band leader Woody Herman, using musical techniques and instrumentation to recreate a jazz style.

However, this does not mean that jazz or works that are influenced by jazz, are all ultimately attempting to achieve authenticity in this way and in fact, as we have seen, the referential use of musical material plays a fundamentally different role in jazz than simply the 'stamping' of a claim to an authentic identity. We can now examine what actual aesthetic motives were developing in jazz during this era, and whether the aesthetic principles that were to cement themselves in the advances of bebop give any evidence to the claims made by Adorno.

### **Adorno's Critique and Bebop**

Assessing the relevance of Adorno's opinion to jazz in the 1930s, our examination so far indicates that his view only pertains in a general sense to music as mass culture. As discussed, Adorno states that the basic form of a jazz composition is merely a sequence of moments, the same accusation he levels at Impressionist music and the popular variety act, determining that the form the jazz composition takes is structured around the same principle.

Adorno applies this to the use of improvisation in jazz composition, and how the emphasis is on the expectation of the 'thing to come', that ultimately makes no difference to the structure of the music (1936, p.53):

Even the much-invoked improvisations, the "hot" passages and breaks, are merely ornamental in their significance, and never part of the overall construction or determinant of the form.

Of course, passages or sections of improvisation in the music do naturally influence the form, as in its structure, but what Adorno is referring to is that their material, their musical content, is not related to the progression of the composition. In other words, sections of improvisation are divorced from the development of the piece itself, and this critique illuminates how Adorno's opinion of jazz is inextricably linked to the European musical tradition, expecting improvisation to be drawn from a composer's directions and in relation to thematic development, not from the individual soloist's musical performance.

Adorno's critique so far is based on judgments of the musical style of jazz. Floyd, however, argues that the 'Signifin(g) revision', which is Gates' theory and the ensuing work in researching vernacular as a crucial aspect of African culture, subsequently, referencing Adorno's claims, 'debunks the notion that jazz is merely a style, not a genre' (1995, p.141).<sup>11</sup> As the ability to 'create and re-create, state and revise' are essential aspects of improvisation in jazz, the emphasis is on the 'substance' of these qualities, rather than merely their presentation in a performance (Floyd, 1995, p.141). Therefore, Adorno's error is that what he perceives as 'ornamental' is in fact fundamental. However, if we consider symphonic jazz, swing, and their reception as 'whitened jazz', then perhaps Adorno's opinions may find more relevance. Applying the critique of style specifically to the limited variety of jazz that Adorno reveals himself as referring to, then his opinion could in fact echo the opinions of early bebop musicians. The 'ornamental' quality is the precise aspect of earlier jazz styles that bebop musicians sought to move away from, and improvisation in that sense became supplanted by these musicians who changed the use of improvisation to become a more influential force in the development of melody and structure (Floyd, 1995). Rather than use improvisation as a feature to be utilised ad hoc, musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie treated improvising as a way to compose, as it was through improvisation and experimentation that new compositions were formed (Ramsey, 2004). As we will examine in the next chapter, Charlie Parker too brought improvisation closer to an integral structural principle of the genre.

Regarding jazz composition, an important observation to make is that in bebop, while the 32-bar song structure remained largely unchanged, melody and improvisation increased in complexity, as did the structure and rhythm of phrases, incorporating 'unexpected points of emphasis' and syncopation (Gioia, 2011, p.187). Therefore, while Adorno's critique of jazz as structurally rigid may be somewhat accurate to the music to which he was referring, the bebop movement sought to increase the complexity and theoretical depth of the music, such as the use of extended chords and altered scales, while retaining the original structural format. The nuance is that Adorno's understanding of structure differs to how it is used in the jazz tradition, where it is more

---

<sup>11</sup> The distinction being that styles are subsets of a genre.



accurately understood as part of a vernacular tradition whereby the structure is used as a platform for improvisation, rather than having any bearing on the thematic development of specific pieces. So, while it appears as though Adorno and bebop musicians were both critical of improvisation as ornamental in music, and shared the view that it should take an integral role in a work's structural development, their motivations were distinct. Whereas bebop musicians sought to emphasise the role of improvisation, they did not share Adorno's critique of structure as rudimentary and rigid as this structure was the necessary foundation for the exploration of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material.

As well as being ornamental, in jazz Adorno saw the use of improvisation as being a claim to individuality and style, used to convey a sense of uniqueness and prestige which was simply part of its marketing as a product set apart from popular music (1936, p.53):

The improvisational immediacy which constitutes its partial success counts strictly among those attempts to break out of the fetishized commodity world which want to escape that world without ever changing it, thus moving deeper into its snare.

Again, there is a parallel to be made here regarding how this may also have been an issue that bebop musicians recognised, as they wished to change the view of jazz as simply popular music, and move into the realm of serious artistic appreciation. For example, writing in 1979 Dizzy Gillespie wrote that bebop musicians 'found most pop music too bland and mechanically unexciting', although he went on to write that they still accepted it (1999, p.166).

Adorno's criticism on improvisation as an attempt to resist stagnation can be understood culturally as the result of 'the increasing degree of self-reflection within certain kinds of more radical popular music', in that as a genre becomes more self aware, it develops subsequently 'a critical character' (Paddison, 2004, p.101). However, in bebop this development is somewhat more complex as rather than the critique coming from the position of the genre as a whole, instead it seems to have come from a fairly select group of musicians, as well as a subset of enthusiasts and patrons. In fact, many of the established and most successful jazz musicians did not share in the same desire for aesthetic development, such as Louis Armstrong, who considered bebop unmusical (Peretti, 1997). While historically bebop is seen as the next fundamental epoch in jazz's development after the swing era, at the time it was much more of a scion of the mainstream jazz genre, in many ways divorced from its preceding musical ancestry.

Taking Adorno's eventual acceptance of Stravinsky's use of musical material, we can pose another challenge to his critique of jazz. As Adorno's theory finally takes into consideration how existing material can be used to confront musical meaning rather than simply reify and maintain it, we begin to see the important role of irony and revision. Irony, parody, and pastiche are important elements of the signifying discourse, as well as the premise that 'resemblance thus can be evoked cleverly by dissemblance' is critical (1988, p.104). What this refers to is the reuse of material (and in the process giving it new meaning via the way it is reused), and Gates sees that 'repetition of form and then inversion of the same through a process of variation is central to jazz', giving John Coltrane's *My Favourite Things* as an example (1988, p.104).

That Adorno ultimately gives consideration to this aspect in Stravinsky's work suggests that had he revised his critique of jazz, it may have been more sympathetic. Nonetheless, he does not make this connection, and so we do not know if his opinion would have been in any way mediated. However, Adorno's revision of his critique of Stravinsky as identified by Paddison, must be considered, particularly as it pertains to the canon of modernism. For Adorno, the value he finds is the 'meaninglessness' or the 'resistance to interpretation' (Paddison, 2003, p.202). This varies in a small but significant way in what is valued in the signifying discourse. Instead of 'meaninglessness', it is instead a play or revision of meaning, an open-ended and intertextual approach to the interpretation of a given work, and how new meaning is created in this process.

### **Bebop and the Authentic Work**

If we are to locate authenticity, it will not be in the vein of Adorno's interpretation of Schoenberg, regarding the defiance of pre-existing meaning in musical material. This is because jazz has a consistent referential aspect, between not only musical works, but between other creative forms, and therefore, undermines Adorno's position on what constitutes authentic composition (Gates, 1988; Floyd, 1995). If we are to understand the modernist influence, then we must consider that 'black musical texts have critiqued, teased, and taunted these boundaries and the logic of "modernist" aesthetics', and examine the dialectic of two cultural systems that contributed toward a hybrid aesthetic discourse, progressing simultaneously alongside modernism in its solely Western form (Ramsey, 2004, p.107).

Floyd argues that bebop 'merged rationality and myth', in that it drew on both the African and European traditions, and formed its own unique musical discourse (1995, p.143). On one hand, the European standards of an institutionalised education, regarding the academic treatment of music theory, arranging and scoring, and compositional techniques, were understood and valued by jazz musicians, and for example, the 'elaborate harmonic and melodic revisions' of bebop were rooted in an academic interest in the development of musical vocabulary (Ramsey, 2004, p.107). On the other hand, other elements indicate the importance of historically and culturally significant forms of expression, such as vernacular and rhetoric, that relate back to music of African origin. While as discussed, the notion of continental musical traditions is not wholly useful, the premise of Afro-modernism is best understood as drawing from and combining these two aesthetic sources (Floyd, 1995).

On Adorno's terms, if to achieve authenticity is to 'dominate the handed-down material' and therefore allow 'the repressed social content of the material to speak again', this can only occur inside 'the closed world of the work', meaning in accordance with its own rules as determined by the composer (Paddison, 2004b, p.216). In the case of jazz compositions, Ramsey argues that bebop works were not 'self-contained artefacts', and therefore not autonomous works in the modernist definition, and here is where we can see jazz break from the modernist paradigm (2004, p.108). However, the interpretation of the 'closed world of the work' is key, as in Adornian terms, the 'world' is that of the composer's piece, as the material is defined by nothing other than their own use of it, avoiding externally defined objectivity. So, in jazz, as 'signifying texts', the work is by definition not closed. On the other hand, if we consider the closed world to

include the genre of the work, then Adorno's criteria for authenticity may more readily be met. As such, we can still see autonomy in the modernist sense embodied in the developments of the bebop era, and in relation to our broader argument, see the influence of modernism in the jazz tradition.

While we do not want to force a link between Adorno and bebop, we must consider the roles of autonomy and authenticity in jazz, and in order to do this, we can now look more closely at how Adorno interpreted the role of musical techniques in achieving autonomy, and whether or not this relates to the development of jazz.

### **Adorno, Beethoven, and Form**

Our argument so far is that jazz maintained several features that are comparable with modernism in the Adornian definition, but varied in a number of key ways, such as its referential nature, and more intertextual approach rather than strict autonomy. To analyse another similarity, the role of 'elaborate harmonic and melodic revisions' in bebop is comparable to the musical evolutions of modernity (Ramsey, 2004, p.107). In regards to how form evolved in European music, Adorno maintained several contentions with how subjectivity and objectivity were achieved in composition, which may be useful to our discussion. If we are to consider referentially in jazz as distinct from Adorno's modernism, we must first examine his own views on form in composition.

In Rose Subotnik's reading of Adorno's analysis of Beethoven, specifically his second and third periods, she highlights what she calls his 'developing variation theory', which is the process through which 'a musical element subjects itself to logical dynamic change while simultaneously retaining its original identity' (1991, p.20). This refers to what Adorno sees as the music's ability to 'reconcile the contradiction between subjective freedom and objective form' which he believes is what Beethoven attempted in his second period, and results in the composer achieving control over the musical material (1991, p.20). However, in keeping with Adorno's pessimism toward autonomy, Subotnik notes how this fails, as the composer can never have true freedom in the face of the predetermined meaning, which supersedes their own use (1991).

The initial belief is that 'the grinding down of materials through the developmental process', in particular the reformation and revision of musical material, results in the composer being able to create their own meaning rather than relying on a pre-existing, culturally defined one (Subotnik, 1991, p.23). It was Adorno's view, however, that the subjective musical material, through constant development, 'negates itself entirely in the service of the larger entity', in other words, the individual identity and freedom that is sought through the personal development of material is lost within the wider structure of the music (Subotnik, 1991, p.23). For example, the recapitulation and reprise of material, in Adorno's view, demonstrates the reliance on the external authority of form (Subotnik, 1991). As a consequence, it was Adorno's opinion that authenticity could only be achieved by completely abandoning any reliance on existing rules or norms, which is what he perceives in Beethoven's third, or late, style. Adorno's conclusion was that 'the only protest left to authentic art is withdrawal from society' (Subotnik, 1991, p.25),

however, as we have seen earlier, this is a paradox in terms similar to that demonstrated by Paddison (2004b), and the failure of authenticity in the first sense that we examined; that the independence of a work from its social and cultural surroundings is impossible.

There is, however, a resolution to this problem. As discussed earlier, the work of Schoenberg, for Adorno, demonstrated how 'absolute renunciation of the gesture of authenticity becomes the only indication of the authenticity of the structure', as he divorced his work from any historic meaning inherent to musical figures or phrases (Adorno, 2016, p.147). While not truly autonomous, as this is impossible, authenticity is found in the tension between the resistance to socially dictated meaning, and his own internal rules.

It should be noted, as Subotnik does, that relating Adorno's observations to specific musical characteristics is complex and often unclear, but fundamentally, it is the reliance on existing musical features that demonstrates the influence of external authority, in tying the piece to the meanings created by their previous use (1991, p.29). Therefore, in having its own rules, a composition 'could acknowledge its own underlying dependence on a foreign source of authority, objectivity' whilst at the same time avoiding being overwhelmingly influenced by it, and achieving authenticity in the recognition of this (1991, p.26). If we examine more closely the techniques that Adorno valued in Beethoven's late style, we can explore what a more considered analysis of jazz by Adorno might praise.

Beethoven's late style presents extremes, such as the formal rules of 'fugue and canon', sections of 'free rendition', and the 'interpenetration of sections of movements in strict (contrapuntal) and free (homophonic) style' (1991, p.30). As we will see, the development of bebop in the 1930s also presented the merging of a number of seemingly opposing musical techniques, including the use of melodic content in affecting structural development within a given composition. The significance of this is that Adorno's critique of the 'ornamental' features of jazz that do not influence form is challenged by this (1936, p.53).

Ultimately, the carefully balanced position that authentic music can hold is unsustainable, as its unique and oppositional character is reduced by its assimilation and acceptance in society, as what was once new and provocative becomes normalised (Subotnik, 1991).

His praise for Beethoven's late style, was due to the resistance to the preexisting meaning derived from the European canon, and that it 'recognised the need of authentic art to avoid types of musical language already tainted by over exposure', which Subotnik argues is a significant aspect of Adorno's aesthetics (1991, p.33).

The subsequent problem however, is the loss of the communicative power of art, as a result of the 'irreconcilable dichotomy between the ability to perceive and articulate social truth on one hand, and to communicate it to society on the other' (1991, p.33). Therefore, the work must attempt to negotiate this contradiction, and though the task is an impossible one, it is the attempt that constitutes an authentic work. If Adorno were to widen his understanding of jazz in the 1930s, it could be argued that the criteria he sets out are met more readily than he might expect.

In bebop we can identify resistance to neutralisation and established conventions in composition, and in addition to this, there seems to be no reason why the widening of musical language alone would not at least satisfy some of Adorno's criteria for authenticity. In terms of the dichotomy between communicative power and social critique, considering Adorno's later acceptance of Stravinsky's use of revision and repetition, we can examine further the vernacular discourse and the representational role it played in bebop. Therefore, while the relevance of Adorno's critique of jazz is limited, his wider theory of music still holds some usefulness in assessing jazz, specifically bebop.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter was to examine an influential account of modernism, and subsequently clarify the influence of modernism on the development of the jazz tradition. We have seen that while modernism was influential, Adorno's strict aesthetic account has limited relevance. In the exposition of Adorno's writing on Stravinsky and Schoenberg, we have demonstrated that there is room in Adorno's modernist aesthetics for a more sympathetic account of jazz, although this is made partially redundant by jazz's more unique characteristics that are not understood in such a reading. Adorno's account reveals much of the prejudicial attitude towards jazz, namely the dismissal of improvisation and use of musical structure, and while Adorno's analysis of Beethoven does indicate a sympathy toward experimentation, one comparable to bebop and free jazz, it confirms the elitist attitude that jazz faced in the early to mid 20th century. In the next chapter, to examine the aesthetic objectives of jazz and how they developed in the wake of modernism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can analyse the music of Charlie Parker and the inception of bebop.

## Chapter 4: Charlie Parker, Bebop, and Jazz as Entertainment

The music of saxophonist Charlie Parker demonstrates the emergence of several musical principles that were to become central to the bebop genre. In understanding these developments we can begin to answer the question of what aesthetic features were valued in jazz, and how these changed, or began to change, during the 1940s. Understanding bebop through the influence of both Western modernism as well as through the legacy of a complex, transnational musical tradition, we can see why much has been made of modernity's influence on Parker, and why his role in the creation of the bebop genre has led to him being considered historically, amongst other things, the archetypal 'jazz modernist' (Ramsey, 2004, p.65). However, the emphasis on modernity over other cultural influences lends a bias to the aesthetic understanding of bebop. Where I intend to expand on this is by analysing bebop's reception, in addition to its inception, or more plainly, assess what the music meant to both those who played and listened to it, and subsequently, understand the range of influences that shaped its development.

This chapter will focus on Parker's role in the creation of bebop, and how his approach to composition and improvisation influenced, and indeed determined, the genre's development. Through this, the aesthetic values of the genre can be examined, and their philosophical underpinnings elucidated, and in conclusion, we see how certain aspects like improvisation and spontaneity were given particular significance. Further to this we see how bebop's unique merging of aesthetic qualities challenged the existing notions of art and entertainment.

First, in light of Adorno's critique, both its inaccuracy and its potential relevance, we have identified some consistencies with the European tradition as it evolved under modernity, which may help examine bebop's similarity and difference with the Western definitions of 'art'. For example, in Parker's work we can examine the notion of the work-determinative composition, and the relationship between his music and that of the Western classical tradition.

### **Parker, Composition, and the 'Standard'**

Bebop drew upon several musical principles that both support and contradict Adorno's modernist criteria. Both original music, as well as the knowledge and recreation of historically and culturally defined musical 'standards', were key aesthetic values that underpinned the development of bebop. The first point to examine is how these two elements manifested themselves, and how they were balanced. As a composer, Charlie Parker crossed the divide between jazz and orchestral Western music, using forms in the jazz tradition, as well as aligning some of his work with European classical music. However, examining the aesthetic values that guided this synthesis may help define more clearly which influences were most central to Parker's music and bebop in general.

We can begin this discussion with a closer examination of ontological requirements of the genres, and how these manifested themselves in Parker's work. As discussed earlier, the

ontology of a work varies significantly depending on its musical history and tradition. In the European canon, as we have seen, an authentic performance in this sense is the following of 'work-determinative instructions' given by the composer, so the performance is an accurate instance of the work (Davies, 2001, p.207). Therefore, regarding the European classical paradigm, to play the piece authentically is to play it as close to the composer's instructions as possible (Davies, 2001).

On the other hand, the performance of a work in jazz does not subscribe to the same rules or expectations. In fact, the value is almost to the complete opposite; instead, works are used for individual performances, experimentation, and reworking them is common. Given that 'a jazz performance is allowed to depart from the prescriptions for such a work', and that the departures themselves are valued, work-determinative rules are significantly less stringent, if present at all (Davies, 2011, p.95). However, there is some synthesis to be found. Returning to the terms of the aesthetics of perfection and imperfection as they are found in jazz and classical music, they are indeed 'interpenetrating opposites' (Hamilton, 2007, p.197). This must be considered if we are to accurately examine jazz in comparison with European classical music, and assess the influence of the classical tradition on the jazz tradition.

This synthesis is perhaps best exemplified in the premise of the 'jazz standard', as both authentic responses to contingencies (as we have discussed) are desired, such as original and skilled improvisation, as well as some adherence to an existing, composed work. To recap, as Hamilton defines, 'imperfectionism is a *constant striving for new contingencies to respond to*' (2020, p.299). In considering jazz as an art of imperfection, the expectation is that these responses are what will form the fundamental aesthetic values of the genre, but a reproduction of an existing work in some sense is essential to the performance, and expected by the audience. In addition, a comprehensive knowledge of other works, such as through familiarisation with the 'real' or 'fake' book, is required so as to be called upon during improvisation within a performance. So crucial was this skill, it was used as a metric through which to quantify a musician's ability (Gioia, 2012).

There is an argument to be made of whether a performance of a standard is in fact a performance of the work itself, as in some cases only a very limited amount of identifying material is needed to qualify the performance of being 'of' the work. Returning to Davies' question of whether it is actually a performance of a work, he observes that 'it might be asked whether a performance stands to the performable work in the right relationship to count as a performance of that work' (2011, p.95). It could be argued that this is the 'classical' error; to think a jazz player is giving a performance of a piece, rather than a performance on its own terms. In jazz, while it seems that the performance may not be of a specific work, the notion of an original work is still significant. The performance may take on individual and unique qualities not present in the original composition, or depart from it entirely, however, it is still thought of as being derived from a specific work. There are three aspects of the standard we can observe which indicate that performances of standards are, at least in some way, related to a work or a work-concept.

## 1) The Use of Standards

Charlie Parker's discography can be divided into three groups, 'larger-scale works, smaller-scale works intended for improvisation, and directly improvised works' (Martin, 2020, p.17). The latter of these categories is mentioned by Davies, who rightly argues that these cannot be said to be performances of a work at all, and are instead created by performers, often using 'various musical traditions as ingredients in their improvisations' (2011, p.160). It is the second category that is relevant; it is here that the question arises of what constitutes a work, and if a performance of this kind can be said to be of a work at all. Smaller works designed for improvisation, that use both 'popular songs and jazz tunes', make up the majority of standards as they are used as vehicles for improvisation by jazz musicians (Martin, 2020, p.18).

In making the distinction between these categories of jazz works, Martin recognises the level of departure from a given musical piece that was expected in Parker's era of bebop. It was common practice amongst bebop musicians was to compose 'contrafacts', which involves the abstraction of 'the form and harmony of a popular song', often with an original melody, and 'sometimes including harmonic substitutions or alterations' (Martin, 2020, p.18). This treatment of musical material not only featured within this type of work, but also contributed to the development of new works. Ontologically, this raises the question of at what point a piece is of a standard, or becomes a new work. Therefore, identifying these works as compositions is difficult, as there seems to be no single defining point at which one becomes the other, and they are dynamic in nature. Nonetheless, a 'standard' often forms the basis of these works, whether that be an existing jazz piece, or a popular song, which are different from jazz tunes, though still often found in jazz performances (Martin, 2020).

That there are musical artefacts that are learnt, handed down, and form part of the genres' repertoires alone gives some indication that an original work is significant. Therefore, subsequent performances are *of* something akin to an original source material or composition, however brief. In addition to this, if a performance was not related to an original work in some way, then references to it such as through song titles and melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material would be irrelevant. While this does not mean that a performance can be said to be totally *of* a work, as in a direct instance of it, there is still clear evidence that the work is essential, as without it, the ensuing performance is not contextualised for the audience. Even if the abstraction is such that the new work is related to the original standard by name only, it is still through knowing the original that the new work is contextualised for the listener.

However, the question still remains of how, and at what point, a performance of a standard becomes a work in itself. It could be argued that the performance is no longer of the standard, as the new instance is seen as a separate composition, as the work-determinative rules of the new version may differ so greatly from the original standard. In addition, it is important to consider that it may be impossible for a work to entirely separate itself from its preceding material. While a work may be entirely separated if the audience listening does not recognise or identify the original material, this seems unlikely in jazz, because as we have seen, the role of



the audience in validating musical value jazz is fundamental. This is integrated into a theory of jazz ontology by Brian Kane, which we can now examine.

Kane's argument is against what he calls the 'realist view', which is Steven Davies' distinction between 'thick' and 'thin' works, referring to the level of work-determinative properties and the expectation of adherence to these in subsequent performances of the work. In short, the work in the classical tradition is 'thick' as a result of the amount of properties, whereas the standard is 'thin' as the degree of essential properties is much less, but in Kane's view, this theory does not account for the idea that 'performances have the potential to alter works' (2018, p.513). The reason this undermines the view of the standard as a 'thin' work, is that many standards were originally 'thick' works, of which important but limited amounts of identifying material were subsequently used when performed in a jazz setting. The thin work, therefore, 'emerges from its performances and inscriptions', rather than originally being designated as such (Kane, 2018, p.511).

What is then created is a 'network', through which a performance maintains certain properties, as well as adding and removing them (Kane, 2018, p.523). Martin recognises the objection to this theory is the argument that requirements for the performance change as different versions are created, and therefore no specific work can be seen to define the subsequent interpretations (2020). As Martin indicates, this argument, made by Brian Kane, seeks to correct the view of the work as defined by work-determinative rules by suggesting that 'the work "exists" as an interconnected series of its performances' and subsequently, its is up to the relevant audience's reception of it to determine if a performance qualifies as being of the given work (2020, p.24).

This argument is very important in asking whether a performance can be said to be of a work. In considering that the determinative properties of a work may change as new instances of the work are given, the task of identifying the work, and agreeing that a performance is a valid instance of it, becomes the role of the audience. If work-determinative rules are inessential in this process, or at least being of lesser concern in the performance, this suggests that to view a performance of a standard as a performance of a given work, is inaccurate. The performance may be influenced by other performances unrelated to the original work, or even depart entirely, and therefore Kane argues that 'for any standard that possesses property p, there are versions (actual or potential) that are instances of the work and lack p.', meaning singular characteristics are not enough to identify a performance's related work (2018, p.523).

However, this does not mean categorically that a performance is not of a work in some way. While other versions may change the understanding of the work, introduce or dismiss existing properties or expectations, and influence subsequent performances, there still exist certain examples that are seen as canonical. The crux of Kane's argument is that the process of verifying and agreeing a performance's relation to the standard requires 'mediation' on the part of the audience, which then forms the decision of whether a given performance is successful or not (2018, p.524).

The network theory appears correct, as jazz is in part framed by a musical tradition in which work-determinative rules do not define the performance, and it is the performance itself that is valued, and therefore, an ontological theory must account for this when attempting to understand the requirements for an instance of a work. However, the original work that influences the performance, even when used in a very limited capacity, still maintains significance. The strength of the network theory is that standards and their performances are understood in relation to one another, and individual performances 'never exist as a single node (Kane, 2018, p.254). Each performance simultaneously affects the network, creating a new version, as well as propagating the others, and simultaneously giving an instance of a standard as well as of a new work (Kane, 2018).

So, there is some relation, however minimal, to a preceding work, or at least a work that can be said to be an original version. As we have seen, there is a relevance of a single, primary work, from which early performances are at least initially influenced. In this view of performances being of singular works, it is that specific recordings are seen as being the correct, or an original instance of the piece, that gives weight to this view. In support of this, it can be argued that 'certain recordings can achieve a level of status that may be called "authoritative," perhaps roughly analogous to an autograph score' (Martin, 2020, p.24).

In the designation of a work and the recognition of subsequent performances as being of the work, evidence can be given that there seems to be a general acceptance that there is one recording of a given work that is seen as best exemplifying it, and from which musicians learn the fundamental aspects of the piece, even when no formal example is transcribed or published (Martin, 2020). This can certainly be seen across the jazz repertoire, including Parker's discography, through the use of fake and real books. However, the complexity of identifying the authoritative score is an issue specific to jazz composition, as in regards to popular songs used as standards, they tend to have a more defined original score, from which new versions are created through performances and recordings.

In my own discussion with Brain Kane, he argues 'that authoritative recordings are best understood in topological terms', defining them as 'central nodes' in the broader network that is constructed by the various instances (2020). As the work becomes popular, forming a more frequent part of a musician's repertoire and being performed by others, the central node's properties become replicated and subsequently, they 'emerge as work-determinative' (2020). Considering that performances can establish key properties at any point chronologically, Kane states 'it is a misconception that earlier instances are ones most likely to be authoritative' (2020).

Ultimately, it seems as though performances can be said to be of a work, at least in some way. Kane's distinction is significant, that the requirements for a performance of a work change as more instances of the work are given, and that essentially, in the jazz tradition, no single work can be said to embody the full criteria for validating subsequent performances. Even so, the existence of the standard, in other words, a set of preliminary rules or parameters, is still important and while Davies notion of the 'thin' work has been shown to be unsatisfactory, there

is still some relevance of work-determinative properties. Considering the premise of the network and of 'central nodes', while different performances can alter the expected properties of a work, there are still certain instances seen as best exemplifying the piece, which also serve as the example from which other musicians learn it. In addition to this, however limited the given properties are, as we will now see, not only were they expected by audience, but by other musicians too.

## **2) Required Knowledge of the Standards**

Further evidence for performances being of works in some way can be found in the detailed fashion in which standards are employed. The jazz musicians' ability to perform the standards, and be familiar enough with the repertoires to do this spontaneously, is well documented as being essential in the jazz tradition (Gioia, 2012). This suggests that while improvisation and experimentation around the standards may be encouraged, expected, and given far greater value than simply repeating a work in performance, there is still an element of predetermined composition that is essential to these performances.

Returning to the premise of the network, the observation is that any given property of a work is subject to change as each performance essentially redefines, or has the potential to redefine, the work. As a result, no single performance inherently exemplifies the work, and instead the rules of what constitutes the work change with new performances, as well as an agreement by an audience that the performance demonstrates the work. However, musicians will make performances that alter the work, or introduce new properties, after the original work is learnt. In other words, the original piece must be learnt before interpreted or revised. If we consider the premise of 'mediation', the agreement by an audience that a performance is indeed of a work, perhaps part of what qualifies a performance as being of a work is the knowledge by other practitioners that the musician who is performing is suitably familiar with the original material to be capable of doing so (Kane, 2020). This is a difficult claim to verify, although anecdotal evidence suggests that within the circles of jazz practitioners, great emphasis was placed on a musician being familiar with the repertoire (Gioia, 2012).

The 'required knowledge' that I have referred to does not solely mean the recognition of a piece's musical features, and subsequently appreciating the continuity or divergence from these in performance. Another aspect of this is song titles, and how these are used to transfer to the listener the context of the performance, and that titles of jazz pieces can be seen as labels that indicate to the listener how to approach the music and what to listen for (Frith, 1996). If a jazz musician were to perform a standard, through giving the title, an audience could more accurately recognise what the performer was doing musically. Of course, this isn't the whole picture. There are also many examples of musicians using material from existing works to form new ones, such as Parker's 'Ornithology' using material from 'How High The Moon', without referring to this in the title (Gioia, 2011).

Having the required knowledge of a standard does not mean that this must be present in the performance. In other words, demonstrating one's fluency with the original standard does not

determine whether a subsequent performance is accepted as being a version of a standard. An important consideration is that it may be the case that a work is performed in a deliberately inauthentic manner, and that such a performance still counts as an instance of the work (Dodd, 2014b). To define 'inauthentic', it is with reference to the work concept in the classical paradigm, in which an ideal performance is as close a recreation of a work as possible (Dodd, 2014b).

Though inauthentic, there remains a link to the original work, some properties of which are expected to be identifiable in the performance. The theory of nodes in a network suggests that if a performance is said to be of a standard, while original properties may well not be present in a performance, there will be some link to another performance that is also said to be of the standard. If this were not the case, then an audience could not identify which standard was being performed, nor contextualise the music that was currently being heard (Dodd, 2014b, p.286):

Although such performances are not governed by the concern for authenticity characteristic of classical performance practice, it is nonetheless true that we listen to performances inspired by jazz standards with one ear on the standard itself.

Therefore, the emphasis falls to how standards are understood during performance, and the role the audience has in confirming or denying a performance as being of a standard.

### **3) Expectations of the Standards in Performance**

Following the necessity for knowledge of the standards, the final and possibly most important aspect of the standard is that some element of the work is an essential requirement through which to identify the work and frame the performance. As demonstrated through the expected knowledge of the standards, there seems to be some work-determinative rules that must be followed, although, as Dodd observes, jazz is a 'less work centred' form of music (2014, p.281b). While this is evidently correct, and indeed the original work does not entirely dictate the creation of a jazz performance, there is a question of how influential the existing instances are in shaping the creation of performances, and how they subsequently influence the creation of new works that may become standards. Returning to the idea that performances relate to both the original work and other performances as a sequence of nodes in a network, by which each takes on properties of its own and relates to the original work through the extension of these properties, this appears satisfactory. As Kane asserts, 'for any standard that possesses property p, there are versions (actual or potential) that are instances of the work and lack p' (2018, p.523). However, there still seems to be certain rules that transcend each performance, relating back to the original work. While the network is not linear, there are many instances in which standards are performed in reference to an authoritative example (Martin, 2020).

If we consider the observation that, in the classical paradigm, the authentic performance instances all work-determinative instructions, while this certainly isn't the case entirely, it does still provide some basis for understanding the notion of the standard (Davies, 2001). The composed work is there to be interpreted, changed, altered, subverted, but nonetheless, some elements must be present to both enable the audience to identify the piece, and subsequently

contextualise the following performance. In some cases the musical material is extrapolated to the point that the performance is almost unrecognisable as the standard, and is only identifiable as such due to the title of the piece, but even then, some identifying information must be present.

One interpretation of this aspect of the standard is what can be termed ‘improvisation on a theme’ (Davies, 2011, p.155). The principle is that a performable work is taken and used as a starting point, but only in a limited capacity, as the performance is then driven by the decisions of the performers. The use of a work as a starting point but not as a complete guide supports the notion that jazz places value on qualities distinct from those found in work-determinative performances, and following this, the relationship between the original work and the subsequent interpretation raises the question of whether the improvised version is a ‘correct performance’ of the work (Davies, 2011, p.157). Regardless of how much is left up to the performer, it could well be expected that any work-determinative rules, however brief, are still essential in ensuring that the performance is of the given work. However, Davies argues that firstly, the performance is not trying to ‘fulfil those prescriptions’, and secondly, to do so would be to place value on aesthetic qualities that differ from those found in improvisation (2011, p.157). It is therefore incorrect to view the standard as a work-performance, as any notion of a work, while a foundation, is not a guiding force behind the progression of the subsequent performance, and therefore, the performance can not be said to be *of* the work.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the musician’s improvisation or interpretation is still related to a predetermined composition, however tenuously. In addition to this, while it may not be the improviser’s intention to draw attention to the work from which the performance is drawn, references to and acknowledgement of the source material still forms a vital part of the jazz performance.

The three points we have examined here suggest that the performance of standards is somewhat related to a work-centred approach to musical value, although as the specific use of the work varies, so does the performance’s relation to it. Considering Martin’s divisions of jazz works, it is expected that each performance has the potential to fulfil a slightly different role aesthetically, for both the performer and the audience. In light of Davies’ premise of the ‘thin’ work being unsatisfactory, Kane’s theory of a ‘network’, in which a performance may add or deduct certain properties of a work seems to be the most convincing (2018, p.523). This therefore supports the argument that in jazz, work-determinative rules do not have a significant role in the performance of jazz standards (Dodd, 2014b). As we have seen, this is largely true, although there remains a relation to the pre-existing work, whether through stylistic influence, titular referencing, or abstraction of specific musical content.

The question that now arises is what influences the different interpretations of works in jazz performance; how the purpose of the music affects the value placed on its different qualities. In

---

<sup>12</sup> Davies also identifies works in the jazz tradition whose purpose is as an ‘improvisational frame’, with a deliberate lack of rules to allow and encourage interpretation, and plays two roles, as ‘the improvised performance thereby serves the central function of a work-performance in virtue of also serving as an improvisation’ (2011, p.157). However, in this instance, rules are nonetheless significant.

considering the music's social role, the emerging musical qualities of the 1940s can be better understood, and their aesthetic purpose illuminated.

### **Bebop, Art, and Jazz's Social Function**

Having now examined the roots of the jazz tradition, and how they affected jazz in its development alongside Western modernity, we have seen that one aspect of bebop was how it began to change the social function of jazz. As we have seen, jazz's function was misinterpreted by audiences and critics that treated it as simply 'entertainment', and therefore it is essential to examine the reciprocal relationship between a music's aesthetic principles and its social function to better understand it in its entirety. One undeniable effect of Parker's work and the emergence of bebop was the realignment of the public's understanding of jazz with what can be considered in a general sense as the European definition of art. This involved primarily the shift from jazz as having a specific social function, for example entertainment and dancing, to being functionless, or in other words, for contemplation solely on its own terms.

In terms of Parker's influence on the discourse of jazz as a whole, the development of musical material and the inclusion of a wider and more technically complex musical language was not only a stylistic decision, but also reflects the social role of the music itself. The physical characteristics of the music were indicative of a more fundamental change; as Williams writes these developments were 'a way for jazz to continue, but that way was not just a matter of new devices; it also had to do with a change in even the function of music' (1993, p.136). In the development and propagation of swing, jazz had been diluted to become more marketable for the general public (Gioia, 2011). As we have seen, this was in part due to the cultural hegemony that led jazz to often be dominated by white musicians, using the music as entertainment for mass audiences, rather than remaining faithful to its musical traditions and cultural background.

The view of jazz as a music inherently linked to a social function appears misunderstood as meaning simply entertainment devoid of artistic content. The effect this had on bebop was that the musical norms and expectations of swing were now 'purged in favor of a purer conception of jazz: an art music with the emotional pungency of a battle cry' (Gioia, 2011, p.193). However, as we have already begun to explore, the term 'art music' is not entirely accurate. While in this case it refers to the movement away from the role as entertainment, and the shift into music designed for direct contemplation and listening, as we will see, this is not an appropriate way of understanding the jazz tradition or the emergence of bebop. Again we can see the influence of some aspects of the European classical tradition, but as mentioned, 'art music' does not explain the synthesis that bebop had created. Amiri Baraka states that in fact, the label of art undermines and ignores the fundamental developments of bebop that were so instrumental in its success and cultural importance (Jones, 2002).

Amiri Baraka argues that in swing, spontaneity had been replaced by notation and arrangement, with the result being that diffused 'the human element of the music' (Jones, 2002, p.181). This loss of what we have seen as a fundamental part of the jazz tradition, namely, the qualities of originality and spontaneity during performance, was due to the social location of the music

shifting into a more formalised environment. As a result, what was lost was the communicative aspect of the genre (Jones, 2002, p.181):

Philosophically, swing sought to involve the black culture in a platonic social blandness that would erase it forever, replacing it with the socio-cultural compromise of the “jazzed-up” popular song; a compromise whose most significant stance was finally catatonia and noncommunication.

In Baraka’s analysis, the ‘tasteless commercialism’ that had become a part of swing as it sought to appeal to wider audiences left the bands themselves ‘virtually incapable of serving as vehicles for any serious musical expression’ (Jones, 2002, p.184). Appealing to an audience in itself is perhaps not as egregious, as this will in many cases be essential to ensure the financial success and sustainability of the musician or group, however, Baraka’s criticism is that the desire for success overshadowed and erased the origins and traditions of jazz to the point that swing was no longer representative of its musical history or meaning.

As swing established jazz, or more specifically a representation of jazz, within the confines of the European musical tradition, it was therefore critiqued as such. As bebop adopted in part the notion of ‘art’ under modernity, factors such as historical function were forgotten or ignored. As Baraka writes, ‘because of the lifting of the protective “folk expression” veil from a Negro music, the liberal commentators *could* criticise it as a pure musical expression’ (Jones, 2002, p.189). The ‘lifting of the veil’ left bebop open to interpretation by uninitiated audiences and critics without regard for its musical or socio-cultural history, and in being examined in relation to the established institutional notions of art and music as they existed in the European tradition, bebop was critiqued with little regard for its nonconforming properties or their origin.

Baraka’s contention is that the influence of European classical music in bebop has been overstated, and that actually the significance of bebop was its reintroduction of a range of “non-Western’ concepts of music’ (Jones, 2002, p.194). The evidence for this, as we will see, is that bebop in many ways maintained the function that it inherited from the jazz tradition, and did not entirely shift into what can be seen as the functionless role of art in the Western sense. Baraka writes that ‘the music by the mid-forties had also begun to get tagged with that famous disparagement art’, which he defines as ‘meaning superfluous, rather than something that makes it seem important that you are a human being’ (Jones, 2002, p.199). As a result, Baraka’s critique is that by ignoring the tradition of jazz as a music inseparable from the audience’s experience and its history as a music for social engagement, and viewing it instead as music for solely critical artistic contemplation, the history of its cultural function was missed.

If we consider the overstating of the Western influence in jazz that Baraka identifies, the question of how significant external influences actually were in the emergence of bebop remains. Scott DeVaux argues that the aspects of bebop that were new and unconventional, and that challenged the existing musical discourse, were actually as a result of external pressures. In understanding that bebop’s aesthetic changes were as a result of outside influences rather than as a natural progression of the music, as a result of ‘the collision between

jazz as an artistic endeavour and the social forces of commerce and race', the relevance of external influences can be seen (1997, p.4).

This is one side of the contradiction between understanding bebop as either a 'revolution', or as part of the natural musical development of jazz, of which the radicalism of bebop is often explained by 'the rhetoric of modernism' present in the early 20th century (DeVeaux, 1997, p.4). It is the middleground of these two sides that must be examined in order to explain how bebop developed. Recognising the distinction between the political nature of jazz and the paradigm of modernist autonomy is useful because the former helps explain the artistic motivations of its practitioners, and while jazz was related to modernist aesthetics, the term 'autonomy' fails to accurately account for the nuanced socio-economic position that the music had taken (DeVeaux, 1997). As a music whose history is located within social discourse, and inherently tied to social influences, understanding jazz and the development of bebop as being divorced entirely from this sphere, in other words, as autonomous, is incorrect.

However, the reciprocal relationship between the notions of the artist and the professional musician as it pertains to performances of popular music for economic gain, is relevant, and DeVeaux argues that bebop musicians embodied aspects of both categories. First, as '*artists*', they 'enjoyed a degree of autonomy from society', in that they were able to create and experiment with their music with a level of nonconformity, although of course still informed heavily by the musical tradition in which they worked (1997, p.28). Secondly, as '*professionals*', in other words, working musicians, they were able to benefit financially from their skills, which was a necessity for any performer in order to maintain a viable career without patrons or benefactors (1997, p.28). The paradigms of art and artist, therefore, are not particularly relevant or explanatory in understanding the shift in the role of jazz that bebop has come to represent. As Baraka states, the 'famous disparagement art', his definition of which is 'superfluous, rather than something that makes it seem important that you are a human being', is a title applied to bebop without consideration of its musical tradition (Jones, 2002, p.199). The question remains, however, of how much of an art, as opposed to entertainment, bebop really was. Bebop musicians maintained their musical tradition and resisted assimilation, while at the same time trying to gain influence in the social and economic benefits of the institutionalised art world.

First, we must look at how, if at all, the function of the music changed as bebop emerged, and how its historic role informed the one it adopted. Not entirely autonomous in the sense of modernity, certain aspects of jazz's history were to endure throughout even the most radical of its phases. This, of course, is not specific to bebop, as many artistic forms are informed by a past or tradition. DeVeaux describes bebop as 'a musical solution to a social problem', due to the autonomous character it embodied in the face of artistic elitism (1997, p.44). The foisting of the modernist notion of autonomy upon jazz may undermine its social nature, but in an aesthetic sense, it is necessary to consider how the role and purpose of the music changed during this era. In approaching musical function, we must continue to consider the art/entertainment dichotomy and the position of jazz within this, and the consequences this had on the understanding of the genre.



## A Functional Definition of Bebop

The view of bebop as art in the Western sense, that Baraka opposes, appears to be based on a reading of bebop's musical features that fails to fully take into account its social history. In other words, by seeing the music as art, and by Baraka's definition, 'superfluous', the misunderstanding seems to be a misinterpretation of function (Jones, 2002, p.199). For Baraka, it seems, to be viewed as art is to lose, or ignore, the communicative power and social role of the music. This role and its effect on the understanding of what the music is, and its subsequent value, suggests in the case of bebop one distinction that begins to answer the question of whether bebop is or isn't art in the Western sense. Understanding bebop as representing a shift in jazz from functionalism to non-functionalism, which appears to be the root of Baraka's critique, helps in our analysis of its aesthetic values .

There are several objections to *functional* definitions of art. For example Gracyk notes that when approaching a work, ensuring the correct evaluation is essential, as if the function or purpose of the work is misinterpreted, or has the potential to be, then functional definitions are flawed as they can easily be inaccurate (2012). Further to this, the problem when defining a genre or style as art via a predetermined function is that ancillary or contingent functions are misinterpreted. As Gracyk explains, function definitions are objectionable when artworks 'are correctly valued for performing completely independent functions' (2012, p.108). It is through this problem of functional definitions that we can here locate misinterpretations of jazz, and why its position as both entertainment and art were criticised.

In short, the function of jazz, originally understood in its form during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in genres such as ragtime, stride, and New Orleans jazz, was perceived as entertainment, solely for enjoyment by an audience. In reality, this is a flawed and over simplified view, as the music's initial function was assessed in the Western view as being entertainment due to a lack of what was considered artistic, and instead being closer as we have seen, to 'folk' or traditional creative expression. Even though prior to bebop, jazz was 'a music created for immediate consumption through commercial channels', and therefore needed to be popular with audiences, this presents an oversimplified view of the music (DeVeaux, 1997, p.8).

As the music broadened its harmonic and rhythmic palette, such as integrating more classically derived musical techniques, its image, or reception, as an 'art' developed. Therefore, in spite of the issue of the relevance of imposed Western definitions, we can see a necessity for some alignment with European notions of art as opposed to entertainment, at least in their simple definitions, as specific European influences were introduced and took on a significant role, including the change in the music's function. The general view of bebop in comparison with jazz as it had existed up until 1945 was that of innovative and radical artists as opposed to entertainers (DeVeaux, 1997). While it is important to recognise that 'the history of jazz can be read, in part, as an attempt by determined musicians to close the gap between artistic ambition and economic reward', there remains the question of how this relates to the function of the music if both were to remain central factors in the music's success and sustainability (DeVeaux, 1997, p.9).

For example, bebop presented several musical developments that would change the perceived function of the music. Primarily, emphasis on the enjoyment or acceptance by an audience ceased to be a key factor, instead becoming a secondary consideration, but nonetheless, economic viability remained essential for the musicians. In DeVeaux's analysis, he finds that many of the musical forms that were popular in African American culture, were too closely tied to the history of social marginalisation for them to be appealing to contemporary audiences, and were therefore not economically viable. As a result, only religious spirituals found favour among audiences, as 'field hollers, work songs, ballads' were, in terms of their viability in the music industry, 'too redolent of agricultural peonage to be attractive to those desperately trying to escape it' (DeVeaux, 1997, p.46). They were therefore less economically successful, and taking this into consideration we can establish one central function to jazz that changed with the emergence of bebop – the reduction of the significance of economic success. This is not to say, however, that bebop musicians did not require economic success to maintain their careers, but that it was no longer such an important factor in composing new music.

Nonetheless, while radical in nature, as a musician in the jazz genre seeking new modes through which to enable musical expression, there was still an expected knowledge and adherence to a system of musical values within bebop. While divorcing themselves from the cultural sphere that had evolved in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a system of musical education and practice endured that maintained the musician's relationship and identification with jazz and its history. In addition to being successful in the wider music industry, there was also a necessity within the circles of jazz musicians to be able to demonstrate knowledge of a musical history, and this has been examined through a variety of phenomena. We have already examined the role of standards, but further to this, what DeVeaux refers to as 'technique', was essential for musicians seeking to be established and recognised performers, as it 'meant mastering the characteristic expressive devices of the African American tradition', by which he is referring to historically emergent musical features such as 'the smears, bent notes, and varied timbres by which instrumentalists approximated the nuances of black song' (1997, p.60)

While bebop incorporated wider musical influences, part of which, as we have seen, from the legacy of American modernism, 'the challenge', as DeVeaux explains, 'was to absorb new musical elements without dislodging the African American aesthetic from its central place' (1997, p.62). Bebop's departure from swing, while maintaining the 'technique', can be read in part as an attempt to further distance their music from that which had become seen as catering solely for the white market, while keeping hold of the musical tradition that had become diluted and displaced through its use as a novel, marketable feature for consumption by largely white audiences. References to other musical styles of African American heritage had in many cases been used to ensure economic success (DeVeaux, 1997, p.62):

Musicians in early jazz were careful to foreground their distinctive mastery of swing and blues, as much to stake a claim to cultural leadership within the black community as to satisfy the white market's appetite for black cultural products.

A similar phenomenon that has already been mentioned and that relates to DeVeaux's premise of 'technique' is Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of signifying. A system of communication that requires specific cultural experience and knowledge, in music, signifying is manifested through specific features that are not only incorporated, but may form the basis of musical pieces (Floyd, 1995, p.8):

Musical Signifyin(g) is the rhetorical use of preexisting material as a means of demonstrating respect for or poking fun at a musical style, process or practice through parody, pastiche, implication, indirection, humor, tone play or word play, the illusion of speech or narration, or other troping mechanisms.

While this theory does not account for an explanation of all expressive and referential qualities found in jazz, in combination with DeVeaux's premise of technique and the role of the standard, it can be seen that a musical language that contained a historical system through which to achieve expressive capabilities existed and influenced bebop and its musicians.

In Charlie Parker's music, his use of musical referencing is extensive, with one notable example being his use of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in 'Salt Peanuts'. This combination of musical reference, as well as the use of material from a genre so far distinct from the jazz canon, shows Parker 'paying his respects while also declaring his freedom with a somewhat impudent air' (Ross, 2009, p.519). The effect of this reference, and of the array of musical references employed by Parker and his contemporaries, is the demonstration to listeners that his 'musical mobility was large enough, and his level of musicianship high enough, to include—and signify on—the music of even the most revered modernist European composers' (Stewart, 2011, p.345). Therefore, the view that bebop divorced itself entirely from the preceding jazz community through its revision of musical language, whether understood as modernism or radical innovation in the face of swing music, can be challenged. We can see in Ross' comment the reference to Gates' semiotic analysis and indeed, the reference by Parker to Stravinsky does more than draw attention to his musical education. In addition, it widens the musical language of jazz, one that draws upon, repurposes, and reappropriates musical material. For the audience, some may recognise the reference, and some may not, but the point is that it brings into the jazz canon material that can be recognised and contextualised by the audience.

If we return to the critique of the verifiability of improvisation during live performance, it was stated that 'only the musician can know for sure whether or not he is improvising' (Auslander, 2013, p.55). The claim is that 'the audience agrees to act as if something it cannot verify is taking place', as there is no proof that the improvisation is genuine as opposed to being prewritten (Auslander, 2013, p.62). We have challenged this position on the grounds of jazz's social role. Improvisation does not mean total spontaneity, nor would jazz performances be valued for their improvisational content if reference were not a recognised and intrinsic aspect for musicians and audiences. By bringing forth more abstract musical reference, the nature of improvisation, particularity under Monson's definition of 'elaborating upon something previously known', becomes clearer (2002 p.114). In addition to this, the live performance itself features musical reference as part of the aesthetic experience, as 'the jazz performer involves the

audience in the process and makes it meaningful for those who recognize the sources' (Murphy, 1990, p.9). As suggested in the previous chapter, this sort of deliberate inauthenticity, or in other words, the abandonment of work-determinative rules validating a performance, coupled with the inclusion of more abstract musical reference, creates new musical possibilities and maintains the key aesthetic principle of audience reception. The conclusion this observation suggests is that even during the bebop era, the audience's relationship with the music was an essential and driving characteristic, and therefore, we not only see the widening of the musical language that bebop used in the creation of works and improvisation, but we can also see an extension of the vernacular that brought other forms of music into the orbit of jazz, subsequently elevating jazz in the eyes of 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture, and beyond.

This latter point regarding cultural reception must be considered when looking at the amalgamation of the jazz canon and modernism that bebop is seen as representing. In Floyd's expansion on Gates' theory, he suggests that 'Signifyin(g) was developed in response to the black cultural apostasy that resulted from the onset of modernism' which was also influenced by 'prohibitions instituted by exclusionary lawmaking after Reconstruction' as well as other marginalising social developments in America (1995, p.98). What Floyd is referring to here is the movement away from traditional African influenced music-making, forced upon musicians as they were forced to assimilate culturally, and the desire to maintain these creative forms. This echoes DeVeaux's observation that for musicians, 'field hollers, work songs, ballads' were seen as being 'too redolent of agricultural peonage to be attractive to those desperately trying to escape it', and therefore less viable for musicians to perform, which, as we can now examine, were then subsequently reclaimed (1997, p.46). The artistic and cultural movements emerging that would lead to the inception of the Harlem Renaissance can be seen to reflect the desire to maintain creative forms, but also how creators were forced away from certain forms and into others. One thread we can identify is the continuing need for financial sustainability, which endured into the bebop era, and examining this and the continuity between the swing era and the bebop era further illuminates the nuanced social role of bebop.

In analysing the work of Coleman Hawkins and his effect on the developments of jazz in the 1930s and 40s, DeVeaux suggests that the relationship between Hawkins and bebop in terms of continuity between genres, 'was the shared experience of finding a satisfactory place in the music business' in what he calls 'that most anomalous of professional categories: the African American virtuoso instrumentalist' (1997, p.71). In examining the changing social location of jazz as bebop emerged, we can see that while bebop has come to represent a paradigm shift in jazz's history, it actually maintained several key principles.

First, as identified by DeVeaux and Floyd, an ability to demonstrate knowledge of a historic musical language endured, whether through familiarity with musical devices, or the wider tradition of musical construction and discourse, of which signifying forms a crucial part. Emphasis on the audience's reception of the music also continued, although this was obscured and refined so as to only be possible for an increasingly select audience, one familiar and engaged with bebop practice, rather than jazz as the mass cultural product it had become as a result of the swing era. For example, the riff based sections of songs, known as 'heads', were

abstracted further, and shifted in the arrangement of songs so as to further conceal the recognition of the work being performed. As a result, 'the beboppers made it impossible to hear their music as a version, a "jazzing", of some other repertory', and making more private and esoteric the works that they drew from (DeVeaux, 1997, p.425). In the face of this, however, the economic factor was undeniable, and bebop had little choice but to remain, at least in some way, a music for consumption by an audience in order to generate and sustain the careers of its musicians. Influenced by its tradition, and in part by the impossibility for bebop musicians to cease to perform entirely to ensure financial sustainability, the role of the music as entertainment, even though the viable audience was reduced, did continue.

While bebop's inherent relationship with a social location in which the music was displayed and propagated could be seen to undermine its identity as 'art', the reality was more complex. On one hand, the observation, made by both DeVeaux and Baraka, that notions of art are unsatisfactory, inaccurate, and undermining when applied to jazz, challenges any artistic definition into which jazz may be placed. On the other, to remove the category of art from bebop as a result of its continued reliance on audience reception and favour in the music industry would be an ignorant position when considering the economic realities of jazz musicians in mid-century America. While bebop musicians distanced themselves from popular music culture, to denounce the industry as a whole in the way that European modernist composers had been able to would be impossible.

In regards to the tension between social function and the title of 'art' in the modernist sense, perhaps there is no synthesis to be found, and part of the problem with the misunderstanding of the jazz tradition in the western musical sphere is that the relationship between art and 'entertainment', or audience-centred performance, in jazz is irreconcilable. Even for African American composers who were not performers, attempts at career security and recognition for their work was still restricted, even when composing music in the classic vein, and outside of popular culture. The African American composer William Grant Still first featured on a program by the International Composer's Guild in 1926, with a premier of his work following in 1931, and was the first black composer to join the guild (Ross, 2009). One of the founders of the ICG, Edgard Varèse, stated that 'Jazz is not America', and that it was 'a negro product, exploited by the Jews' (Ross, 2009, p.153). The elitism and prejudice of this statement, particularly coming from a composer who had founded the organisation to avoid 'commercial restrictions', suggests the depth of misunderstanding and ignorance of non-Western music making in Western culture (Ross, 2009, p.150). While as Ross notes, it was true that 'much of the music that white audiences of the twenties would have considered "jazz" came from the pens of Jewish composers', the total dismissal of the genre by Varèse speaks to an insidious and unintellectual treatment of African American creativity and expression (2009, p.153). The acceptance of Still, who had trained with Varèse, into the ICG, could be interpreted as demonstrating how only those musicians and composers who were, in the eyes of the institutions' gatekeepers, suitably distinct from African American popular culture (though Still's works were principally and essentially inspired by African American culture and history), were allowed to be a part of their elitist sphere.

An issue we have continually encountered is the misunderstanding of the expressive nature of jazz, and how historic modes of music making were marginalised as a result of the domineering elitism of the European tradition. If a functional definition is not sufficient, and the notions of art and entertainment both unsatisfactory, then to uncover the aesthetic values of bebop, analysis of its expressive ability may help construct a clearer answer.

### **Musical Expressivity in Bebop**

As we have discussed, for a work or performance to be fully understood, there is a necessary level of socio-cultural understanding that an audience must have, evidenced by the signifying discourse. Therefore, in constructing a theory of expressivity for bebop, we must take into account the idea that a work's expressivity is best realised when presented to an informed audience. As a consequence, an expressive quality may well be misinterpreted by an uninformed audience, and the value of the work missed, should they not be suitably familiar with the various techniques and conventions of the form. For example, if we are to relate this to an expressive theory such as 'the emotional engagement theory', which posits that value is found in art when the art is able to elicit an emotional response in the way its creator intends, the value is lost on the uninitiated as emotional content will not be understood (Gracyk, 2012, p.22). In the case of bebop, the power to elicit such a response has been demonstrated as being inextricably tied to both a historic musical tradition, as well as the incorporation of new musical qualities, as shown in Parker's work.

Placing value on emotional content in music certainly seems emergent in the mid 20th century developments of bebop and the work of Parker. Preceding this, jazz as it had come to be known in popular culture was largely experienced by audiences as swing music, which had taken on a distinct function as entertainment, with limited emphasis on emotional conveyance as its earlier roots such as the Blues and then New Orleans jazz were sidelined. Bebop subsequently came to represent a more emotional and sincere musical form, but explaining definitively how emotive expression was achieved is complex, and vague terms are often used when examining this aspect of the musical experience.

For example, the view of the further abstraction of standards and popular song, and introduction of technically advanced melody and improvisation, came to be seen as influential to the expressive quality of the music. Parker and Gillespie's early bebop playing demonstrated a compositional process that reworked standards dramatically, but continued to use 'the emotional hook of the harmonic structure' of these already established pieces (Perry, 1996, p.157). This indicates that emotion was, at least in part, still tied to the recognisable and identifiable works from which new compositions were drawn, and similarly, in Parker's improvisation, it is the use of historic musical styles and the referential aspect that affords the expressive quality. His improvisation presented 'the traditional melodic gestures and intonational subtleties of the blues', while also incorporating new and radical techniques and devices (DeVeaux, 1997, p.192). The effect this had on Parker's improvisation was that it presented two aspects that can be termed a 'dialogic' quality, embodied in the 'juxtaposition of different *kinds* of rhetoric' (DeVeaux, 1997, p.268). To list some examples, Parker draws on 'Swing Era-type riff figure', in

other instances he utilises blues style phrases through ‘pitch bending and rhythmic “playing in the cracks”’, and also quotes from a wide variety of popular songs (DeVeaux 1997, p.268).

Louis Armstrong’s criticism of bebop as “crazy, mixed-up chords that don’t mean nothing at all” appears to doubt the emotional content of the music, being an exercise in technicality rather than expression (Peretti, 1997, p.103). However, Parker’s music was seen as having meaning, as Floyd writes, ‘the music was fraught with semantic value, but it was a semantics unknown to the uninitiated’ (1995, p.138). This is a prevailing view of bebop, that it maintained meaning, but that it was only accessible to committed listeners, and not the general public (Peretti, 1997). A comparison can be made here with the effects of the modernist composers on artistic discourse, who sought to distance themselves as far as possible from any mass appeal. Carl Ruggles, who formed the International Composer’s Guild along with Edgard Varèse, complained when guild’s performances appeared as too accessible (Ross, 2009). While value was not specifically placed on inaccessibility, bebop musicians established a hierarchy of musical values, and popularity was not a primary concern. Therefore, we must still explore how expression, as something to be recognised and shared by an audience, can be achieved in a music that did not conform to institutional requirements, and furthermore, how expression is understood in relation to the influence of different musical traditions.

### **Notions of Jazz Expressivity**

To understand expressivity and musical tradition, we must examine the techniques used in the genre. Before examining this, a clarification must be made. There is a significant difference between expression and expressiveness, which is crucial in understanding the debate. Expression is ‘to display outwardly an actual occurring state in one’s psychology’, whereas expressiveness involves ‘displaying outwardly features typically associated with that state’ (Trivedi, 2014, p.223). In this thesis we have been and will continue to use the terms interchangeably, but what we are examining is the latter; how expressive features are understood by an audience to represent emotions.

In Jerold Levinson’s analysis of the expressivity of jazz, defining what he calls ‘jazz expressiveness’, he argues that jazz can only express certain emotions as a result of its musical features, and that these musical features emphasise specific emotions while being unable to express others (2015, p.131). This view rests on the impression that there is ‘a penchant or propensity of jazz to be expressive of certain emotions, moods, or other mental states rather than others’, as is the case, according to this view, in all genres (Levinson, 2015, p.131).

The evidence provided for this argument is that jazz, in the general sense of the term, has an inability to invoke negative emotions. In assessing this, Levinson divides musical expression into four categories, with the subdivisions of expression being HEN (high-energy negative), HEP (high-energy positive), LEN (low-energy negative), and LEP (low-energy positive), although he does concede ‘that the boundaries of the categories thus defined remain terminally fuzzy’ (2015, p.135). Levinson argues that musical characteristics that invoke the HEN and LEN emotions are rarely if at all found in jazz, and more fundamentally, the general musical nature of

jazz tends not to reflect these emotions (Levinson, 2015). As a result, when performing songs that may traditionally convey these emotions, by being played in a jazz style, they are diluted, even if they are not deliberately omitted (Levinson, 2015). Therefore, in being performed by a jazz band or group of jazz musicians, the expressive capacity of a piece of music is reduced. It is Levinson's contention 'that music cannot, or cannot easily, both unequivocally sound like jazz and also convincingly express anguish, grief, rage, despair' (2015, p.138).

The initial problem with this analysis is how Levinson is defining the expression of an emotion via musical feature. In fact, this is an issue that regards more broadly the understanding of the expressive characteristics of non-Western music. Interpretations of emotions and their representation and expression in music is often based on a specifically European view of the expressive capacity of certain musical features.

For example, the comparisons Levinson makes between jazz and music that he states can portray these emotions are with European composers. Evidence of his argument, he claims, is 'that almost no one leaves a jazz concert feeling down, disturbed, depressed, or distraught' (2015, p.138). In light of this, Levinson points to the opposite being the case in European classical music (2015, p.138):

But such might very well be the effect of a symphonic or chamber music concert featuring many works by Brahms, Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, Schnittke, or Shostakovich, in virtue of the emotional realms addressed by classical music that jazz is mostly barred from.

While anecdotal, this seems somewhat accurate, although there are several points this observation does not consider.

First, the use of the term 'jazz' is suitably vague to leave room for contradicting examples. No specific jazz performances are defined in which an audience may encounter positive emotional expression rather than negative, instead referring to a general sound or feel, not a particular style or era (Levinson, 2015). Secondly, in addition to the observations of feel and sound, and that audiences tend not to leave jazz performances feeling negative emotions, in support of this, Levinson quotes Ornette Coleman as having said "Music is for our feelings. I think jazz should try to express more kinds of feelings that it has up till now", subsequently arguing that this shows 'an awareness of the inherent gravitation of jazz towards a certain sort of expressivity' (2015, p.139). What isn't recognised here is that Coleman and free jazz represented a very specific creative direction, and his own interpretation of the expressive capabilities of music were very much distinct from those of jazz musicians of the more traditional styles. In other words, Coleman's view is likely to support Levinson's as a result of the musical direction free jazz had adopted.

An observation we have seen that lends some support to this view to some degree, is DeVeaux's; that musical forms such as 'field hollers, work songs, ballads', became less popular as they were 'too redolent of agricultural peonage to be attractive to those desperately trying to escape it' (1997, p.46). These forms, often carrying with them themes of the kind of negative



emotions that Levinson defines, were often found in the styles of music influenced heavily by the African musical tradition that were, according to DeVeaux, moved away from in part as a necessity for success in the music industry. Therefore, in objection to Levinson's argument that jazz is unable to express certain emotions, perhaps instead it is better to recognise that jazz often chooses not to, or was forced not to, and that the modes in which these emotions were conveyed were minimised in the development of the music as its need to be economically successful overshadowed its communicative range.

The examples recognised as contradicting this account are argued to either not portray emotion clearly, or to not sound like jazz, with the sentiment being that if a work were to portray negative emotions in a clear way, then it would likely not be identifiable as jazz (Levinson, 2015). One example given is Charles Mingus' 'Fables of Faubus' which Levinson argues 'does not to my ears express anything like anger', although he recognises that Mingus himself had stated that the piece was a vehicle through which to express anger at governor Orval Faubus, who opposed the desegregation of schools in Little Rock, Arkansas (Levinson, 2015, p.140).<sup>13</sup> While the testimony of a work's composer in and of itself does not of course determine whether the piece in question does convey the stated emotion to the listener, this view does not consider the aesthetic system so far examined. If we take the position that jazz does indeed portray these emotions, or at least has the capacity and musical vocabulary to do so, then Levinson's argument rests on a misinterpretation of expressive devices rather than an absence of them.

The justification for this standpoint is Levinson's final caveat that 'all musical idioms have limits to expressiveness' (Levinson, 2015, p.141). The examples provided include how 'post-classical minimalist music' is unable to express 'rage, anguish, amorous passion, blissful forgetfulness', and that it is 'virtually inconceivable' for rap music to 'express a state of serenity, a sense of resignation, a mood of melancholy' (Levinson, 2015, p.141). Other than the fact that there are many examples that disprove this argument, particularly regarding rap music, in jazz and especially bebop, we see a musical language deliberately designed and implemented to be understood only by those who had sufficient cultural and musical knowledge. As Floyd's observation on semantic value in bebop states, 'it was a semantics unknown to the uninitiated' (Floyd, 1995, p.138). Ultimately this objective account of musical expression is insufficient in understanding the jazz tradition, and it is essential to consider the relative nature of expression and consider that while many creative and expressive forms share certain qualities, the unique history of jazz gives it its own expressive palette, that requires a level of cultural understanding to fully grasp. We will explore the socio-cultural nature of expression further in examining John Coltrane, but to understand the role of technical development and expressivity in bebop, we must return to Parker's music.

### **Technical Development, Expressivity, and Spontaneity**

---

<sup>13</sup> In fact, so clear was the anger and political nature of the track, that Columbia Records prevented its release on *Mingus Ah Um* (1959), only allowing an instrumental version. The track was not released with lyrics until 1960, on the album *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (Monson, 2007).

We have concluded that analysis of jazz's expressive capability is inaccurate when the mechanisms of expression are not adequately understood. In the case of Charlie Parker, his ability to express emotion, or at least, create music seen to be expressive, can be ascribed to various musical techniques. The issue is that explanations of these are often vague. For example, the general view is that wider harmonic language equals greater expressive capability, as Williams claims, one 'senses immediately the increase in the emotional range of the idiom that Parker's technical innovations make possible (1993, p.142). If we maintain the argument that expressivity in jazz is linked to the social history of the work, and the recognition of the work's continuity or departure from existing expectations and traditions, achieved in part through the use of various musical techniques, the question, then, is how does broadening a genre's harmonic language effect expressivity. The answer to be expected is that the new techniques are actually still recognised from outside the musical culture in which they are being used, and their expressive character is essentially imported from its original genre into the new context. Therefore, Parker's use of classically derived musical figures is seen as making jazz more expressive, via broadening jazz's harmonic pallet. But here we have an issue. As we have seen, jazz expressivity relies on more than simply the reuse of expressive devices, and instead their specific implementation and reconfiguration.

In understanding how the use of a broader range of musical techniques was seen to afford a greater expressive capacity to bebop, we must contextualise their use in forming part of a range of musical features used within a performance, and how their use relates to their original expressive meaning or content. As Hamilton writes, 'the true imperfectionist always seeks new contingencies, constantly striving for spontaneity' (2020, p.299), and so rather than simply the use of, for example, classical figures in a jazz standard making it appear more expressive, it also adds new material that musician's have to respond to and to work into their performances. The following quote from Floyd offers some insight into how the use of new techniques from other genres fits into a jazz performance (1995, p.96):

With the *musical* experience, the expectation is that something musical will *happen* in the playing of the music, and it is the *something* that fascinates, that elevates the expectation and places the hearer in a critical mode.

Simply introducing musical figures from another style does not necessarily translate to being expressive, and instead it is their individual use and how a musician navigates this that contributes to a performance's expressivity.

Expanding on this idea, the view that technicality was of the utmost importance in bebop, as is often emphasised in commentaries on Parker's work, led other features of the bebop to be seen as secondary. As we have seen, a better way of understanding this is seeing that it was not technical advances alone, but their use within the context of jazz performance, and this leads us to the next aspect of Parker's music we must examine. In describing bebop, Williams emphasises Parker's 'imagination', and the role this played in shaping a given work (1993, p.143):

A traditional or borrowed chord structure would take care of the basic outline; his own sense of order as an improviser would take care of melodic order; his own melodic and rhythmic imagination would take care of originality.

What we can consider, then, is the significance of spontaneity in improvisation, and how this functions in combination with a broader use of harmonic material. The term spontaneity does not mean entirely original in content, and it is necessary to recall Monson's description of improvisation as 'elaborating upon something previously known' (2002, p.114). What is important, is how material is used in original and unplanned ways within a performance.

The assumption is that as Parker sought originality and expanded his musical vocabulary, he had more material to draw on during improvisation, therefore opening up more expressive possibilities. Parker still drew upon many existing characteristics of jazz, such as 32 bar solo sections, and continued to use jazz standards as vehicles for improvisation, but his mastery of harmony and relentless practice, known as 'woodshedding', is evidence that he sought to maximise the range of material he could draw from spontaneously, rather than continue to use common techniques and phrases. This aspect of Parker's musicianship can be seen as being a natural progression of the jazz tradition rather than as a paradigm shift. As Floyd writes, in the jazz tradition, audiences 'have their favourite tunes, but it is what is done with and inside those tunes that the listeners look forward to, not the mere playing of them' (1995, p.96). Rather than Parker and bebop being the vanguard in their aesthetic principles, they are better understood as an extension of an already crucial aspect of a musical tradition, one that had been sidelined by the popular success of swing.

On the other hand, some of Parker's work appears to affirm the swing era ethos of expression and musical value, as can be seen in the influence of European classical music on the 1950 album *Charlie Parker with Strings*. Made up of recordings from 1949 and 1950, these exemplify the musical affiliation with what was considered more commercial and even bourgeois, and enabled Parker to gain 'an aura of respectability that few artists enjoyed during these years' through this association (Gioia, 2011, p.213). The reason for this artistic decision is likely an economic rather than aesthetic one, as Parker would, in his later life, use strings sections when touring, as well as perform with Stan Kenton and Jazz at the Philharmonic (Gioia, 2011, p.214). Further to this point, the revision and reinterpretation of existing songs and material can also be understood as a necessary consequence of the financial strictures facing musicians, and the Savoy Records founder, Herman Lubinsky, was able to make more money from Parker's recordings by avoiding copyrighted songs (Haddix, 2015, p.81). The 'standard' still played a significant role in the creation of *Charlie Parker With Strings*, such as the versions of 'April In Paris' and 'Summertime', and in fact, as the album's title makes clear, it is the instrumentation that most clearly links the album to the modern classical tradition, rather than the musical content. In fact, this stylistic departure may even be interpreted as simply more expansion of musical vocabulary, and so while the influence of the classical European tradition is clear in Parker's work however, it by no means forms a central aesthetic principle. In examining the supposed dichotomy between improvisation and composition, we must finally analyse the

distinction between these two phenomena, the specific value of improvisation, and how Parker's work is situated between these.

### **Spontaneity and the Value of Improvisation**

We have shown that the view of improvisation as being the opposite of composition is incorrect, as improvisation involves spontaneity and can include preexisting material. As identified, spontaneity is a better quality through which to understand the specific quality that is valued during improvisation, and in an aesthetics of imperfection, as opposed to the classic paradigm of perfection, 'the true perfectionist always seeks new contingencies, constantly striving for spontaneity' (2020, p.299).

Earlier in this thesis, we challenged the view of improvisation that posits it as a 'social characteristic of jazz performance rather than an ontological characteristic of the music' (Auslander, 2013, p.57). We saw that the social view is only one way of understanding improvisation, whereas on the other hand, it can be argued that improvisation 'relies upon the foundations of the particular musical tradition in which the work exists' (Gould and Keaton, 2000, p.146). The suggestion is that the difference between jazz and classical music performance is actually 'the degree of preexisting compositional material' rather than 'spontaneity of expression in performance', and so, instead of the onus being on the jazz musician to be able to improvise with complete spontaneity and originality, it would instead be the case that while some improvisation was expected in classical music, more would be expected in a jazz performance, and in neither instance is spontaneity an ontological necessity (Gould and Keaton, 2000, p.147). In addition to this, Gould and Keaton argue that (2000, p.147):

The player may remain very close to that framework, or may stray distantly, but he will never leave it to the extent that the identification is lost. This distinction also assumes that musical notation, as currently used, can convey the whole, or nearly so, of a musical entity.

Gould and Keaton conclude that all performances involve some degree of improvisation, and there will be some improvisation necessary when dealing with all compositions in any musical tradition (2000). Their argument, in short, is that work-determinative rules are present in both traditions, but in neither are they able to communicate a full realisation of a piece, and the reliance on these rules is a matter of degree. While this view helps construct a balanced understanding of improvisation, as a musical system in which spontaneity, or imperfection, is essential, but in which prewritten musical material is also an accepted and even valued aspect, it again relies on the notions of 'thick' and 'thin' works as argued by Steven Davies. The opinion that the fundamental difference regards the amount of compositional material rather than the degree of spontaneity does not fit with either our criteria of improvisation or our examination of an ontology of the jazz standards (Gould and Keaton, 2000).

Returning to our discussion regarding the role of work-determinative rules, taking the network theory into account, a mere lack of predetermined compositional material does not accurately explain the discourse of jazz performance. The rules of a composition are subject to change, as

a performance 'relays some properties forward, adds new properties of its own, and excises others' (Kane, 2018, p.523). Improvisation can be understood in a similar way, as properties of a performance that can be present and emphasised, or may not be. Improvisation is an amalgamation of several musical features, such as spontaneity, but also technical skill, and the ability to reference and rework existing musical material in a live performance setting. Therefore, the observation that improvisation is found in all musical performances, while true under a general definition of improvisation, does not apply to the definition of improvisation in the jazz tradition as we have found (Gould and Keaton, 2000). Like the theory of 'thick' and 'thin' works, the reality is that what is being compared are two musical systems with different values, rather than just the degree of work-determinative rules.

It can also be argued that the view of spontaneity as being non-essential in improvisation does not fit with the definition of improvisation, as spontaneity forms an essential part of the experience, and a central aesthetic element of jazz performance, and 'if the performance was indeed preconceived, then we cannot properly take the kind of distinctive interest in it that we take in improvisational action, since there was no risk of the relevant sort' (Davies, 2011, p.154). The view that all performances involve some improvisation does not seem to define improvisation in the way that we have understood it in the jazz tradition (Gould and Keaton, 2000). Therefore, a classical performance may feature some aspects of improvisation, as may a jazz performance, but the two are not comparable in their definitions of improvisation itself.

One example of the significance of spontaneity within improvisation and how it informs the value of improvisation is in the bebop era's use of 'cutting sessions', events in which different musicians would swap in and out of a live ensemble, demonstrating their improvisational ability. The qualities of the cutting session that were so appealing to musicians and audiences, surmised by DeVeaux, are 'its flexibility and lack of pretension, its offhand displays of virtuosity, its apparent disregard for everything outside its own charmed circle (1997, p.202). In fact, so influential to the bebop era were the values that cutting sessions embodied, DeVeaux sees them as essential in understanding bebop as the 'conformation of underlying principles' in the development of the jazz in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1997, p.203).

One of the purposes of cutting (or 'jam') sessions was as a means of both practice and rehearsal, and, most importantly, demonstrating musical ability and competing against other players. Cutting sessions appear to embody the aesthetics of imperfection, not least because they were not targeted at an audience, or for the public at all, and so were not orientated around performing known pieces (DeVeaux, 1997). However, these sessions still required preexisting understanding of the specific cultural rules of the convention, as 'the jam session offers few clues to the uncontexted outsider', with a lack of written material, rehearsal, or any other parameters or directions (DeVeaux, 1997, p.203). Part of the value of the cutting session was in seeing how musicians responded in the moment, encouraging 'techniques, procedures, attitudes' that were then propagated, and establishing the 'essential components of musical language and aesthetic' (DeVeaux, 1997, p.217).

So, the cutting session presents two aesthetic principles. On one hand, it encapsulates the established idea of what DeVeuax calls ‘the pursuit of virtuosity for its own sake’ and ‘the shift of focus away from the mass audience to the personal struggle of musicians to master the art of improvisation’, which were all crucial aspects of the bebop style (1997, p.217). However, while we see imperfection and spontaneity as forming the crux of the cutting session, there is also the expectation of aspects of perfection in that musicians were expected to be familiar with a range of existing musical material. Furthermore, part of the value of the jam session for both musician and audience was in the recognition of what was occurring between performers, and it was essential that these sessions did not lose their serious but open and social atmosphere (DeVeaux, 1997).

As we have seen, jazz performances place value on both the aesthetic principles of perfection and imperfection. Across recordings, live performances, cutting sessions, and elsewhere, value is placed on both the musician’s individual choices, spontaneity, as well as the demonstration of existing works, and the audience’s reception of them. Returning to Charlie Parker, on one end of the spectrum of his musical output, there are works that are deliberately designed as vehicles for improvisation that are highly complex and original, and on the other, we see more structured and deliberate performances of existing compositions. While, anecdotally, it seems as though Parker’s reason for his intense practice, termed ‘woodshedding’, and his original and unique expansion of musical vocabulary, was to simply be the best musician possible, it is important to consider the specifics and the purpose of broadening the amount he had to draw from in composition and in improvising. To return to Monson’s phrase, it is the ultimate goal of the jazz improviser, after the expected musical tasks of familiarising oneself with the standards and melodies, to finally ‘develop the ability to respond appropriately to the musical flow’ (2002, p.119).

We can see, therefore, that Parker’s work does combine elements of both musical traditions, although in terms of a singular guiding aesthetic direction, jazz remained the primary influence. The role of the ‘art for arts sake’ doctrine that emerged in bebop’s development was critical to its identity, and what can be comparably termed as ‘the pursuit of virtuosity for its own sake’ (DeVeaux, 1997, p.217). However, as we examined in chapter 3, bebop defied the modernist paradigm of autonomy as its works and performances were not ‘self-contained artefacts’ (Ramsey, 2004, p.108). In fact, bebop still placed value on the alternative – the work-centered performance - and, while in part due to the need for economic success, this endured in the use of standards and in the importance of contextualising material in order to fully grasp the given performance. Audience reception was not an entirely contingent property to the music; part of the value of bebop was not for its own sake, but to appeal to an informed audience and to play a distinct social role.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter we have seen that Charlie Parker’s unique musical developments brought new characteristics into the jazz tradition, as well as affirming existing ones. In the use of standards, they can be understood as affirming the significance of the work-concept, requiring certain

characteristics to ensure audience validation, while also placing great importance on the qualities of imperfection. In terms of musical function, the tension between the notions of entertainment and art are exemplified in the emergence of bebop, inextricable from its social and economic surroundings, but nonetheless striving for autonomy from institutional restrictions.

In exploring the premise of musical expression, we began to see how in bebop, the notion of expressivity in music took on a more prominent role, in part through the audience's perception, but also through the intensification of improvisation and spontaneity which, while in keeping with the jazz tradition, was seen to reflect a more readily present demonstration of emotion. Further to this, we also examined the subjective nature of expression and how Western prescriptions of musical characteristics and their relation to certain emotions are of limited use when applied to the jazz tradition, and that interpreting emotion must be made with reference to the genre and its associated traditions.

In the next chapter we can further explore how bebop's musical developments influenced jazz as it became more experimental in the free jazz era, and how these principles endured and evolved.

## Chapter 5: John Coltrane, Free Jazz, and Autonomy

This chapter begins with an examination of the themes of autonomy in free jazz and the perceived rejection of hard bop in the work of John Coltrane. Following this, the expressive aspect of jazz and the impact that the free jazz movement had on the perceived expressivity of the music are both assessed.

In conclusion, it is shown that while free jazz is often thought to represent a paradigm shift in the genre, a number of established aesthetic principles can be identified that are inherited from the jazz tradition, particularly in its social function. The relationship between free jazz and the socio-political movements of the era illuminates one source of aesthetic value, and helps situate Coltrane and the influence and impact of his music within the musical culture of the period.

Central to this chapter is the tension between understanding free jazz as autonomous and as the extension of a musical tradition, and the conclusion that it was in fact, as well as new musical innovations, several enduring musical features that contributed to free jazz's autonomous aesthetics, such as the emphasis on communal music making. John Coltrane's discography can be roughly divided into three eras (Gioia, 2012), and for the purpose of this chapter, I shall focus on the later stage of Coltrane's career, beginning with the transition between his hard-bop period into his free jazz work.

### From Bebop to Free Jazz

John Coltrane's 1965 album, *A Love Supreme*, brought into jazz vernacular an engagement with wider cultural material than that traditionally found in the music, such as religious and philosophical imagery (Perry, 1996). The focus of the recording is one of spiritual expression, that transcends the hard-bop technicality and musical innovation through the use of existing pieces such as standards or Tin Pan Alley songs, that is found in Coltrane's earlier work. Steve Lacy in his interview with Derek Bailey explains how free jazz emerged in reaction to these limitations (1993, p.54):

The changes that began in the late '50s and were probably completed by the middle '60s came about because in the 50s jazz was no longer on the edge. When you reach what was called 'hard bop' there was no mystery anymore. It was like – mechanical – some kind of gymnastics. The patterns are well-known and everyone is playing them.

By this account, while bebop had been heralded as a highly original and innovative stage in the progression of jazz, this reification that Lacy finds suggests that it was no longer seen as an original idiom. One effect of this development was that the modernist influence that bebop was praised as having was neutralised as the autonomy of the music and its resistance to popular culture was replaced by stylistic rules and expectations, as indicated by Lacy.



Ornette Coleman, who was one of the pioneers of free jazz, also demonstrates an awareness of this development, and suggests in a 1960 interview that his music specifically sought to resist the standardisation and stagnation that bebop had suffered (Gloag, 2014, p.193):

Some of the comments about my music made me realize... that modern jazz, once so daring and revolutionary, has become, in many respects, a rather settled and conventional thing. The members of my group and I are now attempting a break-through to a new, freer conception of jazz, one that departs from all that is 'standard' and cliché in 'modern' jazz.

By departing from the hard-bop idiom, John Coltrane could reclaim his autonomy and authenticity, features that were central to bebop's original inception.

In Amiri Baraka's view, Coltrane and other free jazz musicians of the early 1960s, that he calls the 'avant-garde', represented a step toward greater musical autonomy, and the restoration 'to jazz its valid separation from, and anarchic disregard of, Western popular forms' (Jones, 2002, p.225). He relates this directly to the socio-political events of the time, arguing that 'the music has changed because the musicians have changed' (Jones, 2002, p.225). The question then, is in what sense was free jazz autonomous; entirely individualistic and distinct from its preceding tradition, or as Baraka suggests, separated from popular culture but tied to the socio-cultural currents of the era.

### **Autonomy and Authenticity**

Free jazz, and the emphasis on improvisation as primary force in the creation of music, presents an issue regarding the use of musical referencing and the reworking of existing works that we have seen as central to the jazz tradition of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. While bebop musicians like Charlie Parker had presented a revolutionary approach to both composition and performance, the bebop idiom still drew heavily from the existing jazz genre, particularly in its use of popular song. In contrast, Coltrane ultimately rejected this entirely, particularly the reworking and reinterpretation of standards and show tunes, and their use as platforms for the creation of new music. Whereas on *My Favorite Things* (1961), he had recorded only other musician's compositions, which were already popular works, *A Love Supreme* (1965) consists of entirely original pieces, and at their core, free form improvisation with an emphasis on self-expression around only a cursory structure.

First, Adorno's theory of mass culture may bear some relevance here. While we have seen the limits of his aesthetics in relation to jazz, his views on the tension between the artwork and the constrictions of the culture industry and its grasp on artistic creation lend some insight into how music develops in the face of this restriction. If we consider Steve Lacy's critique of the later stages of bebop, that 'jazz was no longer on the edge' by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century as it had become commonplace and routine, and its unique characteristics reused and diluted, then we can begin to understand the decisions made by free jazz musicians (Bailey, 1993, p.54). Free jazz's significance appears to lie in how it does not solely represent a new or original style within

a genre, but a complete revolution of the fundamental musical values, yet managing to simultaneously remain within, and as an extension of, the genre.

Free jazz can be seen to hold value similar to that idealised by Adorno when examining authentic artworks. Returning to Paddison's analysis of the possibility of authenticity in Adorno's theory, it must be located in the resistance to historically defined modes of musical expression. Adorno identifies within the art work two aspects, one as 'autonomous artifact', and the other as 'heteronomous social fact' (Paddison, 1993, p.190). In its form as an artifact, there is a finished, independent object, however as social fact there is a dynamic aspect, as the work is related to its role and position in society in the way that the composer uses the musical material. Therefore, it is both independent of, and intrinsically attached, to the social world (Paddison, 1993, p.191):

This internal dynamic of the work, having severed its 'ties with the empirical world', also constitutes its polemical and critical character over and against the empirical world. There is something in the art work, Adorno maintains, which 'in an unconscious way expresses its desire to change the world'.

The duality of these two elements enables the art work to be autonomous and independent, while remaining critical toward modern society. As well as identifying authenticity in resisting existing musical conventions, as he does in the case of Schoenberg, Adorno also finds it in the unescapable social aspect of a composer's creation. As we have seen, the question is how relevant is this to the understanding of free jazz. Adorno's elitism and his interest only in the European classical tradition indicates that it is not. However, considering the total abandonment of the historical and traditional musical material that free jazz can be seen to represent, there persists a potential usefulness.

In exploring new musical forms, challenging typified trends, yet staying rooted in jazz's historic culture through its social and cultural environment and influence, including musical qualities such as instrumentation and structure of the ensemble, Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* (1965) can be seen to demonstrate the criticality that Adorno identifies. Reification in hard-bop is the gradual surrendering of autonomy, as it ceases to present musical development, becoming stagnated in its own norms and idioms, such as technicality and the leaning on Tin Pan Alley standards and popular songs. As a result it loses its dynamic of independent artifact and its 'tension', which 'compromises the art work and leads to its assimilation by the culture industry' (Paddison, 1993, p.191).

As we have seen, in Adorno's writing on Beethoven's second and third periods, he valued his ability to manipulate musical content in such a way that, in Adorno's view, it presented an authentic example of individual creative freedom while resisting the historic meaning and connotations of the material. Subotnik refers to the music's ability to 'reconcile the contradiction between subjective freedom and objective form', which is what Adorno finds Beethoven

attempting in his second period (1991, p.20). The result is that the freedom of the composer becomes the dominant force in shaping the form of the music (Subotnik, 1991, p.20).<sup>14</sup>

The premise is that Beethoven's manipulation of musical material and its development within his compositions, in particular the reformation and revision of musical material, demonstrates his ability to integrate different elements into one unique totality (Subotnik, 1991). The subsequent issue, however, is that as this material is shaped and manipulated, it loses its individual quality as it is lost within the broader structure of the composition (Subotnik, 1991). In other words, the unique and subjective development of musical content is diminished in comparison to the composition as a whole. For example, however individualistic the use of the material, techniques like recapitulation and reprise demonstrates its ultimate heteronomy, or 'its dependence on an externally imposed authority' (Subotnik, 1991, p.23).

The paradox, as highlighted by Subotnik, is that as greater independence is sought, the more obvious is its impossibility. Adorno contends that no reconciliation is possible between the subject and the object, and so the composer's autonomy and the heteronomy of the material are forever in opposition within the work (Subotnik, 1991). As a consequence, it was Adorno's opinion that 'to be authentic music must become explicitly negative', which in Beethoven's third period, is demonstrated in 'the impossibility of aesthetic wholeness and harmony' in his compositions (Subotnik, 1991, p.25). Rejecting any attempt at reconciliation was the only way to achieve authenticity in music for Adorno, and furthermore, it was essential that art did not attempt to conform or appeal to any social requirements, and that for artists to 'actively resist designing (or ultimately even permitting) their art to please existing society or to serve it in any way' (Subotnik, 1991, p.25).

Giddins makes a comparison between Coltrane and interpretations of Beethoven's late period, and his works such as *Missa Solemnis* and the Ninth Symphony, referencing Slominsky's comment on the latter describing 'the great man upon the ocean of harmony, without the compass which had so often guided him to the haven of success' (1999, p.481). In attempting to move away from the historic conventions and content of the material, Coltrane presents a comparable musical evolution, and like Beethoven, embracing 'the impossibility of aesthetic wholeness and harmony' (Subotnik, 1991, p.25). This view of Coltrane is not entirely retrospective. In 1963, before Coltrane's 'free' period, but as he had begun to experiment with longer improvisation on 1961s *Africa/Brass*, and avoid standards entirely as on *Impressions (1963)*, Amiri Baraka praised Coltrane for presenting an 'emotional directness' and what he describes as presenting a 'fresh reconsideration of all the elements of its musical existence' (Jones, 2002, p.228).

For example, the use of material on Chasin' The Trane from *Coltrane "Live" At The Village Vanguard* shows Coltrane employing 'everything he has learned in order to challenge the validity of what he had already mastered' (Giddins, 1999, p.479). Breaking from the technicality

---

<sup>14</sup> Specifically regarding his techniques and compositions, Adorno argues this is found particularly in Beethoven's use of 'development and recapitulation of the sonata allegro' (1991, p.20).

of the 'sheets of sound' idiom, Chasin' The Trane represents the resistance to form and convention, in order to achieve a more authentic and expressive performance (Giddins, 1999, p.479). The value Adorno finds in Beethoven's late period is echoed here, and the impact on the genre that Coltrane had was profound. In the wake of the musical developments that Coltrane spearheaded, ultimately all the musicians in the genre had to in some way appreciate free jazz as it was seen to present such a radical yet sincere expressive capability (Jones, 2002).

In evaluating the relevance of Adorno's critique we must consider Paddison's exposition of authenticity as defined by Adorno, and that there is a necessity for the rejection of 'handed-down meaning' (2004, p.199). Up until free jazz, authenticity within what can be termed the jazz tradition was defined in the opposite; in the recognition of influences, to reference and reinterpret other musical pieces, to pay homage, to mock, satirise, and fundamentally to locate and transmit meaning through sharing and encouraging the recognition of these features within an inherently communal setting (Gates, 1988, Floyd, 1995). So, in the face of the claim that 'resigned art affirms accepted meaning as if it were unproblematic, becoming itself the embodiment of reified consciousness', the jazz tradition appears at odds (Paddison, 2004, p.199). However, one can argue against this in several ways.

Jazz's musical tradition itself was so distinct from the culture toward which Adorno aimed his critique, with its own unique system of creative meaning and value, the question returns regarding the usefulness of his criteria. Furthermore, the marginalised status of the musicians separated their work from the culture market too sharply for Adorno's critique to be directly relevant. Adorno's unconsidered and ineffectual critique of jazz cuts short its usefulness, and instead a sympathetic view must be found elsewhere in his writing, one that navigates his elitism and hierarchical attitude in which European classical music is held as superior.

The development of free jazz appears as a complete break from an existing musical system, and therefore gives Adorno a renewed relevance. Taking an aesthetic direction more sympathetic to Adorno's view of the consequences of mass culture on the autonomy of music, his critique is still potentially illuminating in a discussion of free jazz due to the value placed on the perceived departure from the use of historic material, and the role of the subjective musical expression against any meaning that could be deemed objective. While, as shown, Adorno's analysis of Stravinsky does allow for an understanding of referentiality within music, his general objection is that 'as more and more musical vocabulary becomes familiar to society, less and less uncorrupted language remains available to authentic music' (Subotnik, 1991, p.34). Free jazz can be held to maintain a similar view of what constitutes authentic music.

However, as we will now examine, there remained several fundamental musical principles within free jazz that not only demonstrate a continuation of the aesthetic values of jazz as it had previously existed, but that also challenge the notion of the avant-garde and of the perceived artistic autonomy of free jazz. In other words, the reading of free jazz as a break from the preceding musical tradition is in many ways inaccurate, and warrants further examination.

## Musical Tradition and Expression

As mentioned, one view of free jazz is that it represented a paradigm shift in the expressive nature of jazz. While individualistic in form and structure, the new genre was inextricably tied to African American culture, and its figurehead, John Coltrane, came to be seen as ‘an embodiment of uncompromising African American artistic self-expression’ (Heisler, 2015, p.393).

Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme* presented musical autonomy, in the modernist sense, via a complete shift from not only the conventions of hard-bop, but also in rejecting the use of popular song and standards which had until this point been the main vehicles of jazz composition. The originality and avant-garde nature of free jazz’s artistic philosophy coalesced at the same time as increased demands for political and social change from African American citizens, and the two movements are seen as inextricably related (Jones, 2002; Gioia, 2011). The emphasis on freedom and subsequent ‘implicit conflation of musical freedom and political freedom’, were not unique to Coltrane, and these themes were increasingly found amongst jazz musicians during the era of civil rights (Heisler, 2015, p.397). However, while the motive behind Coltrane’s musical direction was undoubtedly influenced by political concerns, personal expression was also significant. Coltrane’s motivation was his own pursuit of musical sincerity and truth, and Porter cites an interview with Coltrane in which he describes his approach to musical authenticity, when asked for his opinion on the relationship between music and religion (1999, p.259):

I think the majority of musicians are interested in truth, you know – they’ve got to be because a musical thing is a truth. If you play and make a statement, a musical statement, that’s a truth right there in itself, you know. If you play something phony you know that’s phony. All musicians are striving to get as near perfection as they can. That’s truth there, you know.

Coltrane describes a view in which musical ‘truth’ and perfection are achievable musical qualities, and conflates these with originality. In stating that ‘if you play something phony you know that’s phony’, Coltrane indicates a critique of unoriginality, and the reuse and reliance on musical material as undermining authentic expression. It can be inferred that through the unhindered and immediate expressive capabilities of improvisation, Coltrane finds this to be a more direct expressive format than the use of existing musical material, a view not dissimilar to Adorno’s.

In Coltrane’s own words, he states that a musician’s primary desire is to convey personal belief or experience in a way that is understood by an audience (Giddins, 1999, p.490):

“The main thing a musician would like to do” Coltrane said, “is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe”.

This statement presents an issue. If, as we have seen, referential qualities are a fundamental aspect of jazz expression, then Coltrane's rejection of this suggests either a complete aesthetic change in the nature of jazz, or potentially, that his music is not accurately labelled jazz at all. The latter point is, of course, incorrect, although it is important to consider that Coltrane's free jazz performances were initially labelled 'anti-jazz' (Giddins, 1998, p.477). Instead, Coltrane's use of material is more complex, and while he introduces new musical values, he does not entirely abandon those that already existed.

Returning to the observation that jazz practice places great emphasis on spontaneity, that is, musical reactions within a performance, rather than a predetermined composition, there is still continuity. This is one principle that Coltrane can be seen to emphasise rather than depart from, and this feature is an enduring aspect of what we can consider jazz tradition, being an expectation 'that something musical will *happen* in the playing of the music' (Floyd 1995, p.96). While this expectation does not specifically refer to spontaneity, it is referring to the performative nature of music as a space in which new musical ideas are formulated and demonstrated, and how these emerge in a live and evolving setting, which Coltrane's free jazz ensemble work demonstrates and champions above all else.

However, the aspect of music reference within the performance, as a feature to be recognised and contextualised by an audience in the appreciation of the musician's playing, seems to be challenged by free jazz as a result of its abstracted treatment of musical material. Monson's argument that the definition of improvisation often omits the premise of 'elaborating upon something previously known' is complicated when applied to Coltrane's music (2002 p.114). In free jazz, directly referencing other works ceases to be a key feature of improvisation, as does the use of existing works as vehicles through which to experiment and form new pieces, as well as demonstrate one's musical skill. However, rather than devaluing or relegating the significance of improvisation, free jazz, of course, only strengthened its role, as Baraka writes, the jazz musicians of the early 1960s 'restored improvisation to its traditional role of invaluable significance' (Jones, 2002, p.225). As we have stated, however, jazz musicians did not entirely abandon the use of existing musical techniques, of the jazz tradition, or of the European, which is explored by Baraka.

On one hand, Baraka argues that the nature of jazz was threatened by the incorporation of Western musical forms, particularly what was termed 'third stream' jazz, and that compositions based on the combination of jazz and classical music exhibit 'what the *final* dilution of Afro-American musical tradition might be' in that their relation to jazz is negatively affected by the European influence (Jones, 2002, p.229). This is, in part, due to the loss of communicative power, and the use instead of jazz as a stylistic quality through which to invoke Western notions of authenticity and of jazz's geographic and cultural origins, while ignoring its true and original aesthetic properties.

However, Baraka indicates that there is still emotional value in the European forms, and he saw contemporary jazz musicians as 'producing an American music which has complete access to the invaluable emotional history of Western art' (Jones, 2002, p.225). Jazz also had a quality

that the European techniques did not, and so while drawing on these, it was important that jazz retained its own tradition and aesthetic values, and avoid subjecting 'the philosophy of Negro music to the less indigenously personal attitude of European-derived music' (2002, p.229). Baraka sees that jazz musicians can draw from the European influence, but it was essential to retain the aesthetic qualities of the music that were drawn from its cultural and geographic origins. The influence of European music was as a technical and educational tool, but the core of jazz was to remain inexorably linked to the emotional language of jazz, with Baraka writing that musicians such as Ornette Coleman 'know the music of Anton Webern and are responsible to it intellectually, as they would be to any stimulating art form', but ultimately, 'they are not responsible to it emotionally' (Jones, 2002, p.229).

In Baraka's argument we see an emphasis on a communicative and emotive aspect of jazz that endured throughout the genre's evolution and various iterations. Baraka does not see this as wavering in the advent of free jazz, and it in fact reintroduced aesthetic values that were of central importance in the history of African American music, particularly regarding emotional expression. We can now examine how Coltrane's amalgamation of musical principles, and the expressive aspects of his free jazz period, were received by audiences, and understand what his music subsequently came to represent.

### **Extramusical Associations**

Coltrane's new musical direction and the artistic autonomy that he came to represent had consequences beyond his own control. *A Love Supreme* emphasised the relationships between Coltrane, spirituality, and the subsequent view of him as a religious figure. Its popularity, 'elevated cultural status' and 'associated mythologies' gave it the appearance of having 'otherworldly qualities' (Whyton, 2007, p.118). Outside of Coltrane's own musical goals, this nonetheless came to be a significant aspect of the public's reception of his music.

Being a recorded artefact existing beyond the composer's control and eventually outliving the composer, Whyton argues that *A Love Supreme* is 'an obvious example of how jazz on record can become enshrouded with a sense of mystery' (2007, p.119). He argues that 'the disembodied voice', which is created by the absence of the creator, results in audiences attempting to reclaim 'the physicality' of the artist and attributing qualities to them via extramusical associations (Whyton, 2007, p.120). This includes the physical album and its liner notes, which in the case of *A Love Supreme*, have become the focus of much attention, and the question this raises is how these aspects contribute to the aesthetic appreciation of his music.

For Coltrane, his freedom was not solely rooted in a rejection of the rules regarding contemporary hard-bop, but also in a spiritual liberation that he experienced by directing his music toward religious worship. The focus on expression in free jazz is often given a great deal of significance, however, with Coltrane in particular and considering Whyton's view, occurs what could be seen as what Scruton identifies as the 'evocation theory' (1997, p.145). Its flaw as a theory of musical expression is that it seeks to locate the meaning of the work in the listener's response rather than the composer's intention (Scruton, 1997). Associations made by the

listener then inform their interpretation of the work, and the artist's intentions become lost as meaning is misattributed (Scruton, 1997, p.146):

The contrast between evocation and expression can be observed in critical discourse. The critic for whom the evocation of the English landscape is part of the expressive content of Vaughan Williams' movement will 'write the meaning into' the work.

Considering this, the view of Coltrane as a spiritual figure can be seen, in part, to have been applied to Coltrane's music more by its listeners than by Coltrane himself, and his spirituality may have become overemphasised in ways than he may not have intended. We will examine Scruton's theory later in this thesis, however, it is useful to consider how extramusical associations can form a part of a generally accepted and popular view of a musician and their work, beyond their own intentions.

Nonetheless, Coltrane's resistance to the use of popular music in his later period and his pursuit of personal and musical autonomy is clear, and ultimately paved the way 'toward Afrocentric forms of spirituality', and for the heightened importance of self-reflective expression within modern jazz (Peretti, 1997, p.139). Coltrane was motivated by a wider message, and was a significant proponent of introspective musical expression, and Coltrane's music contributed to contemporary social progress, particularly the Civil Rights Movement.

In considering musical freedom, while free jazz reinstated jazz's independence, the potential remained for a standardisation that could restrict its autonomy. It can be argued that in retrospect, similarities in subsequent recordings suggest that in time, like hard-bop, conventions and standards eventually permeated free jazz (Gloag, 2014):

It may be 'free' of past constraints and conventions but it is equally bound by its own concept of freedom that becomes potentially another stylistic and generic framework as reflected in the realization that numerous free jazz recordings contained high levels of similarity, suggesting that freedom did not necessarily mean the perpetuation of difference.

This observation, however, is potentially applicable to any and all musical styles. There are still rules and expectations that performers must abide by, even if less strict than in other genres. An anecdote recounted by Davies describes a saxophonist who, when told to improvise in his own way at a free jazz session, played I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside, and was chastised and asked not to return (2011).

It appears that the best way to understand freedom in the case of free jazz, is in the aesthetic values that it introduced (and reintroduced) into jazz discourse, not simply as a lack of rules. These values were related to extramusical phenomena, such as socio-political movements, and understanding this relationship brings us to the significance of the genre within the development of jazz as a whole. We can now examine some of these specific aesthetic qualities and their relation to broader cultural movements.



## Coltrane's Expression and the Resemblance Theory

The timbral qualities of John Coltrane's saxophone playing have become a central aspect of his music that is seen as containing a specific expressive capacity, one that is individual to him as a musician as well as being inherently linked to wider socio-cultural phenomena. Unique to him, his voice was seen to reflect his feelings toward current social issues and be evocative of communal emotion. First, we can examine the premise of a musician's 'voice', and its aesthetic ramifications.

Features like the 'human quality of his saxophone voice', have become defining aspects of Coltrane's music and of free jazz - being representative of human emotion - more so than other forms of music (Williams, 1993, p.229). Amiri Baraka, commenting on the emergence of free jazz that he calls the 'avant-garde', writes that the musicians, including Coltrane, 'literally scream and rant in imitation of the human voice' (Jones 2002, p.227). The effect of this, the perceived human expressive element, leads to a view of the music as being an honest, authentic representation of the emotions of its musicians, and bypassing the obstructive institutional requirements of style and form, with authenticity located in a sense not dissimilar to the requirements set out by Adorno.

Before going further, we must consider a key factor that prevents resemblance being a complete account of how we experience musical expression. Raised by both Robinson and Trivedi, the problem is that other things may present characteristics that we find expressive in music, but we do not then see those things as expressive. Trivedi observes that 'perceived resemblances are not sufficient for expressiveness', and gives the example of how a turtle may 'move slowly, with their heads hung low, and their bodies very close to the ground', which resembles characteristics of human sadness, yet we do not feel sad, or see sadness expressed (2014, p.227). Similarly, Robinson identifies a missing component in the resemblance theory, simply that to resemble is not a full account of expression, writing that 'I am powerfully moved not because my friend has a sad-looking face, but only because that sad-looking face is a sign that she really is sad' (2014, p.204).<sup>15</sup> So, while resemblance is part of the mechanism of musical expressiveness, it does not form a full explanation, and due to the enduring significance of musical tradition and established customs within musical genres, it is here we can further examine artistic expression beyond resemblance.

Returning to Coltrane's sound, the distinction we must make is between the aesthetic effects of this 'human' element, and that which is subsequently read into his playing, or in other words, what the human element is thought to express or be capable of expressing. For example, the originality and uniqueness of this quality, can give weight to the view that there is greater expressive power in Coltrane's playing than in that of other jazz musicians. The view that

---

<sup>15</sup> Signe Howell specifically addresses the belief in universal expression via facial features, arguing that even though facial expressions may be shared across cultures, we cannot determine that they necessarily share the same meaning, concluding that 'collecting art objects which apparently resemble each other formally from our own point of view, while originating in unrelated cultures, can never tell us anything about their content or quality' (1991, p.224).

Coltrane's expressivity stems from his own unique sound and playing, superseding the influence of genre or style, prevails (Williams, 1993). Further to this, in capturing free improvisation in a recording, the effect of endless streams of musical performance occurs, as the tracks did not have specific endings and were often faded out when released with a effect similar to that which Whyton finds in the 'voice' (Williams, 1993). The prevailing view is that there is a distinctly human element to Coltrane's music, one that maintains an expressive capacity individualistic and apparent, that bridges the gap between music as expression, and as technical exercise dependent on melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic understanding, as well as the requirements of form and style. In Baraka's view, in free jazz, 'music and musician have been brought, in a manner of speaking, face to face', avoiding the restrictions of traditional institutional standards, and presenting more authentic and unhindered expression (Jones, 2002, p.227).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the resultant music was a more authentic and accurate portrayal of emotion, as it was shaped by the musician rather than by external requirements or expectations (Jones, 2002).

To relate this type of expressive quality to an aesthetic theory, the 'cognitive recognition' theory presented by Gracyk helps in explaining how the 'human' quality of Coltrane's playing became so valued as an expressive device. The parameters of this theory are as follows (Gracyk, 2012, p.39):

1. As a thing that cannot literally possess emotions, a work of art *x* is expressively *e* if *x* has the expressive appearance *e*.
2. Recognition that a work of art *x* has the expressive appearance *e* does not require *x* to arouse any feelings.
3. A musical work *x* possesses the expressive appearance *e* if *x* resembles the posture and/or behaviour of a person expressing *e*.

In short, musical features that reflect, mirror, or are similar to human expression, convey emotion via an audience recognising the given expression (Gracyk, 2012). As Gracyk points out, there are many examples of art that is seen as expressive that does not feature a human quality through which to convey the emotion, therefore this theory fails as a complete account of artistic expressivity. In regards to Coltrane's 'voice', it is seen as portraying human emotion due to its similarity with real human expressive actions, and as Hamilton writes, 'one does not just experience music as behaving like a human body, but the human body as behaving musically' (2007, p.119).

There are other musical effects as a result of a 'voice', beyond an expressive capacity. Having a 'voice', in other words, having a particular, recognisable sound distinct from one's peers, was

---

<sup>16</sup> Hobsbawm argues that rock was popular in the 1960s as it had similar characteristics to jazz, such as 'rhythm, an immediately identifiable voice or 'sound', real (or faked) spontaneity and vitality, and a way of directly transferring human emotions into music' (1999, p.381). As we have seen, the latter example was a common view.

not unique to free jazz, in either genre or era. In fact, it forms part of a musician's ability to set themselves apart from others and stand out within a performance. One example is that of Miles Davis, who's unique 'voice' regards specific features that identifies oneself with ensemble playing (Keyes, 2009). There is also a relationship between the use of vocally inspired material, and the perception of a musician communicating via a phrase or figure that is drawn from a lyric, poem, or other music drawn from a language based origin. In Coltrane's work, this most notably manifests itself through the use of hymns and chants. The fourth part of *A Love Supreme* is based around a 'canticle', in which phrases are related directly to psalms (Giddins, 1999). Another instance of this in Coltrane's work is the piece 'Alabama', and his use of 'the vocal inflection of Martin Luther King's eulogy for the murdered children', which, as Giddins notes, 'has little precedent in jazz' with the only other example being Duke Ellington's *Black, Brown and Beige* from 1958 (1999). While using spoken language as an influence, Coltrane used a very limited amount himself (Heisler, 2015 p.395):

Coltrane was suspicious of any kind of verbal framing for his music, saying he preferred to put out his albums without liner notes and let the music "speak for itself".<sup>17</sup>

It appears Coltrane wanted the expressive content of his music to be interpreted and understood via the musical performance, rather than through any extramusical signifiers. Thus, the proper aesthetic experience of Coltrane's music is one in which only sounds heard in the moment are relevant to the experience, and no other material is necessary in the proper appreciation of his music.

The 'voice', then, is a multi-faceted technique, one that plays a variety of roles in a musical performance. At the beginning of this section, the role of Coltrane's voice as expressing both his own emotion, as well as those of the wider community, was mentioned. The view of the 'voice' as representing a group belief, feeling, or social phenomenon, suggests that there is a relationship between the sound of the individual musician and the society that surrounds them. To examine this, we must consider how the musical aesthetics of free jazz mirrored the beliefs and feelings of a community in such a way that the music came to symbolise and champion the social and political movements of the time.

### **Community, Convention, and Meaning**

The claim we are dealing with here is that Coltrane's 'voice' and free jazz itself presents a mode of expression beyond resemblance. We can expect that part of this expressivity will be found in the social aspect of a genre, and in exploring this, it is necessary to return to examining the social role of free jazz, and how this shaped the view of the music's expressive nature.

---

<sup>17</sup> Heisler also notes that Coltrane declined to be featured in A. B. Spellman's *Four Lives in the Bebop Business* in 1966, and how Coltrane differed from other musical peers of the era, such as Charles Mingus and Archie Shepp, 'who were much more apt to frame their music with expository text, and even to integrate the latter into the former' (2015, p.395).

We can start by framing this in an aesthetic sense. From bebop, jazz in the mid-20th century could be seen as shifting from a theory of 'emotional engagement', in which value is located in generating an emotional response from the audience, i.e making them feel an emotion, toward a 'self expression theory', in which it is the artist's expression of emotion that makes the art valuable (Gracyk, 2012, p.22). This is broad but pertinent, in part a consequence of modernism, and as Alex Ross suggests, the later stage of a gradual autonomy after being subsumed by popular culture (2011, p.17):

First, the youth rebellion period: Satchmo and the Duke and Bix and Jelly Roll teach a generation to lose itself in the music. Second, the era of bourgeois pomp: the high-class swing band parallels the Romantic orchestra. Stage 3: artists rebel against the bourgeois image, echoing the classical modernist revolution, sometimes by direct citation (Charlie Parker works the opening notes of *The Rite of Spring* into "Salt Peanuts"). Stage 4: free jazz marks the point at which the vanguard loses touch with the masses and becomes a self-contained avant-garde.

The two theories are not mutually exclusive, and nor is the expressive nature of free jazz. Value is found in both the artist's self expression, as well as its ability to cause the audience to have an emotional response, but it is self expression that became the more prominent and valued aspect of free jazz. The question this raises is how and why, if indeed 'self-contained', free jazz was seen as a deeply expressive musical form. We must expect some continuity with the preceding jazz tradition, if we are to understand free jazz as an extension of the genre rather than a complete departure.

In Coltrane's own words, he states that a musician's primary desire is to convey personal belief or experience in a way that is understood by an audience (Giddins, 1999, p.490):

"The main thing a musician would like to do" Coltrane said, "is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe".

Far from an 'art for art's sake' doctrine, the indication is that in drawing the emotion in Coltrane's music from his own feelings, the emotion he wants an audience to understand is one that he himself has. The audience's experience of the emotive content of a work, for Coltrane, is ideally exactly the emotion of the artist themselves. Coltrane's aesthetic philosophy, as far as it is presented here, does not account much for different interpretations. This is distinct, then, from the view of free jazz as being unconsidered and chaotic improvisation, through which expressive content would be through the acceptance of the meaninglessness of music, reflecting the Adornian view that 'expressionlessness becomes an expression' (Hamilton, 2007, p.83).

As we have already touched upon, much of the expressive reading of Coltrane's music can be accounted for with what can be called the 'persona theory', in which 'emotions communicated by an artwork do not have to be the emotions of the originating artist' (Gracyk, 2012, p.32). It is the persona theory that explains the expressive nature of art in the Romantic era, and presents

emotional content, but not necessarily belonging to the artist themselves (Gracyk, 2012). As we have seen, Coltrane had a persona not only as a musician, but also as a social figure. Self expression was at the heart of his musical ambition, and in conjunction with the limited but pertinent writings that he published, a sincere persona can be attributed to Coltrane, one that he was complicit in creating, but one that also took on a life of its own. For example, the following quote is taken from the liner notes on *Coltrane's Sound*, where Coltrane wrote, "It seems it does me a lot of good to play until I don't feel like playing anymore, though I've found out that I don't say that much more!" (Litweiler, 1985, p.92). On one hand, this quote indicates 'the release' Coltrane felt when performing extended solos, however, it also demonstrates Coltrane stating a purpose to his improvisation, offering a way in which to view and interpret his music, as well as indicating what Coltrane sees as limitations to the expressive capacity of a given solo (Litweiler, 1985, p.92).

While the persona theory does explain some instances of expression, is it not a total account, as it attributes expression to the audience's understanding rather than as something caused by the artist (Robinson, 2014). A theory sympathetic to both is given by Collingwood. In what is termed the 'self recognition theory', the basic principle is that Collingwood thinks that there is a shared emotion between the artist and the audience (Gracyk, 2012). In experiencing the artwork, the audience is then able to empathise with the emotion that the artist is conveying (Gracyk 2012, p.29):

An expressive artwork is one that leads the audience to have a parallel imaginative experience and, based on that, a parallel clarity of consciousness in which they recognise that it is their emotion, too.

The use of the term 'imaginative' regards encouraging thought and consideration, and therefore, emotional expression 'is the activity of becoming conscious or aware of one's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, etc' (Sclafani, 1976, p.355). The important aspect of this theory, and one that justifies its relevance, is that the parameters given by Collingwood 'makes it implausible to expect universal access to an artwork' (Gracyk, 2012, p.29). As a result of this, to understand artistic decisions requires at least some existing cultural knowledge, which relates to the role of socio-cultural and musical education in the jazz tradition that we have been examining (Gracyk, 2012).

The theory is therefore pertinent, as it is the shared aspect of the emotional response that is key in the reception of Coltrane's music, particularly in relation to social movements of the time. For example, Litweiler describes the extended solos that became a part of Coltrane's performances in the 1960s as being able 'to move us so urgently because in hearing him, we recognise our own struggles against complacency, against fears, ever into life's unknowns' (1985 p.103). This is not a direct expression of a specific emotion, but instead, encourages the listener to recognise the emotional nature of the music. For Collingwood, the articulation and cognition of the expressive material is a process for both the artist and the audience, and as a result, 'an emotion that was unclear in the poet's mind is clarified once it has been articulated in a structure of words, imagery, rhythm, and other poetic devices' (Robinson, 2014, p.207). As the earlier

quote from *Coltrane's Sound* indicates, he too recognises the artist's individual process of articulating emotion, stating how when improvising for a long period, 'I've found out that I don't say that much more!' (Litweiler, 1985, p.92).

Our conclusion so far is that Coltrane's music, specifically his improvisation in the free jazz era, articulates complex emotional feelings, and conveys them to an already discursively informed audience. It is the specificity of the cultural basis of the music that is significant, as it must still reflect a shared and understood language, but to be too accessible is an error. In Collingwood's theory, 'concessions to accessibility almost always produce bad art', with the definition of 'bad' being an inability to articulate shared emotion (Gracyk, 2012, p.31). As Coltrane's music developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s from bebop and hardbop to free jazz, accessibility was certainly not an aspect that was given much consideration. However, as we have begun to uncover, this is not as accurate as it seems. As can be shown, while not accessible to an uneducated public, Coltrane continued to function within the tradition that informed his musical development, and as such, his music remained relevant to informed jazz audiences.

Central to Collingwood's theory is the requirement that artists use cultural tools to communicate with audiences, otherwise they cannot communicate their message to an audience, nor contextualise, reflect, and ultimately 'understand themselves' (Gracyk, 2012, p.31). In free jazz, there are a number of examples of the use of culturally learned techniques, whether drawing upon existing works as in the case of the religious influence in Coltrane's work, the relevance of the signifying theory, to specific musical techniques and instrumentation. Further to this, even though culturally acquired skills are of paramount importance in achieving expressive capacity, the artist must also work to form their own material in an original and unique way in order to be individually expressive, and ultimately, 'genuine expression is always original, and achieved only through the process of shaping material' (Gracyk, 2012, p.31). The relevance of this to Coltrane's recordings and free jazz in general is the emphasis on community representation in the expressive capacity of artworks. The crux of his theory is that understanding the emotion conveyed in an artwork is only possible if one is sufficiently familiar with the ways in which an artwork can express an emotion. In Coltrane's later work, accessibility in the sense of popular appeal was sacrificed, but in terms of communicative discourse, free jazz maintained values that tied it firmly to the jazz tradition.

While there are some emotions that cannot feasibly be expressed, particularly complex ones, 'music can express desire, aspiration, or striving; a theme may struggle to achieve resolution, fail, try again, and finally achieve closure; or one theme may gradually and with apparent difficulty transform into a theme with a different character' and this is the significance of the cultural nature of expression and the recognition of musical devices, and goes beyond the theory of resemblance (Robinson, 2014, p.207). Rather than simply resembling emotional gestures, it is the treatment of the material in its cultural context that offers expressive content. Recognising emotion then takes place in the mind of the listener, as indeed, 'music is not literally or really sad but is rather only imagined to be so' (Trivedi, 2014, p.229).

While we can discount resemblance as a total explanation, an important aspect of Kivy's theory must be considered, that it is a result of European customs that musical devices such as major keys are seen as presenting positive emotions, and minor keys seems as presenting negative ones (Trivedi, 2014). We have already touched upon the cultural nature of expression, and as a significant aspect of how expressiveness functions, we must examine this in greater detail, and consider how instrumental music can generate a response that is distinct from the music itself.

### **Musical Profundity**

An analysis of profundity is useful in understanding how the significance of music such as free jazz is formed on account of the experience that it offers to an audience, via its relation to broader conventions and traditions rather than solely on its musical properties. Drawing on our examination of how expression is achieved, we can go further and argue that instrumental music can be profound, defining profound as being able to reveal 'fundamental aspects of the human condition' (Dodd, 2014a, p.299).

Kivy's stated requirements for an artwork to be profound are as follows (Dodd, 2014a, p.300):

- (1) *w* has a profound subject matter (i.e. *w* is *about* something profound); and
- (2) *w* handles its profound subject matter in such a way as to elicit a deeper understanding of it or a fuller grasp of its significance (in a suitably situated and prepared appreciator).

To qualify as being *about* something in a sufficient way, and to fulfil these criteria, for an art work to be profound, it must be able to refer to something, with the consequence being that art that is not able to clearly do this, is therefore unable to be profound (Dodd, 2014a, p.301). Dodd's critique of this position is that for Kivy, 'in order to be profound, an artwork must both *denote* something profound and express profound *propositions* about what it denotes' and therefore, Kivy's conclusion must be that instrumental music cannot be profound (2014a, p.302). In arguing against this position, it is with the definition of profundity that Dodd takes issue, stating that semantic meaning is not needed for an artwork to be profound (Dodd, 2014a).

Instead, the claim is that artworks such as instrumental music display certain properties via reference to them, and the properties that are able to display reference are located within the tradition of the artwork, the social norms and expectations that surround it, and through our own expectations and engagement with the artwork itself (Dodd, 2014a). The properties that are profound, or encourage profundity, exist as a result of the referential qualities of the artwork, and the reference is achieved 'by virtue of displaying properties that are not only possessed or expressed by the music, but instantiated beyond it' (Dodd, 2014a, p.310).

It is the existence of what can be termed '*response-dependent property*' which is able to cause a response in the observer or listener which generates profundity, rather than through '*saying something profound*' (Dodd, 2014a, p.312). This is at odds with the theories given by Kivy and Scruton, who argue that as music is unable to be fully predicative, it cannot make semantic

reference (Dodd, 2014a). Dodd's counter to this is that it is incorrect to believe that semantic reference and propositions are the source of profundity, and instead, in the case of the literary work, 'it is the writer's detailed use of the medium, not his packaging of a message, that elicits fresh insight in those who understand the work' (2014a, p.315).

The crux of this argument is that it is *interpretation* that informs the profundity of a work, and as a result, a distinction must be made between 'artistic meaning' and '(quasi-) semantic meaning', and that one should locate profundity in an artworks ability to inspire contemplation and thought rather than make outright statements (Dodd, 2014a, p.316). In the process of revealing artistic meaning in an artwork, different interpretations are necessary, and the experience of profundity is a personal experience of a works' given properties, encouraged by its creator, but unique to the individual (Dodd, 2014a).

The consequences of Dodd's challenge to Kivy is that profundity becomes instead a complex and multi-faceted experience (2014a). Against the suggestion that this view of profundity leaves a work open to infinite interpretations, and therefore unable to convey any profound message deliberately instantiated by its creator, the contention is that there will be a certain way of approaching the work that is guided by its cultural context and the decisions made by the artist (Dodd, 2014a).

The relevance of intentions is an important factor in this theory of profundity. Understanding an artist's intentions does not fully account for how we approach artworks, but they are still significant in forming our aesthetic understanding of them (Davies, 1991). Regarding profundity, understanding the cultural context and the artist's own purpose or motivation, enables the audience to engage with the work in an informed manner, and more fully grasp its subject matter (Dodd, 2014a). The intentionalist account is seen to fail as a complete theory as a work can be interpreted in different ways, beyond what the artist may have originally intended, and so other factors like artistic convention must also be taken into account when assessing a work's value (Davies, 1991). While intentions form a significant part of how we approach a work, they do not necessarily fully explain the appreciation of a work, and as we have seen in the case of Coltrane, intentions and purpose can become overstated or misconstrued in the absence of the artist themselves. Profound meaning is found in the contextual nature of the event, demonstrating the relevance of community and surrounding discourses in appropriately understanding the artist's meaning.

In Baraka's view of modern jazz in the 1960s, including that of Coltrane, is that it returned to the artistic principles of the genre's inception. Baraka argues that jazz musicians of the time were 'reemphasizing the most expressive qualities of Afro-American musical tradition', and at the same time, 'producing an American music which has complete access to the invaluable emotional history of Western art' (Jones, 2002, p.225). However, Baraka's interpretation is not the only account, and Heisler posits a contradictory view to Baraka's, finding that Coltrane was actually influenced by the two varying aesthetic ideals, on account of his musical education. Heisler contends that he bridged 'the institutionally oriented' creative movements like the Harlem Renaissance, and the socio-political movements of the 1960s, and that this created a



tension within his work (Heisler, 2015, p.393).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, to understand Coltrane's aesthetic decisions and his musical evolution, the relationship between these influences must be considered.

The purpose of this exposition is that it demonstrates the conflicting principles of Coltrane's musical values, and this distinction between influential creative movements illuminates the complex aesthetic nature of Coltrane's music. As we understand expression as being formed in the use of musical material within the contexts of genre, tradition, and culture, we can see that in drawing from different aesthetic philosophies, Coltrane created profound and expressive music that resonated with informed audiences.

Regarding the two different influences, the first is drawn from the influence that the European artistic tradition had on the Harlem Renaissance, and how, following this, the legacy of the Renaissance instilled certain artistic values within the community in which Coltrane developed his music. The institutionalised aesthetic philosophy of the Harlem Renaissance championed what can be termed "'classical" aesthetic forms' (Heisler, 2015, p.398).

The legacy of this influence can be found throughout the music of the era. Composers like William Grant Still were influenced by European aesthetic values, while also drawing on African American culture in their compositions (Heisler, 2015). The music of Gershwin, Duke Ellington, and Coleman Hawkins, like Coltrane, also embodied the tension between the two aesthetic philosophies (Heisler, 2015). The influence of the Harlem Renaissance began to diminish, and the success achieved by Hawkins established swing as a viable musical form for young musicians to forge a career, making it 'more seductive in light of the barriers that other African American musicians who had chosen more conventionally respectable career paths faced' (Heisler, 2015, p.399). However, its influence endured into the swing era via the popularity of its musicians, which may explain why the European techniques still remained of interest to avant-garde musicians like Coltrane, many years later (Heisler, 2015).

If we consider the tension suggested in Coltrane's music, it is essential to note that his use of the European musical influences were specifically nuanced. On one hand, for example, the composition Coltrane created with Eric Dolphy, titled 'Red Planet' (also known as "Miles' Mode"), uses 'a nonrepeating twelve-tone row and its retrograde', which was developed and popularised by Schoenberg, whereas *Ascension* includes 'polyphonic blues-based orchestrations' (Heisler, 2015, p.400). As such, the application of these forms is *within* his music rather than as a dominant or essential feature, and the specific genres and subsequent conventions themselves are perhaps less significant, as Coltrane wrote in 1962 regarding the label 'jazz', "'You can have this term along with several others that have been foisted upon us'" (Heisler, 2015, p.401).

---

<sup>18</sup> Coltrane was influenced by the work of saxophonist Coleman Hawkins' technique and tone, who Heisler argues achieved popularity 'in the face of the institutionalized Harlem Renaissance' while retaining a 'stage persona modelled on the figure of the concert artist in the European art music tradition' (2015, p.399).

The tension of Coltrane's influences create meaning through the treatment of the musical properties, and their combination or juxtaposition. If the question is how an audience can feel an artist's expressed emotion, beyond how a musical figure may be compared to the gesture of an emotion via resemblance, then we can begin to see that it is culturally formed. Resemblance doesn't account for how music makes the listener feel the emotion as opposed to simply recognising the resemblance, and so, to hear tension and to understand the musical history inherent in the work, particularly if the artist is seen to offer this intentionally, will encourage the necessary engagement with the work to elicit an emotional, and potentially profound, response. As Robinson writes, 'I am powerfully moved not because my friend has a sad-looking face, but only because that sad-looking face is a sign that she really is sad' (2014, p.204). In the case of Coltrane, the aesthetic tensions are felt as real tension, via the often live and spontaneous creation of a personal musical form as these different influences are balanced.

Considering this, we can begin to form a more sympathetic view of his music as extending from, at least in part, an aesthetic thesis that viewed music as 'art', and that required specific properties through which to achieve this status, bringing us to the issue of understanding free jazz as the embodiment of the 'art for art's sake' doctrine.

### **Free Jazz and Art for Art's Sake**

An issue raised in exploring free jazz expressivity was that of functionlessness, that being art without a perceived purpose, and how we in turn understand notions of autonomy in relation to this. This section shall address the function of free jazz, and the distinctions between autonomy and functionlessness that are crucial in defining the free jazz movement.

As examined at the beginning of this chapter, to obtain autonomy and authenticity in Adorno's terms, ultimately, music must resist social conventions, principally by not catering in any way to the audience (Subotnik, 1991). As Hamilton writes, in Adorno's theory, autonomy is understood as a 'lack of *direct* social function' (2007, p.168). The work still has a social function, as a result of its functionlessness, as an artistic product and thus forming part of a society's culture (Hamilton, 2007). However, for Adorno, to be autonomous is inextricable from also becoming a commodity, which forms the dialectical nature of his position. Therefore, its social function, being its critical nature, is due to its resistance to any social convention or influence (Hamilton, 2007). In other words, when for its 'own sake', the music still has a social function, even though not having a specific, intended one. In fact, 'it is precisely through their refusal of social function that, according to Adorno, autonomous music and art acquire a critical function', which is why art without function is so valued in his critique (Hamilton, 2007, p.183). However, as demonstrated in chapter 3, Adorno's criterion is of limited relevance.

We are not able to fully understand free jazz in this specific sense of functionlessness. It is tempting to view the music as without direct social function, but so closely was it tied to the social and political movements of the era, to view the music as autonomous in this sense is inaccurate. It is even more tempting to attribute the critical nature of free jazz to an Adornian reading of autonomy, whereby the form dictates its critical character, as in the case of

Beethoven. Further to this, the oppositional nature of the avant-garde that Adorno recognised, and its political nature achieved through form rather than explicit political content, which can be understood as the 'post-Romantic conception of art', is also comparable to the free jazz movement (Hamilton, 2007, p.179). The issue at hand is that while we can clearly see the end of the specific function of jazz in the broad sense with the introduction of free jazz, understanding it as functionless does not give us a full picture of its cultural role.

The question we must attempt to answer is whether free jazz is accurately understood as exemplifying a variation of the avant-garde 'art for art's sake' doctrine, or whether there was always a purpose and intended function to the music. Free jazz may present formal aesthetics comparable with those of modernism, rejecting commodification and expanding its tonal language, and if we can take one thing from Adorno's theory, the notion of the critical character found in the formation of a new harmonic language and the rejection of the Western rules of tonality does seem applicable. Looking more closely, however, the question to be asked is whether Coltrane wished his music to be considered 'on its own terms', or whether its value is found in relation to other aspects. If free jazz cannot be fully understood in the formalist sense, then we must now examine the existence of a direct social function.

### **Free Jazz and Social Function**

It has been argued that the social component of free jazz was inseparable from the music. Specifically in relation to the Civil Rights Movement, Gioia writes that 'it is impossible to comprehend the free jazz movement of these same years without understanding how it fed upon this powerful cultural shift in American society' (2011, p.310). As a consequence, Gioia argues that the role of the music became as much a part of its identity as the actual music itself, and subsequently, 'the music risked being relegated to a secondary, utilitarian role, valued for what it advocated rather than how it actually sounded' (2011, p.310). The issue with this interpretation of free jazz, however, is the assumption that the social, political, spiritual messages found in the music were initially secondary to the music being made, whereas in contrast, understanding these themes as inherent in free jazz and in the genre's development, gives us a more comprehensive view of the relationship between the two.

From the beginning of his career, Coltrane had maintained values that suggest an extramusical, or functional, significance. His and other free jazz musicians' use of improvisation and ensemble reflected the notions of unity and cohesion, and this was not in isolation as during this era, 'the emphasis on cooperation and community' in art and culture was becoming more established (Floyd, 1995, p.190). Moving to Philadelphia in 1943, Coltrane found a communal musical environment, with new opportunities to perform and learn from a range of other musicians, as the Second World War draft limited the availability of players for larger ensembles (Porter, 1999). In broader jazz practice, the significance of the Harlem Renaissance in the formation of creative values in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century must also be considered, and the view that 'excellence in art' would ultimately be a way to achieve social equality (Floyd, 1995 p.106).

As we have seen, there were also enduring functions of the musical experience that were not found in the European tradition. Qualities such as ‘enhancing and celebrating life through cradle songs, songs of reflection, historical songs, fertility songs, songs about death and mourning’, among others, were themes not found as readily in the European musical tradition, and were drawn from African music (Floyd, 1995, p.32). These specific examples do not necessarily apply to free jazz, but are useful in understanding the range of values that influenced diaspora music making, and in considering whether social purposes *became* an aspect of jazz, or whether they had always been an integral part.

The renewed emphasis on the social role of jazz is comparable to that of the inception of bebop, in which ‘musicians formed organizations, began self-producing records, formed alliances with other black and white cultural workers, and many were incorporated into the shifting curricula of universities’ (Meltzer, 1993, p.263). The political aspect had become more recognisable and explicit, although more so in the work of certain musicians, with Coltrane’s stance less vocal compared to more openly political figures like Charlie Mingus (Perry, 1996). In free jazz the emphasis on expression began to take precedence over more stylistic concerns, as seen in Coltrane’s rejection of even the term ‘jazz’ (Peretti, 1997). Thus, a musical movement emphasising resistance to mainstream popular culture and its expectations and restrictions, and inherently linked to political and social concerns, rooted in the Harlem Renaissance and the advances of bebop in the 1940s, once again resurfaced.

So, while it can be argued that the socio-political messages were always a part of the music, and simply became more apparent in the free jazz era, what had changed? Coltrane’s rejection of labels, which is of course common among artists, coupled with his personal motivation in music making taking precedence over anything other influence suggests an increase in the importance of artistic autonomy. In fact, it could be argued that the need for economic viability was one aspect completely abandoned in the wake of free jazz, which is perhaps what led the genre to be considered as more directly expressive and sincere in its political message. However, economic independence does not necessarily equal autonomy, and we can examine other objections to the notion of autonomy when applied to free jazz.

Another more obvious objection to free jazz as autonomous already mentioned would be its continued relationship with the preceding jazz tradition. One example is the format of the performances, not the use of standards and popular songs specifically, but the reworking and revision of existing songs. In keeping with theory of nodes in a network (Kane, 2018), Coltrane used live performance to revise, reference, and reimagine his existing music, and that of other musicians, although in a more abstracted and freeform fashion. There are still consistencies and references to a specific, predetermined work, but these are less influential in the evolution of the piece as it is played. Coltrane does not simply do away with work-determinative rules, instead, he uses them as starting points for improvisation, after which the piece progresses as a result of the musician’s decisions, rather than existing structural ones.

One piece that came to be not only a significant piece of Coltrane’s free jazz work but also a jazz standard in itself was ‘Impressions’, the performance of which changed alongside

Coltrane's own development. Drawing on the modal chord progression from Miles Davis' 'So What', on the *Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings*, Coltrane uses phrasing from Ravel's 'Pavane pour une infante defunte' (Giddins, 1999), and when performed in 1965 at a jazz festival in Antibes in 1965, it ran for 20 minutes, demonstrating 'the splintered and splayed phraseology of the era's free jazz movement' (Gioia, 2012, p.192).

Considering the nodes and network argument, a crucial aspect of the jazz tradition was that of an audience's mediation and subsequent consensus on the value of a given performance. In an art system that does not see works as isolated objects, we cannot construct a full account of autonomy in the modernist sense, and therefore the view of free jazz as being pure improvisation devoid of musical influence beyond that of the performer's own inherent feeling in the moment, is not an accurate way to understand the music.

We must understand autonomy in a broader sense. To use musical elements drawn from elsewhere, to make artistic decisions in keeping with the parameters of a genre, or to use any other aspect not entirely original within a creative process, does not necessarily to undermine autonomy, as 'artists cannot be so free that they leave all constraints behind them', because without some relation to the preceding creative history, 'there would be no reason to think that what they are doing is creating new art' (Davies, 1991, p.180).

### **Art Status and Autonomy**

Coltrane's free jazz period is celebrated due to its apparent abandonment of musical rules, being seen as unrestricted creativity in the face of a musical culture that had become heavily influenced by rules and expectations, and escaping the institutionalised hierarchy of the Western classical tradition. However, as we have examined, Coltrane and his contemporaries present a more nuanced account.

While the use of standards decreased significantly, and they were less important in the evolution of free jazz as they had been in the genre's earlier phases, the label of autonomy, in the sense of European modernism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is not accurate either. Instead of demonstrating skill through the performance of existing works, improvisation became a guiding principle, and while no longer so closely attached to the standard, free jazz performances can still be seen as being similar to those of the preceding jazz tradition. Returning to the view that 'the music risked being relegated to a secondary, utilitarian role, valued for what it advocated rather than how it actually sounded', this suggests that the understanding of free jazz as separate from its social associations is preferable (Gioia, 2011, p.310). However, considering this social aspect, it helps explain the construction of musical value within the tradition, and the intrinsic importance of socio-cultural understanding in making valuable art.

However, this is not to undermine its status as art. On the contrary, a social role as a fundamental quality can be seen to strengthen its position as meaningful, constructive, and capable of a real world impact. Instead it is the 'art for art's sake' doctrine that is questioned, as it could be asked how can music or any art created without consideration of external factors, like

politics, style, or audience, have as much impact. Understanding a work on its own terms without consideration of its deliberate relationship with preceding works seems likely to result in an interpretation that misses full artistic and aesthetic import.

The idea that improvised music like free jazz was made without consideration of the audience is another misconception. Audiences still expected certain requirements to be fulfilled in a free jazz performance, and it was not simply the case that any and all spontaneous music-making within a performance setting constituted good free jazz. Martin Williams describes Coltrane's *Ascension* (1966) as being 'at the same time a contemporary jazz performance and a communal rite', suggesting a more complicated relationship between the performer and the audience (1993, p.234). Enduring aspects of jazz continued to appear in free jazz performances, for example, the recording of 'Chasin' The Trane' from *Coltrane "Live" At The Village Vanguard* (1962) is described as 'a compact phrase modulated through the changes of a twelve-bar blues' (Giddins, 1999, p.477). What is notable about this description is that the blues influence is central to the piece, as well as the use of phrasing that Williams interprets as 'deliberately repetitive and incantatory', relating the performance to historic musical forms (1993, p.233). Expressive accounts such as Levinson's attempt to locate expression within musical properties as they are understood in comparison with their use in other music, for example tonality or dynamics (2018). Understanding the expressive properties of a free jazz performance requires being familiar with its unique musical characteristics, and being familiar with the context of their use. As well as musical references and links to the earlier jazz tradition, certain stylistic decisions endured, such as instrumentation, and the ensemble format.

So, while musically free jazz has since been seen to epitomise a paradigm shift in musical tradition, and the complete abandonment of rules in the pursuit of authentic musical expression, the reality is not so distinct. In the paradigm of autonomous modernism, as argued by Adorno, a composer could not continue to use classical forms or tonality without the deliberate use of irony, as they could no longer achieve independence from their historic use for them to be capable of being used with originality (Hamilton, 2007). The notion of autonomy takes on a different shape in free jazz compared to the strict view ascribed by Adorno, as to be autonomous or 'avant-garde' required a 'valid separation from, and anarchic disregard of, Western popular forms', rather than a complete divorce from musical tradition (Jones, 2002, p.225).

We began this section asking whether free jazz can be said to endorse an 'art for art's sake' doctrine. As we have examined, the link between the jazz tradition and its role as a conduit for expression and social change is present throughout much of its history. The view of the music being 'relegated' to a political purpose rather than an artistic one over emphasises the distinctly 20<sup>th</sup> century Western idea of the importance of musical autonomy (Gioia, 2011, p.310). Instead free jazz's value is best recognised as being an amalgamation of both influences, maintaining and expanding its role. The contention examined is whether Coltrane's music and free jazz in general is best understood as a further step away from having a function, toward a broadly 'art for art's sake' doctrine. The use of jazz *within* a social occasion ceases under free jazz, following the changes caused by bebop that saw the music take a more autonomous role.

However, the communicative and social aspects of the music endured. Coltrane's motivation for creating and performing music, and the value he saw in it, was as much grounded in the effect it had on the audience as it was his own desire to express personal emotions. We can now explore how Coltrane's unique expressive performances combined with his own artistic motivations came to be seen as so valuable, and what specific qualities propagated this view.

### **Coltrane and Artistic Virtue**

Coltrane's desire was to be able to convey emotions and experiences in such a way that it contributes to society and human well being in a wider sense. It can be seen that for Coltrane, virtue is an essential aspect of music, with virtuous defined by Goldie as 'constitutive of human well-being' (2008, p.179). This definition of virtue makes a distinction between things that create and encourage well-being, and things that are simply necessary or functional (Goldie, 2008).

As such, virtuous art-making is for its own sake, and it is essential there is not a further motive for creating art (Goldie, 2008). This is a difficult point to fully endorse, as motivation is often multifaceted. Economic viability, for example, is always going to be in some way relevant to an artist, unless they are already successful enough for this to not be a consideration, which is likely to be very few artists and limited to popular genres. As shown, musicians in the jazz tradition of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century were concerned with the economic success of their work, and it seems wholly unrealistic to discount any virtuous qualities as a result of this. However, if the artist's motivation is at least in part the desire to create art and engage in the art making process for its own sake, then it seems fair to think it can be virtuous, even if other motivations are present.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of Coltrane, he presents, and emphasises, several virtuous qualities. The individualistic musical language that he had developed and propagated through free jazz, seemingly unconcerned with commercial success, and his control of his work further supports the view that he was concerned primarily with the process of making music and art rather than in any gain from it. The contract that Coltrane signed with Impulse! in 1961 gave him full control of the recording process, which was rare for the time, indicating that Coltrane was primarily interested in art-making before other commercial considerations (Giddins, 1999). In analysing virtue, traits considered virtuous in art include 'imagination, insight, sensibility, vision, creativity' (Goldie, 2007, p.383). These traits create virtue when they are used for their own sake, and can be employed in different ways, such as in the production of artworks, or in their appreciation (Goldie, 2007).

As mentioned, an issue that artistic virtue shares with ethics is that of motivation, or intention.

---

<sup>19</sup> Hobsbawm argues that 'a rejection of success (except on those uncompromising terms proposed by this artist) is characteristic of avant-garde', and that 'concessions to the box office seemed particularly dangerous to the player who wanted the status of 'artist'' (1999, p.383). However, as we have seen, this strict view does not consider the economic reality of being a working jazz musician.

In examining the importance of intentions, while Aristotelian philosophy holds that intentions are a crucial factor in determining if an action is good or right, the utilitarian view of John Stewart Mill argued that only the consequence of an action mattered, not the initial intention (Goldie, 2007). Applying this to aesthetic analysis, the problem with the utilitarian position is that if 'all that mattered was consequences, we might find appeal in the idea that a perfect forgery has just the same artistic value as the original work' despite the two having been created with completely different intentions (Goldie, 2007 p.378). To be virtuous, we must follow from the Aristotelian view, and conclude that the act would not be virtuous if not carried out with the right intentions (Goldie, 2007).

When applied to the arts, the same expectation exists. This expectation applies to both the acts of production and appreciation, as we would think less of an artist not passionate about their work, and we would not consider a critic's opinions on a work with the same value if it was apparent they were not interested in the work in the first place (Goldie, 2007). Coltrane appears to share this view, and for art to be truly virtuous, the rest of the artist's actions must also reflect this, and he shares the view that art is necessary in, or at least is capable of, improvising the lives of others.

Motivation is therefore the issue. Coltrane's statement that a musician's primary aim 'is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and sense in the universe', indicates that there is a correct or proper motivation necessary for making music (Giddins, 1999, p.490). For Coltrane, art has a purpose. Music's function, which strongly motivated Coltrane, is stated in the liner notes of *A Love Supreme*, 'in gratitude, I humbly ask to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music' (Litweiler, 1985 p.86). While Coltrane's motivation is in part instrumental, in that there is a purpose to the music, this does not prevent it from being virtuous. Instrumental and intrinsic value do not exclude one another (Gracyk, 2012, p.172). We can now examine more closely the specific way in which Coltrane music demonstrated artistic virtue.

In assessing what *kind* of virtue artistic virtue is, there is an important distinction between the artistic and the ethical, and this distinction gives us insight into Coltrane's own beliefs regarding what constitutes 'good' music (Goldie, 2007). It can be argued that 'we will think less' of a person who 'fails on an occasion to do what is required of his ethical virtue', yet we are more sympathetic when the same happens regarding the artistic, that this is a strict quality of ethical virtue (Goldie, 2008, p.181). We expect ethical virtue to be consistent, and for people to express these virtues in all areas of their life rather than as and when they choose. However, this also applies to the artistic virtues, as they also require consistency, and the person displaying artistic virtue must have 'a certain artistic *receptivity*, sensitivity, or openness outside their particular local domain of interest' (Goldie, 2008, p.184). The improvised jazz solo itself can be seen as being dependent on specific virtues to then qualify as being 'good', in particular, 'compositional skill' as well as 'a commitment to the spirit of improvisation' (Love, 2016, p.66).

The earlier examples that include 'imagination, insight, sensibility, vision, creativity' are necessary, and to only use them in a limited capacity prevents the artist's work from displaying



virtue (Goldie, 2007, p.383). If these traits are not used when dealing with art from other domains, then that person is not displaying artistic virtue, even if these are displayed in their own work (Goldie, 2007). Coltrane can be seen to embody artistic virtue in this sense, on account of the relevance of openness to wider artistic influences, and in the stated emphasis on the artistic traits over any stylistic concerns.

As Goldie writes, 'it is, one might say, part of intellectual and artistic virtue to see how different areas of activity connect with each other', and moreover, 'to be open to what is worthwhile outside your area of specialisation' (2008, p.186). This is not to say that musical purists, whether in the jazz tradition or any other, are unable to maintain a virtuous aspect to their work, but as Goldie's parameters make clear, 'it would be a mistake to think that what is worthwhile is restricted to what *you find to be worthwhile*' (2008, p.186). In an interview in 1963, regarding his career so far, Coltrane said, 'I accepted work with all kinds of groups – even if I didn't agree with their musical tenets, because I could learn something while I made a living' (DeVito, 2012, p.199).

As well as receptivity to a variety of styles and forms, there are also standards to which a virtuous artist must hold themselves to. This goes beyond an artist's specific work to broader issues around art, society, and culture, as well as their own development, and is described as the necessity 'to care about what one is engaged in; mere virtuosity of performance is not enough' (Goldie, 2008, p.187). Evidence for this throughout Coltrane's career, and particularly in his free jazz period, is well documented. Other than his repeated statements regarding what he wanted to achieve through his music and the experience he wanted to give to his audiences, he was continuously focused on self improvement and development. The time he spent practising, in combination with the similar stories of Charlie Parker's 'woodshedding', would go on to form a common trope of the jazz musician as insular and obsessive, constantly striving to achieve an impossible standard of musicianship.

Finally, virtue is found in activities involving art-making and art appreciation, thus contributing to human well-being (Goldie, 2007). Through engaging with an artwork, shared experiences occur between audiences and cultures (Goldie, 2007). Coltrane's view of his own work does not specify a particular cultural relevance, and the theistic and reverential qualities that he presents seem centred around an inclusive world view, rather than one directly related to his own beliefs. At a press conference in Tokyo in 1966, Coltrane was asked what he meant when he stated he wanted to express love in his music, and when asked if this was related to a specific religion, Coltrane responded, '...all of them, I think it's the same one, that *one*, that all of them describe' (DeVito, 2012, p.270).

Coltrane can be seen to hold a position in which the intentions and motivations of the artist are essential, and necessary in determining the value of the artwork. To relate this into the wider artistic developments of free jazz in the early 1960s, it is important to consider the increased demand for direct and purposeful engagement with the surrounding social and political climate from commentators, activists, artists associated with the free jazz movement, as well as audiences themselves.

## Conclusions

To quantify the aesthetic changes that occurred between bebop and free jazz, we have examined the increased emphasis on autonomy from rules and institutionalised requirements in the music of John Coltrane.

In examining different methods of expression, we saw that while the human quality that was attributed to Coltrane's unique sound was significant, resemblance is not a full account. We also saw the influence of extramusical associations in constructing identities and associations beyond that desired by the musician. Instead, an account of expression that considered both the artist and the audience and cultural context in the creation and recognition of emotional content via the notion of profundity is useful in understanding how Coltrane's music came to be inherently linked to broader social issues.

The issue of autonomy and the relevance of the art for art's sake doctrine was addressed, concluding that its value in Western modernism was not also found in jazz, as the music had a fundamentally social role that endured throughout its tradition. Finally, we saw that the virtuous quality of Coltrane's music making formed part of the music's aesthetic value, as his music had a fundamental purpose that underlined its development.

In the next chapter, we will see how the influence of the aesthetic qualities we have so far examined influenced Western popular music, and see the comparisons that can be made between the principles of the jazz tradition and other 20th century genres, in the music of Frank Zappa.

## Chapter 6: Frank Zappa and the Influence of the Jazz Aesthetic<sup>20</sup>

So far, we have examined characteristics of the jazz tradition as they are found in the genre itself. For this final case study, we will examine the aesthetics of a popular avant-garde in the music of Frank Zappa, and see how the developments in the jazz tradition influenced other musical genres in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First examining Zappa's aesthetic principles and the music techniques he used to manifest these, this chapter concludes by contextualising these against the aesthetic values of jazz and Western modernism. In conclusion, we see how popular music can be held to embody some of the aesthetic values examined in jazz, demonstrating influence these values have beyond their own genre.

### Music, Elitism, and Expression

Frank Zappa's discography and testimony present a variety of views of the nature of music and its role in Western culture. Often sarcastic, flippant, and contrarian, but underpinned by a highly intellectual and penetrating worldview, Zappa's work presents a challenge when trying to specify any fundamental principles within a musical output that spanned genres with seemingly little value placed on any specific aspect. However, while no single style takes preference over another, as I will show, musical value is found in their final, interconnected totality. The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate some of the artistic values that Zappa held, and demonstrate their relationship to values we have seen in the jazz tradition. The albums given specific attention here are those in which Zappa makes explicit references to or indications toward his own artistic principles.

Zappa's interviews in his co-authored *The Real Frank Zappa Book* lend insight into what he considered important in musical composition, and indicate that there is a universal aesthetic thesis underpinning his discography (1989, p.141):

So, *if music is the best*, what is music? Anything can be music, but it doesn't become music until someone wills it to be music, and the audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music.

This statement, and its emphasis on the role of both the composer *and* the audience in determining something as music, raises the question of how Zappa constructs his own theory of art and artistic value. *The Real Frank Zappa Book* is one of the few texts in which Zappa explicitly details his personal views on music and art, though his views can also be found sporadically elsewhere, such as in interviews and speeches.

For example, the following quote, originally from a 1984 keynote address for the American Society of University Composers makes clear Zappa's condemnation of an elitist view of musical value, suggesting that the appreciation of artworks is a subjective and personal

---

<sup>20</sup> A version of this chapter was published as a paper under the title 'What is Music? Anything can be Music': *Frank Zappa's Theory of Art* in the journal *Popular Music* (Marlow-Stevens, 2022).

experience, rather than one that can be decided and disseminated with any perceived authority. The immediate inference is that 'it represents the work of a self-declared enemy of the establishment-sublime' (Ashby, 1999, p.565). However, it also points toward an aesthetic critique on the purpose of music (Ashby, 1999, p.564):

Ever heard this one before? "Back in the old days, when all the REALLY GOOD MUSIC was being written, composers were TRULY INSPIRED, had a DEEP MEANING in their works, and SUFFERED INTENSE EMOTIONAL DISCOMFORT as these GREAT WORKS were 'BORN'."

Yes, people still believe this kind of stuff. In truth, the situation was pretty much the same then as now (with a few slight variations).

THEN: The composer had to write for the specific tastes (no matter how bad) of THE KING, THE POLITICAL DICTATOR, or THE CHURCH. Failure to do so resulted in unemployment, torture, or death. The public was not consulted. They simply were not equipped to make assessments of relative merit from gavotte to gavotte. If the king couldn't gavotte to it, it had no right to exist.

ALL OF THE SWILL PRODUCED UNDER THESE CONSTRAINTS IS WHAT WE NOW ADMIRE AS "REAL CLASSICAL MUSIC." Forget what it sounds like... forget whether or not you happen to enjoy it... that's how it got made... and when music is taught in schools, it is the "taste norms" of those KINGS, DICTATORS, and CLERICS which are perpetuated in the harmony and counterpoint classes.<sup>21</sup>

Several aesthetic issues are indicated here. First, flippancy toward perceived emotional meaning suggests that Zappa does not view emotion, or at least, a serious emotional response, as an essential component of music, instead being something that is overemphasised. This is perhaps unsurprising, as Zappa's broad use of musical styles coupled with his critique of much of Western society suggests that anything historically seen as valuable, like the institutionalised European musical tradition, would be scrutinised.

This position, however, has some theoretical precedent. Jerold Levinson rejects the necessity for the inclusion of emotional content in the definition of music, as 'some music seems neither the embodiment of a creator's inner state nor a stimulus to emotional response in hearers', but instead 'an abstract configuration of sounds in motion' (2011, p.271). Suggesting that 'music cannot be defined by some special relation to emotional life', Levinson's view seems to correlate with Zappa's critique of the composer's personal emotion in the production of 'good' music (2011, p.271). However, when asked, Zappa appears to believe that it is possible to convey emotion, without direct reference, although he stops short of explaining to what extent these emotions can be experienced. He replies that 'to reach somebody emotionally without using words that have literal connections' is 'quite a challenge', but it is possible 'to perform

---

<sup>21</sup> As Ashby notes, this particularly damning view of classical music may have been emphasised due to that fact that Zappa was addressing, and deliberately 'goading', an audience of composers (Ashby, 1999, p. 601).

expressively on an instrument' (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a). In his view, this is achievable once the musical experience ceases to focus on the physical performance of an instrument, at which point 'you are no longer thinking about operating a piece of machinery and can just project something emotional through the machinery' (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a).

Zappa makes the distinction between emotion as defined above in the musical experience divorced from technical procedure, and emotion in the Adornian sense, as an appeal to pre-existent musical features perceived as eliciting an emotional response (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a):

What I think of as the emotional content of music is probably a lot different than what you think of. Since I write music, I know what the techniques are. If I wanted to write something that would make you weep, I could do it. There's stuff that you stick in there. There's ways to do it. It's a cheap shot.

To appeal to emotion via recognised musical techniques, for Zappa, is easy, insincere, and not a reflection of the actual musical content.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Zappa's sarcastic observation that historically 'the public was not consulted' in what good music was as they 'were not equipped', also indicates that he does not believe that there are any qualifications needed for the appreciation of music (Ashby, 1999, p.564). Levinson argues that there are forms of music that do not require aesthetic attention, and therefore the definition of music cannot include the necessity for such (2011, p.272):

Music for the accompaniment of ritual, music for the intensification of warlike spirit, and music for dancing are all examples of musics whose proper appreciation does not involve contemplative and distanced apprehension of pure patterns of sound, or put otherwise, does not call for specific attention to its beauty or other aesthetic qualities.

This, however, appears to contrast with Zappa's position that music only exists when the 'audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music' (1989, p.141). Whether the decision to listen must always be cognitive, or it can also be a passive or ambient one, Zappa's critique of the idle consumption of mass culture suggests the former, but certainly not an attention only attainable by those privileged enough to have musical training or some special understanding.

In Zappa's view, the judgement of musical merit is open to all, but it does require a particular contemplation. In Levinson's definition, for organised sound to be treated as music there must be some sort of *experience* for the listener. Levinson's conclusion is that music 'is engaged in so that a certain heightening of life, or of consciousness, is attained', finding that 'all sound phenomena that are categorizable as music' lead, or are designed to lead, to 'the enrichment or intensification of experience via engagement with organized sounds' (2011, p.272). If musical expression for Zappa is found once the physical playing of the instrument becomes secondary

---

<sup>22</sup> Asked what specific aspects of a film can make him cry, Zappa responds 'I can literally hate the show and find myself crying because of something that happened in there. And I know that the fact that liquid comes out of my eyes has got nothing to do with reality' (Marshall, 1988)

to the musical experience, then perhaps there is a comparison to be made with Levinson's definition. Zappa seems to share the significance of the 'enrichment or intensification of experience', which for him is achieved beyond 'thinking about operating a piece of machinery' and the musician then subsequently able to 'project something emotional through the machinery' (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a).

While Levinson's definition is convincing, it does not specify beyond 'engagement' an active decision to recognise the organised sound as music, which is what Zappa appears to require. To refer back to the earlier quote, Zappa's initial definition of music is that 'anything can be music' as long as 'someone wills it to be music', and that the audience 'decides to perceive it as music' (1989, p.141). The role of the audience, and the process of viewing and understanding the artwork, is a fundamental aspect. When asked if during composition he is 'guided' by the effect the music would have on a 'listener's spiritual, emotional, intellectual or physical state', or instead 'by the musical structure – melody, harmony and rhythm', Zappa replied (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a):

None of the above. It's more like, how did it turn out. Does it work? And if it works you don't even have to know why it works. It either works or it doesn't work. It's like drawing a picture. Maybe there are too many fingers on one hand, and a foot is too short over there.

In answering the response that these are practical issues instead of aesthetic ones, Zappa, while having initially suggested a somewhat functional motivation in composition, indicates instead a subjective account, arguing that 'if you take a blank piece of paper and a pencil and just start sketching on there, it doesn't necessarily have to be a house and a tree and a cow' (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a). Instead, Zappa describes a personal process in which the value of the artefact rests on the individual's opinion (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a):

It could be just some kind of a scribble, but sometimes those scribbles work and they are the right thing for that blank piece of space, and you can enjoy them. Or you can say, "That's not a house, that's not a cow, that's not a tree, and so I don't like it; it's just a scribble." It depends on what your viewpoint is.

So, while Zappa initially presents a critique on emotion in music, this regards more the socio-historical definition as derived from institutions and tradition, and there is still value in the subjective account of the musical experience, including the personal emotional response of musical taste. Nonetheless, for Zappa, emotional content in music appears as a contingent rather than essential property. If Zappa believes that music exists only when the audience decides to recognise it as such, it is necessary to understand how he confers his music as music, to be interpreted correctly.

### **The 'Frame', the Audience, and Engagement**

To understand music as subjective, qualified by both its creator's intentions and the audience's recognition and agreement, the question remains of how the creator presents their work as art to be viewed appropriately. Zappa suggests that boundaries, or 'The Frame', that he calls 'the

most important thing in art', are essential in the identification of music by an audience, as 'without this humble appliance, you can't know where The Art stops and The Real World begins' (1989, p.140). The significance is one of delineation, like Derrida's *parergon*, the frame 'closes up the artistic work', and 'is made necessary by an internal lack of determinacy in the work, a lack of certainty about where and whether it needs to come to an end' (Hobson, 2002, p.146). In defining what he considered the frame to be, and how it manifests itself, Zappa argues that it is the artist that frames the work, and by then declaring the creation as a work of art, it therefore exists as such, stating "*Take it or leave it, I now will this to be music.*" After that it's a matter of taste' (1989, p.140). The role of the frame in Zappa's artistic philosophy gives an indication of intentionalism, but this is problematic.

Zappa's statements appeal strongly to the intentionalist account, that the work is determined by the artist's intentions, and that essentially music exists on account of its creator's decision; only through understanding the composer's intentions can the work be properly understood. The referential aspect of Zappa's work supports the theory that only through understanding Zappa's intentions can the full content, whether representational, referential, or emotive, of the work be grasped. In the aesthetic sense, in the example of painting, intentions 'appear to determine what one must understand or appreciate in understanding or appreciating the painting as an artwork' (Davies, 1991, p.187). The notion of the frame that Zappa refers to, while not fully endorsing the intentionalist account, can be seen to serve as a way to present external factors, such as category, which can 'restrict the possible range of a work's aesthetically important properties' (Davies, 1991, p.187).

While intentions do not give us a full account of how to approach a work aesthetically, 'external factors' are necessary to then contextualise the other properties of the work (Davies, 1991 p.187). Zappa also values external factors, but stops short of considering them to be autonomous in the designation of music. Zappa appears unconcerned with his role in an audience's interpretation of the work once finished and framed, but maintains its importance in the conferring of status as music. The intentionalist account fails as intentions alone do not determine the many ways an artwork can be interpreted, and this approach ignores the various conventions through which an artwork can be understood, such as artistic category, as a work may fall into several (Davies, 1991, p.205). Zappa can be held to share this view as suggested by his emphasis on the audience's account of musical experience, and that 'the audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music' (1989, p.141). Zappa values intention, and the process of representing the way in which a work should be viewed, but his account does not fully endorse intentionalism.

While it may be significant, the notion of personal circumstances specifically elucidating artistic content is dismissed entirely, with Zappa stating that 'the part of me that people should be most interested in, if they have any interest in me at all, is what I do. Not how I do it, or who I am, or whatever' (Marshall, 1988). Zappa believes that it is inconsequential, and not the reason people engage in artistic products, stating that 'you have to understand the way in which people voluntarily decide to consume something', arguing it 'has more to do with their own orientation than it has to do with the concept or the conception of the person who made the object', and

even if his intentions or circumstances were relevant, 'what I put into the things that I make has little or nothing to do with the way in which people consume them' (Marshall, 1988). Therefore, Zappa's aesthetic thesis is better understood through the subjective experience, in which the artist's framing and designation of a work has significance, but so too does the reception by an audience in qualifying and attributing value to the work.

Zappa's view echoes Arnold Berleant's aesthetic theory of engagement, in that 'the painting must be seen to be appreciated', and that 'without being engaged in experience, it is merely a physical object' (2017, p.136). Zappa's position is comparable in that the music must be heard and experienced for it to then be called music, and in his requirement that 'the audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music' (1989, p.141). Berleant's theory is defined by the 'activation of art in appreciative experience rather than by distancing oneself through disinterested contemplation' (2017, p.135). It seems to be necessary for Zappa that there is an active engagement with the work from both the creator and the audience, and there must be an agreement on both sides that what is being experienced, is music.<sup>23</sup> However, an issue arises when examining Berleant's theory of how music is constructed. He argues that 'the efforts of some aestheticians to ontologize music', particularly the construction of music 'into an object that can be appreciated and judged', is erroneous (2017, p.135). Instead, Berleant argues that a 'musical event offers a distinctive context' and the understanding and appreciation of 'identity, style, originality, and the like must be clarified with reference to the entire field' (2017, p.131). In other words, Berleant rejects aestheticism, claiming that 'musical sound is embedded in the occasion, in the many-faceted experience of active listening' (2017, p.135).

While Zappa appears to share a similar view, to fully apply Berleant's **theory** is difficult. There is some prima facie evidence that Zappa views music as an object rather than as an experience, in that once created, it is for an audience to decide its value, as stating "Take it or leave it, I now will this to be music." After that it's a matter of taste', does not provide a relativistic determination to Zappa's theory, seeming to suggest that it can be assessed aesthetically on its own merit (1989, p.140). On the other hand, there are several indications that Zappa also rejects any aestheticism, in his critique of the objective musical artifact over the subjective musical experience expressed in the earlier quote on perceived historical value of classical music, writing 'forget what it sounds like... forget whether or not you happen to enjoy it' (Ashby, 1999, p.564). Furthermore, when asked about any objective claim to value, Zappa dismisses this entirely (Lyons, S. and Friedman, B, 1987b):

**Is your view truly as subjective as you are painting it to be? So, if I look at an image and it appeals to me, then all I can say is that it works for me and I can't say any more about it.**

What else do you have the right to say? If you go beyond that, you become a critic. Who needs those fuckers.

---

<sup>23</sup> In a 1978 interview Zappa, on the subject of his audience, stated 'They are part of the act. They're the reason why we're there' (Miles, 1993, p.50).



Zappa goes on to qualify this with a culturally relativistic position that musical value is not a universal phenomenon, observing that 'in different cultures there are also different norms for how certain sound combinations are perceived' (Lyons, S. and Friedman, B, 1987a). When asked about an objective account of music that he agrees with, Zappa's response interprets objectivity as the physical nature of sound, rather than in regards to aesthetics. Further to this, when asked about the meaning of 'music' on the album notes of Joe's Garage that read, 'Information is not knowledge, Knowledge is not wisdom, Wisdom is not truth, Truth is not beauty, Beauty is not love, Love is not music, and Music is THE BEST', Zappa replies that it refers to 'whatever you happen to think music is' (Marshall, 1988).<sup>24</sup>

So, if Zappa's account of musical value is based entirely on subjective response, then how does he convey qualities in a way that is generally accessible to an audience? In other words, does Zappa achieve any universally agreeable content, such as emotion, if he discounts historic conventions and objective artistic value? To answer this, we can now examine how Zappa's theory of art manifests itself through his musical techniques.

### **Conceptual Continuity and the Project/Object**

Conceptual Continuity is the name Zappa gave to the recurring themes and motifs throughout not only his music, but all creative material he was involved in. The 'Project/Object' formed part of this idiom, in that 'each project (in whatever realm), or interview connected to it, is part of a larger object, for which there is no 'technical name' (1989, p.139). The reasoning and motive behind this approach is in part to form a narrative arc with returning, identifiable features (1989, p.139):

Think of the connecting material in the Project/Object this way: A novelist invents a character. If the character is a good one, he takes on a life of his own. Why should he get to go to only one party? He could pop up anytime in a future novel.

The phrase Project/Object, and the indicated distinction between the work and its wider context, can be seen as evidence that Zappa considers 'individual works of art as being in a constant state of development', forming the crux of the Project/Object notion (Carr, 2013a, p.8). Zappa also used the Project/Object approach to determine a consistent style, comparing it to the recurrent use of specific colours by painters, writing that 'Rembrandt got his 'look' by mixing just a little brown into every other color -- he didn't do 'red' unless it had brown in it' (1989, p.140). The emphasis, and the intrinsic value, is that while the individual parts may not have significance when isolated, their totality presents an arc through which to understand the artists overall creative output, in that 'the brown itself wasn't especially fascinating, but the result of its obsessive inclusion was that 'look' (1989, p.140). Zappa states rather simply that lyrics, as well as 'pictorial images and melodic themes, recur throughout the albums, interviews, films, videos

---

<sup>24</sup> This quote is also said by the character Mary on the track 'Packard Goose' and, as Kevin Seal notes, is a reworking of John Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, and 'may be the closest Frank Zappa ever came to a statement of his spiritual philosophy' (2013, p.55)

(and this book) for no other reason than to unify the 'collection' (1989, p.140). While that may be the sole motivation for this approach, the effect is more complex.

If we consider the theory of engagement, locating the musical experience in its wider context results in the aesthetic experience of features such as 'identity, style, originality' being subsequently 'clarified with reference to the entire field' (Berleant, 2017, p.131). Conceptual Continuity functions as a way to contextualise the material Zappa presents, and relate it to other themes and motifs. One example is the premise of the 'Utility Muffin Research Kitchen', which is a frequent reference in his discography. It is mentioned in the introduction of 'Muffin Man' as the workplace of the Muffin Man on *Bongo Fury* (1975), the same place the protagonist Joe ends up working on the final track of *Joe's Garage Acts II & III*, 'Little Green Rosetta' (1979). In 1980, Zappa finished building his home studio, which was named the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen (Ruhlmann, 1997, p.33). Not only does Conceptual Continuity operate within Zappa's work, it is also itself drawn attention to. On the song 'Stink Foot', Zappa breaks the fourth wall by referring directly to Conceptual Continuity in the lyrics (1974).<sup>25</sup> Returning to Zappa's comparison with characters in a novel, the effect of this technique is that it creates a fictional world, one that spans Zappa's entire creative output.

In terms of the dialogic consequence of Conceptual Continuity, there is a similarity with the ontology of jazz standards as instances of nodes in a network. As we have examined, this network results in different versions of existing works being performed, and thus establishing new features and excluding others (Kane, 2018). Each performance, and its use of identifying musical material, informs the listening of instances of a work past, present, and future., creating a network of versions (Kane, 2018).<sup>26</sup> While not a jazz musician, interestingly, the first track Zappa ever recorded in a studio, 'Never On Sunday', later known as 'Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance', was a jazz style piece using session musicians (Wills, 2015, p.16), and he frequently referred to the genre throughout his career (not least on his 1991 album *Make a Jazz Noise Here*). In Zappa's work, identifying his self-referentiality and contextualising it amongst his wider creative output generates a recognition and appreciation of both the specific musical content of a given recording, and its wider meaning as informed by other uses. Only through actively engaging with Zappa's discography can the inter-related material be understood.

So, while valuing the subjective musical experience, Zappa presents the mode of listening to the audience, indicating and encouraging the *right* way to listen. The album notes of *Lumpy Gravy* go as far as giving instructions, such as 'NOTE: listen to side one first' and beneath, 'AND TURN IT ALL THE WAY UP!!', and James Borders suggests that through this, the norms and traditions of classical performances and their strict discipline are 'demanded, if simultaneously lampooned' (2001, p.128). Conceptual Continuity can also be seen as an extension of

---

<sup>25</sup> The two 1967 recordings *Lumpy Gravy* and *We're Only In It For The Money* share continuity between them, directly referenced in the posthumous compilation of the two, *The Lumpy Money Project/Object* (2008).

<sup>26</sup> While not a jazz musician, interestingly, the first track Zappa ever recorded in a studio, 'Never On Sunday', later known as 'Take Your Clothes Off When You Dance', was a jazz style piece using session musicians (Wills, 2015, p.16), and he frequently referred to the genre throughout his career (not least on his 1991 album *Make a Jazz Noise Here*).

Zappa's philosophy beyond music, with parallels to physics and the work of Stephen Hawking, of whom Zappa was a great enthusiast<sup>27</sup>, suggesting that through 'linking every piece he composed into an endlessly self-referential and edgeless fabric, Zappa expressed his theory that all events in time happen simultaneously' (Seal, 2013, p.65). The remaining question is how this referential approach contributes toward the expressive aspect of Zappa's work, and how the premise of engagement supports this.

### Referentiality and Expression

Frank Zappa's incorporation of a wide variety of musical styles forms the crux of the interpretation of his work as postmodern (Gioia, 2011). However, to use these elements in a referential manner, in that they form part of a wider musical system of representation and expression, suggests a more nuanced reality, and a recognition of the distinction that 'both embodied and referential affect constitute musical meaning in the sense of being emotionally expressive', and therefore standing 'in contrast with postmodern forms of musical borrowing' (Manuel, 1995, p.232).<sup>28</sup> Zappa's chaotic blurring of influences and subject matter functions as a constant critique of musical norms, and through this, 'established cultures are at the same time imitated and taken apart' (Ashby, 1999, p.559).<sup>29</sup> The rejection of stylistic constants, and to draw from a wide variety of genres, in Zappa's use of the orchestra, 'refuses the beautiful sounds and particular "positive solutions" of nineteenth-century European romanticism', and Ashby draws this comparison with Schoenberg and his contemporaries' 'anti-fetishism', and the conclusion that Zappa's work can be interpreted as modernist (1999, p.564). Almost all of Zappa's work can be read as a direct appeal to the recognition and contextualisation of musical material, and we can explore how this creates aesthetic value rather than rejecting it.

The first issue to be examined is Zappa's use of mimesis, or imitation, in which sounds are introduced within his compositions that directly reference reality. Ranging in complexity, there are numerous examples of this in Zappa's music, both in a general as well as direct sense. In terms of general reference, on the track 'I'm A Beautiful Guy', from *You Are What You Is*, the lyrics detail in the first person a vain, self-involved man who is talking to a woman to whom he is attracted. Initially a distorted guitar in a minor key leads the song, until the lyrics "Cause you want to try, try, try, some stupid game on me" are sung (1981). As this happens, the instrumentation changes to a synthesiser playing a chord sequence in a major key, parodying a game show theme song. The emphasis is on the word 'game', and the reference combines the vanity of the young man and the imagery of the shallow pop-culture game show format. Similarly, 'Don't Eat the Yellow Snow' from *Apostrophe (')*, also uses this technique, with various sound effects enhancing the lyrics, such as blowing wind and percussive effects (1974). This

---

<sup>27</sup> Zappa dedicates *The Real Frank Zappa Book* to, amongst a few others, Stephen Hawking (Seal, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> James Borders also uses Manuel's criteria for postmodernism in analysing Zappa, finding that his 'early work in no way anticipates the ahistoricity, ironic detachment, and playful depthlessness characteristic of postmodern quotation' (2001, p.120).

<sup>29</sup> On modern music, John Cage writes, 'It goes without saying that dissonances and noises are welcome in this new music. But so is the dominant seventh chord if it happens to put in an appearance' (1968, p.11).

referencing goes beyond his own work and themes, directly bringing other works into his own fictional world. On the following track, 'Nanook Rubs It', a trumpet quotes the jazz standard 'Midnight Sun' when a disreputable fur-trapper/businessman, who is 'strictly from commercial' appears in the narrative (Wills, 2015, p.21).<sup>30</sup> Direct musical quoting is used, at times, even more obviously.

The track 'Greggory Peccary' on *Studio Tan* (1978) uses the main motif from the track 'Chameleon' from Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters*, an extremely popular jazz-fusion album (1973). The motif is played when the protagonist Greggory is followed by what the lyrics describe as 'slowly ageing, very hip young people' (1978), a reference to Zappa's view of the fans of modern jazz. On the instrumental 'Variations on the Carlos Santana Secret Chord Progression' from *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar Some More* (1981), the chord progression played is an i – IV chord progression, from G minor 7<sup>th</sup> to C dominant 7<sup>th</sup>, which features regularly in Santana's music, perhaps most famously on the *Abraxas* track 'Oye Como Va' (1971). On Zappa's recording, in contrast to the track's title, the only variation is rhythmic, with the entire piece made up of the two chords, and while initially improvising in the Dorian mode, this descends into more dissonant playing, with out of tune bends, feedback, and increasingly fast and sporadic phrasing. Using music to directly critique other musicians had a real world impact, and Carlos Santana said that at first he 'felt like it was a put-down', although he later found it humorous (Noble, 1995).

These examples demonstrate direct appeals to the consciousness of the audience, asking them to understand the reference in relation to the music. They do not, however, fully account for the expressive capacity of Zappa's music. Instead their use is more akin to a resemblance theory, where meaning is founded in analogy or resemblance between a piece of music and a state of mind', and therefore reduces expression to resemblance (Scruton, 1997, p.146). This is applicable to the music of Zappa, as he deliberately references other works, including his own, to bring forth and combine existing concepts or themes in the mind of the listener. The significance of this distinction when applied to Zappa's referentiality is that it separates representation from expression, and is instead based on what Scruton calls the 'sounds like' relation' (1997, p.147). Much of what is considered expressive in music is the use of techniques and features that are reused by composers, and as we have already seen, Zappa states, 'There's stuff that you stick in there. There's ways to do it. It's a cheap shot' (Lyons, S. and Friedman, B, 1987a).<sup>31</sup> Zappa can also be held to use this in the Adornian sense, in the 'manipulation of musical materials' in order to deliberately 'engage and indeed to render problematic their conventional usage' (Leppert, 2005, p.105). However, Adorno's ideal consequence, in which 'convention is denaturalized, returned to history, and rendered profoundly social', and ultimately, 'releases its claim to the transcendental', does not appear to concern Zappa (Leppert, 2005, p.105).

<sup>30</sup> The phrase 'commercial' and the image of the faceless businessman are part of a reoccurring representation of the music industry throughout Zappa's discography, thought to stem from being told his music had 'no commercial potential', such the tale of adolescent music making on 'Joe's Garage', in which the characters are ultimately offered a music deal by 'a guy from a company we can't name' (1979).

<sup>31</sup> This echoes Hanslick, who critiqued emotion in music, and held the view that musical material 'is not purely natural, raw material, but is historical' (Paddison, 2001, p.336).

As Zappa's use of musical reference demonstrates, material constitutes meaning and affords some expressive capacity, however, while an enduring element of his compositions, this does not explain the mode of expression when the musical material is entirely original. Zappa's earlier dismissal of emotion in music echoes Plato's critique of drama, in that an appeal to the emotions is imitation, and avoids engagement with the mind (Carroll, 1999). However, there are still cases in which Zappa seems to be expressing something. If Zappa believes that valuable musical expression is found when 'you are no longer thinking about operating a piece of machinery and can just project something emotional through the machinery', then it seems likely that the best place to look for this is in his instrumental compositions (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a).

### **Expression, Xenochrony, and Impossibility**

One example of apparent emotional expression in Zappa's discography is the famous track 'Black Napkins' (1976), a four minute long guitar-led piece, comprised largely of improvisation. It certainly contains an expressive element, with an overdriven guitar lead backed by frenetic drums, and more gentle keyboards and bass in 6/8 time. Ben Watson writes that the title refers to Zappa and his band being served black napkins alongside Thanksgiving dinner in Japan, and suggests that the intensity of the track emulates 'a western notion of Japanese extremity' in post-war American culture (1995, p.302). While this may be the inspiration for the track, it must be impossible to express in lyricless music to an audience unaware of the story. However, Watson's further observations help to understand one format of expression in Zappa's music.

Another track on *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More* (1981) features a piece titled 'Pink Napkins', which is an improvised variation of 'Black Napkins'. Watson notes that the use of 'Pink' instead of 'Black' is in reference to what he calls 'its sound-world' (1995, p.414). Watson is referring to the style, as instead of overdriven guitar and rapid drum fills, the guitar is clean and modulated, providing a shimmering sound, and the drums are played with a much softer and reserved feel. While 'Pink' and 'Black' are not emotions in themselves, there is a notion here of using these colours and a particular instrumentation and style to refer to *an* expression.

One theory through which we can examine the effect of Conceptual Continuity, and musical expression, is Kendall Walton's, in which, by inducing the use of the imagination, pieces of music are able to create 'fictional worlds' (1994). The reason this theory is applicable is because it returns us to the subjective necessity of music that Zappa has highlighted. It is through these 'fictional worlds', Walton argues, that music achieves a provocation of the imagination, and it is through this provocation that the listener experiences the emotion, rather than just its expression (1994, p.55):

This accords with the idea that music sometimes portrays anguish, not by portraying behavioural expressions of anguish but more directly, and also with the thought that our (fictional) access to what is portrayed is not perceptual – we imagine introspecting or simply experiencing the feelings, rather than perceiving someone's expressing them.

In other words, the phenomenon that can occur is music's being able to induce an emotional response within the listener, rather than just the recognition of the portrayal of an emotion. As a result, an emotion can be experienced without the listener necessarily understanding its presentation, and therefore 'even when there is no definite character in music', the listener can still discern a particular emotional content (Walton, 1994, p.58). The important nuance of Walton's theory is that music can provoke 'feeling in certain ways', in that is not necessarily a specific feeling, but some sort of emotional response (1994, p.55). In combination with the theory of engagement, through a contemplation of not only the presented work, but by situating it within Zappa's discography as a whole, expressive themes can be elucidated. The constant manipulation of material, as we have seen in the case of 'Black Napkins', presents not a finished article, but instead, through reworking and revision in performance and recording, a transient and multifaceted product, with different iterations revealing different expressive contents.

Another technique, the examination of which may go some way to explaining this thesis, is what Zappa termed 'Xenochrony', which translates as 'alien time'. This was his practice of taking a guitar solo recording from one track and dubbing it onto another, which he began experimenting with in around 1971 (Ruhlmann, 1997, p.47). This has the effect of what Watson calls a 'spacious, delayed metrical scheme' (1997, p.183). Watson writes that this had a 'liberating effect', a 'freedom from human control', and 'the possibility of undreamed-of combinations' (1995, p.304).<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Zappa himself said that its purpose was to achieve musical results that would not be possible live, as the limitations of complexity would prevent 'a good performance' (Marshall, 1988). Instead of following any formal method that would fulfil usual expectation, Zappa would attempt to create the least likely or least predictable result, and through Xenochrony, even though all the parts used are of his own composition, the final musical work will take on an unpredicted form, even for him. There is a comparison to be made between Zappa's Xenochrony and that of the New Complexity school, originating in the 1980s. New Complexity composers sought not to define a specific method of composition, but to instead, quoting Brian Ferneyhough, achieve authenticity through recognising 'the endless continuum of complexity uniting all things' (Toop, 2010, p.91). As the aim of the New Complexity school was to push the boundaries of composition, they were subsequently aware of its limitations (Toop, 2010, p.91):

One can, perhaps, detect a certain fatalistic tendency in this conception of complexity. In terms of both performance and perception, it is well aware that its voyages begin at the limits of possibility, and that its hope of transcendence is fragile.

To relate this approach to Zappa, as we have seen, he sought to push the boundaries of not only composition, but also of live performance and the normative musical experience.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> While noting the similarity between this and the avoidance of strict meter by free jazz musicians, Watson states that 'there was always a point where the musicians sought to resolve their meters', while Zappa does not (1997, p.183).

<sup>33</sup> Delville and Norris identify a 'maximalist fold' in Zappa's music, particularly in the composition 'The Girl In The Magnesium Dress' from *The Perfect Stranger*, through the 'infinite polyphonies of the piece',

Xenochrony, and the editing process itself, particularly the use of musique concrète such as on *Lumpy Gravy* (1967), can be seen as ‘a kind of immanent critique, to do with the traditional aesthetic limits of the musical worlds in which Zappa operated’ (Gardner, 2013 p.73). This is certainly in keeping with Zappa’s pessimistic observations of mass culture, with Zappa knowing he cannot escape mass culture, and perhaps not wishing to. Instead, the aim is to draw attention to it, to critique society from inside, and subvert any expectations or requirements placed on him or his music. Further to this, however, Zappa’s editing, including Xenochrony, has a deeper effect on the musical experience, which brings us to the final technique examined here, that can be termed ‘impossibility’.

Throughout his recordings, Zappa uses extremely complicated musical composition and arrangement, and there is evidence for motivation beyond a mere interest in complexity. The most well-known of these is ‘The Black Page’, originally for solo percussion, with the earliest version recorded in 1976 and released on *Zappa In New York* (1978). One interpretation is that the monumental complexity of the piece ‘posits unplayability as an aesthetic strength’, perhaps suggesting an ironic comment on over-composed music (Durkin, 2014, p.228). However, it also raises the question of how, if engagement is what defines the musical experience for Zappa, an impossible work can be engaged with. An aesthetic of impossibility in music suggests that any intended meaning is to be considered beyond the aural experience. Durkin suggests that with complex notation and scores, the objective is to present a statement through the visual medium alone, arguing that ‘because the work demands to be considered, at least in part, as text, perhaps one does not even need to actually hear the music to “get it”’ (2014, p.229). Another example of this is guitarist Steve Vai’s audition for Zappa’s band, who recalls how Zappa asked him to play increasingly complicated technical exercises until they were physically impossible, and then mocked him (2011). Vai was subsequently given a place in the band, so perhaps this was simply Zappa challenging Vai, but nonetheless it certainly suggests an interest in the physical boundaries of music. However, in the case of these two examples, they are not actually impossible, and while exceptionally complicated, Zappa requests that they are realised. Requiring serious musicianship and preparation, they still provide an aural experience, and so instead of impossible, a better term would perhaps be ‘improbable’ or ‘unlikely’. There is shared similarity with Xenochrony as the final result is one that challenges musical expectations, with Zappa deliberately drawing attention to this, for example, whilst on tour in 1978, inviting members of the audience to dance on stage during the performance of ‘The Black Page’ (Watson, 1995, p.334).

As we have seen through our examination of Zappa’s testimony, he treats the identification of music as a subjective event, in both its creation and reception. The composer ‘wills’ the music into existence, and the listener decides whether what is being heard is music (1989, p.141). The existence of works like the ‘The Black Page’ initially suggests, as Durkin argues that ‘one does not even need to actually hear the music to “get it”’ (2014, p.229). However, in *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, Zappa emphasises the role of the aural experience of music (1989, p.161):

---

‘irregular rhythmic groupings’, and ‘overall absence of symmetry’ (2007, p.132). This, however, is not consistent throughout his compositions.

When someone writes a piece of music, what he or she puts on the paper is **roughly the equivalent of a recipe** -- in the sense that **the recipe is not the food, only instructions for the preparation of the food**. Unless you are very weird, you don't eat the recipe. If I write something on a piece of paper, I can't *actually* 'hear' it. I can conjure up visions of what the symbols on the page **mean**, and imagine a piece of music as it might sound in performance, but **that sensation is nontransferable; it can't be shared or transmitted**. It doesn't become a 'musical experience' in normal terms until 'the recipe' has been converted into **wiggling air molecules**.

Again, we see the emphasis on the musical experience over the musical artifact. For Zappa, there must be an attempt to realise the score, to provide an aural experience to then be understood by the listener. In combining recordings of live and studio performances, Zappa was able to create 'an illusion of what appears to be an impossible display of musicianship', which consequently 'engages the listener in the dual process of immediacy and hypermediacy', and it is the realisation of these seemingly impossible creations which is key to the appreciation of the music (Carr, 2013b, p.138). So, again, perhaps Zappa's impossibility is better understood as an interest in musical boundaries and the unexpected, unexplored, and unlikely musical phenomena.

If we consider Levinson's attempt to define music, and his conclusion that phenomena that qualify as music are in some way 'aimed at the *enrichment or intensification of experience* via engagement with organized sounds' (2011, p.272). Zappa's above statement in conjunction with the music techniques we have examined indicate that he shares a similar view. If these techniques are to afford the work an expressive capacity, it seems that Zappa's expression is rooted in his reuse of material, the subversion of expectation in both recording and performance, via once having created the work, reshaping it, and constructing a continuous and constantly changing world. The links that Conceptual Continuity provides offer strands through which themes and motifs can be traced, and ultimately, meaning is achieved through the overall network this creates each.

To use again the example of the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen, if only one of its uses is known, it provides little information. But once understood in relation to his wider material, it takes on meaning, as the workplace of the sinister Muffin Man, the factory where Joe ends up working as his dream of being a musician fails, and Zappa's own place of musical creation. To use the example of Xenochrony, Carr argues it 'invites the listener to consider how seemingly immediate-sounding performances are in fact mediated, and more importantly how these events are made real', therefore asking the audience to consider the manipulation of time and space inherent in the technique (2013b, p.138). As Carr writes, alongside Zappa's desire to experiment with techniques that subvert the expect musical experience, and how he seemingly 'opposes realism', he also incorporates real world topics and narratives in his work, and 'is at least equally preoccupied with providing a mimetic and truthful account of the world as he perceived it' (2013b, p.143). Thus, an emotional content is present, as the listener engages with their knowledge of Zappa's music and its surrounding context, and is able to make the links that he is



suggesting.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with Walton's theory, Zappa's music encourages a provocation of the imagination, and for the listener, a central part of the experience of his music is to engage with the 'fictional world' that he creates.

### Zappa's Social Critique and the Role of Music

One remaining problem with Zappa's own aesthetic thesis as we have so far examined it is that he simultaneously places value on audience reception in qualifying music, but was a well-known critic of mass culture. We are left with the question of how Zappa locates the audience's appreciation of his work, whether he requires any existing musical experience or knowledge, and if there are any factors which discount certain individuals' opinion. In stating that music exists when 'the audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music', Zappa appears to refer beyond individual opinion to some variation of a consensus (1989, p.141). Further to this, as we have seen, he was critical of objective definitions of music, particularly ones derived from any institutional hierarchy (Ashby, 1999).

Zappa routinely condemned and criticised popular culture, and categorising him is problematic. David Wragg suggests that Zappa's music exists in two conflicting spheres, arguing that there is a duality in the latter's position as an avant-gardist, but one who wanted to entertain and reject the bourgeois category of 'serious' music (2001, p.209):

Since Zappa does, in fact, identify the operations of the capitalist market place in a way which is roughly comparable with Adorno, we are faced with the problem of how his identification *with* the culture industry allows him to stake out a critical position on popular music from *within* its limitations as 'entertainment'.<sup>35</sup>

In general terms, the culture industry restricts art through standardisation, and as a result, that which succeeds in the marketplace must conform to predetermined rules, and 'must already have been handled, manipulated and approved by hundreds of thousands of people before anyone can enjoy it' (Adorno, 1991, p.67).<sup>36</sup> Adorno's critique of the culture industry argues that the fundamental motivation of any product is its economic success. One example of Zappa's rejection of this motivation is his third album with The Mothers Of Invention, *We're Only In It For The Money* (1968), with the title immediately drawing attention to, and foregrounding a critique of, the financial rather than artistic motivations of the music industry. As well as critiquing the music industry in his lyrics, the album cover for *We're Only In It For The Money* Zappa deliberately parodied the Beatles. However, rather than simply mocking popular culture, this reference is more specific, with Watson suggesting that Zappa's dislike of the Beatles was due

<sup>34</sup> In the case of Zappa's use of parody, Schmalenberger emphasises the role of the informed audience in understanding and contextualising the complex references, indicating Zappa's 'intimate collaboration with his audience' (2018, p.22).

<sup>35</sup> This position, and its negation of Adorno's, is also examined by Watson, who argues that an attempt to keep 'a critical consciousness alive in the marketplace', as 'an explicit degradation amidst the graded racks of available product', is impossible for Adorno (1995, p.45). Nonetheless, as Wragg suggests, 'Zappa can be held to go along with Adorno's view on "entertainment"' (2001, p.214).

<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between Zappa's music and critical theory see Ben Watson's *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* (1995).

to 'their adoption of the raggle-taggle bohemianism of San Francisco flower power', instead of a general attack on mass culture (1995, p.21). Zappa's view seems to have room for the opinions of the general public in the designation and appreciation of music, as his main critique is based more on the culture industry and those engaged in it, as his disdain for The Beatles is caused by their appeal to the popular trends of the time.<sup>37</sup>

If we take Adorno's view that products find their place within mass culture through conforming to predetermined standards, Zappa clearly subverts this through his use of conflicting musical genres, imagery such as the Sgt. Pepper's parody, and the techniques we have identified such as Xenochrony and 'impossibility', which question and challenge the identification of musical material. If Zappa locates the musical experience socially, emphasising public opinion and dismissing any preordained or inherent value, then the existence and 'activation of art in appreciative experience' appears satisfactory in appraising Zappa's aesthetic thesis (Berleant, 2017, p.135). However, while Berleant's theory elucidates the notion of engagement as validating the work, Zappa maintains the importance of *audience* reception, beyond that of the individual.

There is also an issue regarding where Zappa locates value in the musical experience. If we consider the cognitivist view, 'that the artworld makes an indispensable contribution to processes of discovery, thinking, and learning', Zappa's statements provide conflicting accounts (Gracyk, 2012, p.180). On one hand, Zappa's critique of 'REALLY GOOD MUSIC' from a period when 'composers were TRULY INSPIRED' and their music 'had a DEEP MEANING' indicates that in his view, it is the musical experience itself that is valuable, without reference to or need for any wider considerations (Ashby, 1999, p.564). When asked about the purpose of music in society, and Berkeley Symphony conductor Kent Nagano's view that 'that the public is employing the composer to lead them, to show them a direction', Zappa replied, 'I don't think a composer has any function in society at all, especially in an industrial society', then adding sarcastically, 'all the good music's already been written by people with wigs and stuff on' (Lyons and Friedman, 1987b). In keeping with his fatalistic view of mass culture, Zappa goes on to critique emotion as primarily a marketable feature of music in the culture industry (Lyons and Friedman, 1987a):

The performers and composers don't necessarily believe in what they're saying or what they're doing, but they know that if you write a song about love, it's got a 3000 percent better chance of going on the radio than if you write a song about celery. It's a buy and sell. And so the value system builds up from that.

Asked directly about the value of music, and if he would 'define the word "art" as a sensory training for common-sense perceptions', Zappa replies, 'I think the word "art" has been pretty much flogged into porridge' (Marshall, 1988). He goes on to state that 'I don't think that training

---

<sup>37</sup> While Zappa appears critical of the Beatles in this instance, Costa suggests that there are similarities between the later albums Beatles' *White Album* and Zappa's *Cruising with Ruben & the Jets* in that they both make 'references to older popular-music repertoires', demonstrating a 'developed consciousness of its own tradition' (2020, p.184).

people to consume art in that sense makes them any more sensitive, or more highly developed or refined in any way', though the distinction is that Zappa is referring to the contemporary art industry (Marshall, 1988).

However, while any inherent moral or emotional value in music seems at odds with Zappa's aesthetic philosophy, this does not exhaust the cognitivist account. In fact, in the same interview, Zappa agrees that he does aim his music at an audience, considering whether its content will be understood, and being aware that there are limitations to what can be conveyed to an audience, explaining that he must 'conjure up in my brain an imaginary picture of who the guy is, how smart he is, how many references he might have that I can make through metaphorical references in a work' (Marshall, 1988). In doing this, Zappa approaches these limitations and asks whether the implicit message will be understood, and if not, 'should it go in there anyway or should I change it and say it blunt' (Marshall, 1988). Zappa recognises that the subjective reading of the music prevents total understanding, and that 'in order for them to get it all they have to know what I know', concluding that 'nobody gets 100% but if anybody ever got 60%, they'd be in big trouble' (Marshall, 1988).

For example, we can consider the three acts of *Joe's Garage*, released in separate parts as *Act I* and *Act II & III* in 1979, and its use of a narrator in the character of The Central Scrutinizer. The opening track on *Joe's Garage Act I* is named after this character, who is introduced as a bureaucratic governmental machine that warns against the dangers of popular music, giving a speech detailing its role throughout the album (1979):

I bring you now a special presentation  
To show what can happen to you  
If you choose a career in music

Throughout the album, The Central Scrutinizer returns periodically to narrate the story of the main character Joe, painting a dystopian picture of a society in which music leads to moral corruption. At the close of *Act 1*, the Scrutinizer refers to Joe's story as an example of the dangers of rock and roll and youth culture (1979):

Joe says Lucille has messed his mind up  
But, was it the girl or was it the music?  
As you can see... girls, music, disease, heartbreak  
They all go together...

If the story of Joe is considered, Zappa is clearly referencing the issue of government censorship spurred on by moral panic regarding the themes of popular music. Six years after the album's release, Zappa testified at the Parents' Music Resource Center senate hearing on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1985, arguing against their proposal that parents' groups could determine records as explicit, and Zappa would use audio samples from the hearing on the track 'Porn Wars' from the album *Frank Zappa Meets The Mothers Of Prevention*, with the album title also being a reference to the PMRC (1985). So, Zappa indicates a non-cognitive view of musical

appreciation, emphasising the subjective experience of music in stating that ‘anything can be music’ as long as ‘the audience listening to it decides to perceive it as music’, providing no necessity for cognitive value within the aesthetic experience, but *Joe’s Garage* seems to challenge this (1989, p.141).

However, later, on the opening of ‘Watermelon In Easter Hay’, while continuing to narrate, The Central Scrutinizer begins to laugh, breaking character. At last, on the final track, ‘A Little Green Rosetta’, The Central Scrutinizer reveals himself to be Frank Zappa, by removing the vocal effects (1979):

And if this doesn't convince you that music causes big trouble  
Then maybe I should turn off my plastic megaphone  
And sing the last song on the album in my regular voice

Zappa deliberately exposes his position as narrator, and as the track continues, Zappa talks directly to the audience, and to other band members. The effect is similar to that of the close of a theatre performance, where the actors return to the stage to receive applause, removing any illusion that what just occurred was anything more than a story. This subversion of narrative structure certainly reflects Arthur Danto’s statement that narrative no longer has an ‘active role to play in the production of contemporary art’, who states that contemporary art ‘is produced in an art world unstructured by any master narrative at all’ (1997, p.48).<sup>38</sup> However, while at the close of *Joe’s Garage* the warnings of the Central Scrutinizer and the story of Joe are finally shown as meaningless and irrelevant as the illusion collapses, there is still a ‘master narrative’ of critique, related to real world issues, which negates the applicability of the postmodern account of narrative (Danto, 1997, p.48). Zappa’s discography continuously refers beyond itself, encouraging the recognition of what Zappa himself calls the ‘journalistic aspect’ (Marshall, 1988). This aspect, however, while present, is not essential in the appreciation of music, with Zappa again echoing pessimism toward modern society stating ‘that if a person is truly intelligent, then they’re going to find their own way, and they don’t need me to tell them what to do’, and the messages in his music aimed at those ‘who are just teetering on the brink of being consciously intelligent, who will opt for it’ (Marshall, 1988). Therefore Zappa seems uncommitted to either account of aesthetic value. His position is instead pluralistic; music maintains a significant cognitive function, or at least has the capacity to, but that this is not an essential function for its appreciation.

## Conclusions

While the influence of 20<sup>th</sup> century Western modernism on Zappa’s music is well stated, as shown, several of his artistic values are comparable to those of jazz musicians, and throughout Zappa’s career he embodied several artistic principles that we can relate to our assessment of jazz. Similar to the way that Coltrane wished to “give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of”, Zappa also places value on the communicative aspect of his music (Giddins, 1999, p.490). In regards to his musical techniques themselves, such as

---

<sup>38</sup> Zappa states that ‘the whole idea’ behind the album is ‘the criminalization of America’ (Marshall, 1988).

Xenochrony and the Project/Object concept, while unique to him, they can be seen as extensions of values that were not uncommon in jazz. Zappa's approach to the work concept is comparable to what Kane refers to as a network, with a more fluid approach to properties of works in performance.

Finally, as an autonomous figure, Zappa recognised the need for economic viability to achieve success in the marketplace, but resisted mainstream conventions and existing institutional definitions regarding music and music performance. Like musicians in the jazz tradition, he occupied a place not entirely committed to the art for art's sake doctrine, due to the economic realities and the fundamentally social nature of music making. However, while Zappa presents his music as entertainment in order to resist any alignment to the notion of art and its historical and elitist connotations, he still sought autonomy from mass culture and from specific functional purposes. For Zappa, music is defined by the public's response, validated by appreciation, and ultimately, that is the limit at which the value of music can be found.

In terms of definitive qualities that form an aesthetic thesis for Frank Zappa, his constant and deliberate subversion of musical expectations, and his repeated critique of any style or musical identity leads to an overarching assessment of his music being meaningless in the postmodern idiom. However, we have seen that Zappa relies on a series of musical techniques through which to encourage, but not demand, recognition and engagement with extramusical content, and is more closely aligned with modernist approach to art. Zappa frames his work, providing the right way to appreciate and listen, but believes that beyond that, it is ultimately up to the audience to decide its merit and qualify a work as music.

Instead of an inherent expressive capacity in music, Zappa views expression as largely drawn from socially recognised techniques, although expressive content is found in the interconnected totality of fragments as they relate to his wider discography. A position comparable to that we have examined in the jazz tradition. Zappa rejects aestheticism, instead finding value in being able to communicate to an engaged audience and recognising the limitations of this communication, but does not consider the communication of any content as an essential property of music. Zappa can be understood as a musician who is aware of his position within the culture market, but who also seeks to disrupt and circumvent its conditions, although appears more optimistic than Adorno in music's ability to do so. Fundamentally, it is the circumstances of the audience that decide the merits of the work, stating, 'another thing you have to remember about all science and all art: it is impossible if you're starving to death' (Marshall, 1988).

## Conclusions

This thesis has presented an account of the aesthetic values of jazz, examining chronologically musicians and movements through the 20th century. At the beginning, three research questions were set out. The first question was what are the aesthetic values of jazz and its avant-garde in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in examining the jazz avant-garde, or vanguard, we have looked at jazz's most significant developmental periods. The avant-garde, by definition, is situated at the most experimental or progressive style within a genre. The assumption would therefore be that each of jazz's key developmental periods challenges its fundamental aesthetic principles. However, even when at their most radical, jazz styles maintained certain aesthetic values and musical traditions, at times altering or revising them, as well as developing new ones, which we have examined through this thesis.

The premise of authenticity can be understood both through jazz's own rules, and also in its relation to other music of the era. As so many of jazz's characteristics were used by Western composers, resistance to this appropriation formed a key aspect of its aesthetic development. Cultural appropriation was a significant motivator, as jazz not only sought greater autonomy from institutional restrictions and exceptions, its musicians sought their own economic and social freedoms. Particularly in the wake of the Harlem Renaissance, aesthetic value was strongly linked to authenticity, and jazz increasingly emphasised its cultural heritage. In doing this, traditional creative characteristics such as the practice of signifying emerged as fundamental to the creation of authentic music, with authenticity therefore understood as being found in the use of specific musical techniques and demonstration of abilities, rather than through the modernist definition of the autonomous work. From an epistemic standpoint, understanding jazz's unique musical features and cultural context were essential in authentic music making, and required cultural understanding and experience.

The work concept in jazz presents a more different relationship between pieces when compared to the European paradigm of the singular composed work, with the network theory explaining how standards interact with each other. Approaching this ontologically, viewing standard songs solely as vehicles of improvisation does not offer a complete view of their purpose in jazz. Furthermore, the strict perfection/imperfection dichotomy is not an accurate way of understanding jazz performances, as instances of both are valued. Nonetheless, imperfection, particularly spontaneity in improvisation, is a significant musical feature throughout jazz's development.

In terms of the function of the music, the art for art's sake doctrine does not offer a complete account of jazz's aesthetic direction, as it was so closely tied to its socio-cultural context. While free jazz appears to present a paradigm shift in the function of music toward a strictly autonomous art form, free jazz maintained several essential links to preceding musical tradition, and in its relation to and reception by audiences. Therefore, a social aspect can be seen to endure throughout the jazz tradition, and so while bebop appeared more radical and free jazz presented itself as similar to functionless art in the modernist sense, they both relied on cultural

tools and were informed by social movements. As such, while jazz moved away from having a function in terms of entertainment, it retained a communicative social function and purpose.

Regarding expression, it is a quality given particular emphasis in jazz and its development through the 20th century. In the music of both Charlie Parker and John Coltrane, expression was a key aspect of their music, and their performances were seen as having a specific aesthetic value due to how expressive their playing was seen to be. In examining the pitfalls of understanding music expression, such as through resemblance or via extramusical associations, we arrived at an account of expression that considered both the artist, the audience, and cultural context in the creation and recognition of emotional content, rather than via objective rules or techniques.

To address the second question, regarding the phenomena that influenced jazz's aesthetic values, we have examined a number of significant factors.

Primarily, we can understand jazz and its aesthetic values as being formed through the influence of genres antecedent to jazz, primarily the blues, and the African American creative movements of the early 20th century, such as the Harlem Renaissance. The creative principles and features that these propagated included the signifying idiom, which itself was an aspect of the social nature of the music.

Following this, we saw socio-cultural movements as intrinsically related to the development of the music, in particular the Civil Rights Movement, and more broadly the impact of the post-war changes in art and entertainment spheres. In terms of economics, jazz's need to remain financially viable created a complex relationship between the autonomy of its musicians and the social status of the music. However, we saw how the need to be economically successful does not necessarily jeopardise creative autonomy or cultural authenticity, or undermine the social aspect of jazz's discourse, such as the importance of live performance.

At the beginning of this thesis we saw that cultural appropriation was influential in shaping jazz, particularly in the reaction against appropriation in the 1940s and 50s. The work of Kerouac and Gershwin showed how appropriation took different forms, and we examined how appropriation can be detrimental to a culture even when seemingly well intentioned.

In understanding the influence of modernism, we examined the usefulness of Adorno's account, and concluded that a strict account of modernism was not fully applicable to understanding jazz aesthetically. While Charlie Parker drew inspiration from European modernism, with his music seen as being the prime example of the modernist influence in jazz, he also continued many values of the jazz tradition, such as the use of the standards and in the significance of improvisation within them. On the other hand, while John Coltrane appeared to present the paradigm of musical autonomy, he too maintained a close relationship to the social, communicative aspects of jazz's history. In Frank Zappa's music, notably influenced by modernism, the jazz influence can nonetheless be seen in the comparable approach to both the work concept and the art for art's sake doctrine. We have also seen that the perception of the

European influence in jazz has been often overstated. Understanding the jazz tradition as embodying the aesthetics of imperfection and the European tradition as embodying the aesthetics of perfection is not accurate, as jazz presented aspects of both.

Jazz emerged as an amalgam of creative influences; most significantly it was the blues that made up its musical foundations, but through the 20th century, jazz intersected with a range of other creative influences. If we are considering how jazz changed through this period, then considering the European influence is necessary but not conclusive. Further to this, from an aesthetic standpoint, drawing on aesthetic theory that has been formulated with reference to the European tradition only, is likely to be ineffectual when applied to jazz, or any other non-Western music. As this thesis has shown, seemingly strict categories such as art and entertainment overlook important nuances, and understanding expression requires reference to musical tradition and discourse.

Ultimately, broader concerns such as social status, class, race, and economics, all shape a culture and its creative endeavours. Therefore, in approaching jazz, it is essential to be cognisant of these influences, in order to fully understand its aesthetic values. The purpose of the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis was to achieve this balance, and in turn examine the limits of the analytic approach to understanding music and philosophy.



## Bibliography

- 13<sup>th</sup>. (2016) [Film] Ava DuVernay. Dir. USA: Kandoo Films.
- Adorno, T. (1936) 'On Jazz', *Discourse*, 12(1), pp.45-69.
- Adorno, T. (1991) *The Culture Industry*. UK: Routledge.
- Adorno, T. (2013) *Aesthetic Theory*. UK: Bloomsbury.
- Adorno, T. (2016) *Philosophy of Modern Music*. UK: Bloomsbury.
- Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1997) *Dialectic Of Enlightenment*. London: Verso.
- Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality*. UK: Routledge.
- Appiah, K. A. (1998) 'Race, Pluralism, and Afrocentricity', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 19(), p.116-118.
- Ashby, A. (1999) 'Frank Zappa and the Anti-Fetish Orchestra', *The Musical Quarterly*, 83(4), pp.557-606.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., Tiffin, H. (2000) *Post-Colonial Studies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. UK: Routledge.
- Auslander, p. (2013) 'Jazz Improvisation as Social Arrangement' in Cook, N. and Pettengill, R. (ed.) *Taking It To The Bridge: Music as Performance*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Baker, H. A. (1987) *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Baker, H. A. (2019) *Deformation of Mastery*. [email].
- Bailey, D. (1993) *Improvisation*. USA: Da Capo Press.
- Bateman, D. A. (2018) *Disenfranchising Democracy*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Berleant, A. (2017) 'Further Ruminations on Music', *New Sound International Journal of Music*, 50(2), pp.129-137.
- Borders, J. (2001) 'Form and the Concept Album: Aspects of Modernism in Frank Zappa's Early Releases', *Perspectives of New Music*, 39(1), pp.118-160.
- Bruce, D. (1992) 'W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness', *American Literature*, 64(2), pp.299-309.

Cage, J. (1968) *Silence*. London: Calder and Boyars.

Carr, P. (2013a) 'The Big Note, Xenochrony and All Things Contextual: Frank Zappa and the And' in Carr, P. (ed.) *Frank Zappa and the And*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Carr, P. (2013b) 'Zappa and Technology: His incorporation of Time, Space and Place when Performing, Composing and Arranging Music' in Carr, P. (ed.) *Frank Zappa and the And*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Catala, A. (2015) 'Democracy, Trust, Epistemic Justice', *The Monist*, 98(4), pp.424-440.

Collier, J. (1993) *Jazz: The American Theme Song*. UK: Oxford University Press.

Cook, D. (2018) *Adorno, Foucault, and the Critique of the West*. UK: Verso.

Cox, R. W. (1993) 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay In Method' in Gill, S. (ed.) *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Costa, J. (2020) '1968: The Beatles, Frank Zappa, the Soft Machine, Pink Floyd: Establishing the Dialogue between Experimentation and Tradition in Rock Music', *Rock Music Studies*, 7(3), pp.175-186.

Dabiri, E. (2020) *Don't Touch My Hair*. UK: Penguin.

Danto, A. (1997) *After the End of Art*. USA: Princeton University Press.

Davies, D. (2011) *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*. UK: Wiley – Blackwell.

Davies, S. (1991) *Definitions of Art*. USA: Cornell University Press.

Davis, S. (2000) 'Non-Western Art and Art's Definition' in Carroll, N. (ed.) *Theories of Art Today*. USA: University of Wisconsin Press.

Davies, S. (2001) *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration*. UK: Oxford University Press.

DeVeaux, S. (1997) *The Birth of Bebop*. USA: University of California Press.

DeVito, C. (2012) *Coltrane On Coltrane*. USA: Chicago Review Press.

- Delville, M. and Norris, A. (2007) 'Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart, and the Secret History of Maximalism' in Armand, L. (ed.) *Contemporary Poetics*. USA; Northwestern University Press.
- Dodd, J. (2014a) 'The Possibility of Profound Music', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 54(3), pp.299-322.
- Dodd, J. (2014b) 'Upholding Standards: A Realist Ontology of Standard Form Jazz', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 72(3), pp.277-290.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (2007) *The Souls of Black Folk*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Durkin, A. (2014) *Decomposition*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Fanon, F. (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*. UK: Pluto Press.
- Floyd, S. (1995) *The Power of Black Music*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980) 'Two Lectures' in Gordon, C. (ed.) *Power/Knowledge*. UK: Harvester Press.
- Fricker, M. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fricker, M. (2017) 'Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice' in Kidd, I. J., Medina, J., and Polhaus, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. UK: Routledge.
- Fricker, M. (2019) *Discriminatory Epistemic Injustice*. [email].
- Frith, S. (1996) *Performing Rites*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, J. (2013) 'Zappa and The Razor: Editing, Sampling and *Musique Concrète*' in Carr, P. (ed.) *Frank Zappa and the And*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gates Jr., H. L. (1988) *The Signifying Monkey*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Giddins, G. (1999) *Visions of Jazz*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gillespie, D. (1999) 'The Cult of Bebop' in Walser, R. (ed.) *Keeping Time: Readings In Jazz History*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic*. USA: Harvard University Press.
- Gioia, T. (2011) *The History of Jazz*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gioia, T. (2012) *The Jazz Standards*. UK: Oxford University Press.

- Gioia, T. (2016) *When Jean-Paul Sartre Cured Existential Angst with a Jazz Record* [online] Available at: <http://www.fractiousfiction.com/nausea.html> (Accessed 5 January 2023).
- Gloag, K. (2014) 'Jazz – avant-garde – tradition' in Downes, S. (ed.) *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives*. UK: Routledge, pp.188-202.
- Goldie, P. (2007) 'Towards a Virtue Theory of Art', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 47(4), pp.372-387.
- Goldie, P. (2008) 'Virtues of Art and Human Well-Being', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 82, pp.179-195.
- Gould, C., and Keaton, K. (2000) 'The Essential Role of Improvisation in Musical Performance', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 58(2), pp.143-148.
- Grayck, T. (2012) *The Philosophy of Art*. UK: Polity Press.
- Hacker, P. M. S. (1995) 'Language-game' in Honderich, T. (ed.) *The Oxford Companion To Philosophy*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Haddix, C. (2015) *Bird: The Life and Music of Charlie Parker*. USA: University of Illinois Press.
- Hall, S. (1997) 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' in Hall, S. (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. UK: Sage Publications.
- Hall, S. (2018) 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power' in Andersen, C., Galabuzi, G. E., Gupta, T. D., James, C. E., and Maaka, R. C. A. (ed.) *Race and Radicalization: Essential Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Canada: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Hamilton, A. (2007) *Aesthetics of Music*. UK: Continuum.
- Hamilton, A. (2020) 'The Aesthetics of Imperfection Reconceived: Improvisations, Compositions, and Mistakes', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 78(3), pp.289–302.
- Heisler, A. Y. (2015) 'John Coltrane's Pursuit of Elegance', *African American Review*, 48(4), pp.393-413.
- Hentoff, N. (1976) *Jazz Is*. USA: Random House.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1999) *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz*. UK: Abacus
- Hobson, M. (2002) 'Derrida and representation: mimesis, presentation, and representation' in Cohen, T. (ed.) *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Howell, S. (1991) 'Art and Meaning' in Hiller, S. (ed.) *The Myth Of Primitivism*. UK: Routledge
- Jackson, T. A. (2000) 'Jazz Performance as Ritual: The Blues Aesthetic and the African Diaspora' in Monson, I. (ed.) *The African Diaspora*. USA: Garland Publishing.
- Jones, L. (2002) *Blues People*. UK: Harper Perennial.
- Kane, B. (2018) 'Jazz, Mediation, Ontology', *Contemporary Music Review*, 37(5-6), pp.507-528.
- Kane, B. (2020) Email.
- Kerouac, J. (1972) *On The Road*. UK: Penguin Books.
- Keyes, C. L. (2009) 'Sound, Voice, and Spirit: Teaching in the Black Music Vernacular', *Black Music Research Journal*, 29(1), pp.11-24.
- Kivy, P. (1995) *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*. USA: Cornell University Press.
- Laver, M. (2014) 'Rebels and Volkswagens: Charles Mingus and the Commodification of Dissent', *Black Music Research Journal*, 34(2), pp.201-227.
- Lemke, S. (1998) *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Leppert, R. (2005) 'Music "Pushed to the Edge of Existence" (Adorno, Listening, and the Question of Hope)', *Cultural Critique*, 60, pp.92-133.
- Levine, L. W. (2007) *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, J. (2011) *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, J. (2015) *Musical Concerns*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lincoln, A. (1863). *Emancipation Proclamation*. USA: National Archives.
- Litweiler, J. (1985) *The Freedom Principle*. UK: Blandford Press.
- Locke, A. (1925) *The New Negro*. USA: Albert and Charles Boni Publishing Company.
- Love, S. C. (2016). 'The Jazz Solo as Virtuous Act', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 74(1), pp.61-74.

- Lyons, S. and Friedman, B. (1987a) Frank's Wild Years. *Option*. [online] Available at: [https://www.afka.net/Articles/1987-03\\_Option.htm](https://www.afka.net/Articles/1987-03_Option.htm) (Accessed 3 November 2020).
- Lyons, S. and Friedman, B. (1987b) Winter In America. *Option*. [online] Available at: [https://www.afka.net/Articles/1987-01\\_Option.htm](https://www.afka.net/Articles/1987-01_Option.htm) (Accessed 3 November 2020).
- McKinley, A. (1986). 'Debussy and American Minstrelsy', *The Black Perspective in Music*, 14(3), pp.249-258.
- Manuel, P. (1995) 'Music as Symbol, Music as Simulacrum, Pre-Modern, and Modern Aesthetics in Subcultural Popular Musics', *Popular Music*, 14(2), pp.227-239.
- Marlow-Stevens, E. (2022) "'What is music? Anything can be music': Frank Zappa's theory of art," *Popular Music*, 41(1), pp.37-55.
- Martin, H. (2020) *Charlie Parker, Composer*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, H. (2012). 'Expanding Jazz Tonality: The Compositions of John Coltrane', *Theory and Practice*, 37/38, pp.185-219.
- Marshall, B. (1988) *Interview by Bob Marshall*. [online] Available at: [https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Interview\\_by\\_Bob\\_Marshall](https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Interview_by_Bob_Marshall) (Accessed 20 October 2020).
- Meltzer, D. (1993) *Reading Jazz*. USA: Mercury House.
- Miles, B. (1993) *Frank Zappa In His Own Words*. London: Omnibus Press.
- Monson, I. (1994) 'Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology', *Critical Inquiry*, 20(2), pp.283-313.
- Monson, I. (1996) *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. USA: The University of Chicago Press.
- Monson, I. (2002) 'Jazz Improvisation' in Cook, M. and Horn, D. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphy, J. P. (1990) 'Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence', *The Black Perspective in Music*, 18(1/2), pp.7-19.
- Nettl, B. (1983) *The Study of Ethnomusicology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. USA: University of Illinois Press.
- Noble, D. (1995) Variations On The Carlos Santana Secret Interview. *T'Mershi Duween*. [online] Available at: [https://www.afka.net/Articles/1995-01\\_Tmershi\\_Duween.htm](https://www.afka.net/Articles/1995-01_Tmershi_Duween.htm) (Accessed 28 October 2020).

- North, M. (1994) *The Dialectic of Modernism*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Okiji, F. (2018) *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited*. USA: Stanford University Press.
- Paddison, M. (1993) *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Paddison, M. (1996) *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture*. UK: Kahn and Averill.
- Paddison, M. (2001) 'Music as Ideal: the Aesthetics of Autonomy', in Samson, J. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Paddison, M. (2003) 'Stravinsky as devil: Adorno's three critiques' in Cross, J. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Paddison, M. (2004a) *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture*. UK: Kahn & Averill.
- Paddison, M. (2004b) 'Authenticity and Failure in Adorno's Aesthetics of Music', in Huhn, T. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Peretti, B. (1997) *Jazz in American Culture*. USA: Ivan R. Dee.
- Perry, D. (1996) *Jazz Greats*. UK: Phaidon Press.
- Pohlhaus, G. (2012) 'Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of "Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance"', *Hypatia*, 27(4), pp.715-735.
- Porter, L. (1999) *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Ramsey, G. P. (2004) *Race Music*. USA: University of California Press.
- Robinson, J. (2014) 'Expression Theories', in Gracyk, T. and Kania, A. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*. UK: Routledge.
- Ross, A. (2009) *The Rest Is Noise*. UK: Harper Perennial.
- Ross, A. (2011) *Listen To This*. UK: Fourth Estate.
- Rouse, J. (1994) 'Power/Knowledge' in Gutting, G. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowell, J. (1995) 'The politics of cultural appropriation', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 29(1), pp.137-142.

- Rudinow, J. (1994) 'Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing The Blues?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52(1), pp.127-137.
- Ruhlmann, W. (1997) 'Frank Zappa: The Present Day Composer' in Kostelanetz, R. (ed.) *The Frank Zappa Companion*. UK: Omnibus Press.
- Said, E. (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. UK: Vintage.
- Said, E. (2003) *Orientalism*. UK: Penguin.
- Sanders, J. (2016) *Adaptation and Appropriation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. UK: Routledge.
- Schmalenberger, S. (2018) "'Dirty Love": Frank Zappa and the Antithetical Love Song', *Rock Music Studies*, 5(1), pp.20-28.
- Sclafani, R. (1976) 'Wollheim on Collingwood', *Philosophy*, 51(197), pp.353-359.
- Scruton, R. (1997) *The Aesthetics of Music*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Seal, K. (2013) 'Zappa and Religion: Music is the Best' in Carr, P. (ed.) *Frank Zappa and the And*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sidran, B. (1995) *Black Talk*. UK: Payback Press.
- Sollors, W. (2006) 'African Americans since 1900' in Bigsby, C. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988) 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Grossberg, L. and Nelson, C. (ed.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. UK: Macmillan.
- Stewart, J. (2011) 'No Boundary Line to Art: "Bebop" as Afro-Modernist Discourse', *American Music*, 29(3), pp.332-352.
- Subotnik, R. (1991) *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*. USA: University of Minnesota Press.
- Toop, R. (2010) 'Against a Theory of Musical (New) Complexity' in Deliege, I. and Paddison, M. (ed.) *Contemporary Music*. UK: Ashgate Publishing.
- Trivedi, S (2014) 'Resemblance Theories' in Gracyk, T. and Kania, A. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*. UK: Routledge.
- Vai, S. (2011) *Steve Vai Talks About Zappa Audition*. [online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx1RguHA4XE> (Accessed 15 October 2020).



- Walton, K. (1994) 'Listening with Imagination: Is Music Representational?' in Alperson, P. (ed.) *Musical Worlds*. USA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Watson, B. (1995) *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*. London: Quartet Books.
- Watson, B. (1997) 'Frank Zappa as Dadaist: Recording Technology and the Power to Repeat' in Kostelanetz, R. (ed.) *The Frank Zappa Companion*. London, Omnibus Press.
- Whyton, T. (2007) 'Four for Trane: Jazz and the Disembodied Voice', *Jazz Perspectives*, 1(2), pp.115-132.
- Williams, M. (1993). *The Jazz Tradition*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wills, G. (2015) *Zappa and Jazz*. UK: Matador.
- Wragg, D. (2001) "Or Any Art at All?' Frank Zappa meets Critical Theory', *Popular Music*, 20(2), pp.205–22.
- Young, J. O. (2005) 'Profound Offense and Cultural Appropriation', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 63(2), pp.135-146.
- Young, J. O. (2008) *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts*. UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Young, J. O. (2011) 'Appropriation and Hybridity' in Gracyk, T. and Kania, A. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*. UK: Routledge.
- Zappa, F. (1989) *The Real Frank Zappa Book*. London: Picador.

## Discography

- Beatles, The. (1967) *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* [LP]. UK: Parlophone.
- Coltrane, J. (1961) *Africa/Brass* [LP]. USA: Impulse!
- Coltrane, J. (1961) *My Favorite Things* [LP]. USA: Atlantic.
- Coltrane, J. (1962) *Coltrane "Live" At The Village Vanguard* [LP]. USA: Impulse!
- Coltrane, J. (1963) *Impressions* [LP]. USA: Impulse!
- Coltrane, J. (1965) *A Love Supreme* [LP]. USA: Impulse!
- Coltrane, J. (1966) *Ascension* [LP]. USA: Impulse!
- Coltrane, J. (1991) *Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings* [CD] USA: Impulse!
- Debussy, C. (1908) *Children's Corner* [Musical Score]. Paris: Durand and Fils.
- Gershwin, G. (1929) *Rhapsody in Blue* [Musical Score] USA: Library Of Congress.
- Hancock, H (1973) *Head Hunters* [LP] USA: Columbia.
- Milhaud, D. (1929) *La Création Du Monde* [Musical Score]. Paris: Max Eshig.
- Mingus, C. (1959) *Mingus Ah Um* [LP] USA: Columbia Records.
- Mothers of Invention, The. (1968) *We're Only In It For The Money*. [LP] USA: Verve.
- Parker, C. (1950) *Charlie Parker with Strings* [LP] USA: Mercury.
- Santana (1971) *Abraxas*. [LP] USA: CBS.
- Stravinsky, I (1946) *Ebony Concerto* [Musical Score]. Charling Music Corp.
- Wagner, R. (1860) *Tristan und Isolde* [Musical Score]. Germany: Breitkopf und Härtel.
- Zappa, F. (1967) *Lumpy Gravy* [LP] USA: Verve.
- Zappa, F. (1974) *Apostrophe (')* [LP] USA: DiscReet Records.
- Zappa, F. (1976) *Zoot Allures* [LP] USA: Warner Bros.
- Zappa, F. (1978) *Studio Tan* [LP] USA: DiscReet Records.
- Zappa, F. (1978). *Zappa In New York* [LP] USA: DiscReet Records.
- Zappa, F. (1979) *Joe's Garage Act I*. [LP] USA: Zappa Records.

Zappa, F. (1979) *Joe's Garage Acts II & III*. [LP] USA: Zappa Records.

Zappa, F. (1981) *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More* [LP] USA: Barking Pumpkin.

Zappa, F. (1981) *You Are What You Is* [LP] USA: Barking Pumpkin.

Zappa, F. (1985) *Frank Zappa Meets The Mothers Of Prevention* [LP] USA: Barking Pumpkin

Zappa, F. (2008). *Lumpy Money Project/Object* [CD] USA: Zappa Records.

Zappa, F. (2013) *A Token of His Extreme* [CD] USA: Zappa Records.

Zappa, F., Beefheart, C., and Mothers of Invention, The. (1975) *Bongo Fury* [LP] USA: DiscReet Records.