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From Dadaism to Free Jazz:  
The Cultural Developments of a New Aesthetic

by

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A Thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Jazz History and Research

written under the direction of

Dr. Lewis Porter

and approved by

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Newark, New Jersey

May, 2013

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Thesis Director:  
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What does it mean for something to be called “avant-garde”? The ambiguity of such a label fails to define the works of which it is typically applied. It’s more relevant to think of the term as an on-going *process* that explores new artistic possibilities. This thesis will look at some factors that helped propel such a process into motion and the shared aesthetics that came as a result.

An avant-garde process began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as individuals and groups sought out a divergent worldview that began to question the rapidly developing Western worldview dominated by science and its frameworks. By looking at the works and statements of key individuals of the time such as the surrealist André Breton, psychologist Carl Gustav Jung and poet Charles Olson, one gets a clearer picture of the many factors that fueled this divergence. The most notable being World War I with its atrocities and globalized horrors, the splintering of social groups between capitalism and communism and increased secularization.

In cataloguing the connections between both political and artistic groups it becomes clear how the collective skepticism and questioning of the then dominant worldview led to the eventual creation of an altogether new worldview centered around

concepts and ideas not available in old. The development of jazz is seen within this light as a uniquely culturally positioned art form. From more traditional jazz styles to more experimental, jazz is looked at as following a parallel trajectory into a moment of avant-garde synthesis. In looking at the early development of progressive jazz musicians Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane, this thesis aims to cement the 1950s as a hotbed in which an avant-garde aesthetic converged, ultimately resulting in music of the likes of free jazz and beyond.



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction: Avant-Garde as a Process:</b>	<b>1</b>
 <b><u>Chapter 1</u></b>	
<b>An Overview of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Worldview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Windows Into the Unconscious</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Surrealism and the Creative Unconscious</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Discovery of a Primitive Aesthetic</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The New Image of DYN</b>	<b>16</b>
 <b><u>Chapter 2</u></b>	
<b>Rene d'Harnoncourt and John Collier</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The Politics of Primitivism</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Avant-Garde Jung</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>The Poetics of Primitivism</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The New York School, Bohemia, and <i>Yugen</i></b>	<b>35</b>
<b>The Avant-Garde Aesthetic</b>	<b>37</b>
 <b><u>Chapter 3</u></b>	
<b>Jazz: An Alternative Worldview</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>The Difficulties of Historical Models of Jazz</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Syncretism and Innate Musicality Within the Prehistory of Jazz</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Genres of Jazz</b>	<b>49</b>

<b>Jazz Rhythms and Developments of Early Ragtime</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>New Orleans Jazz as an Amalgamation of Musical Productions</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>The Swing Era and the Paradigm Shift in Jazz</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Modern Jazz, Experimentation and Expression</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Jazz and the Avant-Garde</b>	<b>64</b>

#### **Chapter 4**

<b>Bebop: The Growth of a Niche Marketplace</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>The Beginning of a Great Divide</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>On Defining Artistic Value</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>In the Dusk of the Swing Age</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>The Undercurrent of Politics in Bebop</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Experimentation and Charlie Parker</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>A Unique Place in Time</b>	<b>78</b>

#### **Chapter 5**

<b>The Arrival of Free Jazz</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>The Early Developments of Ornette Coleman</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>The Early Developments of Cecil Taylor</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>The Early Developments of John Coltrane</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>The Lure of the Five Spot Café</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>The Critical Impact of Gunther Schuller's Third Stream Jazz</b>	<b>96</b>

## **Chapter 6**

<b>Process Analysis: An Approach to Avant-Garde Analysis</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Jackson Pollock</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Charles Olson</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Ornette Coleman</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Ornette Coleman and Jackson Pollock</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>The Internal Structure of Ornette Coleman’s “Free Jazz”</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Augmented Trichordal Structure of John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps”</b>	<b>111</b>

## **Chapter 7**

<b>On The Jazz Avant-Garde Today: Daniel Carter Interview</b>	<b>117</b>
---	------------

<b><u>Bibliography</u></b>	<b>141</b>
----------------------------	------------

<b><u>Selected Discography</u></b>	<b>148</b>
------------------------------------	------------

<b><u>Appendix A: Selected Timeline of Events</u></b>	<b>150</b>
---	------------

<b><u>Appendix B: A Network of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Avant-Gardism</u></b>	<b>154</b>
--	------------

<b><u>Appendix C: A Graphical Representation of Ornette Coleman’s “Free Jazz”</u></b>	<b>155</b>
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## Introduction

### Avant-Garde as a Process

In order to understand 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental and abstract art forms one must ponder the idea of what does it mean for something to be “avant-garde.” As a descriptive term it does very little describing. As a label it has no standard or widely understood function and is mentioned in more contexts by more people than could possibly be accurate. To this end, it is perhaps better to be understood as a *process* rather than a descriptive characteristic. At any point in the production of art throughout history there could be particular movements or works called “avant-garde” even if looked at individually without relative context they are very different developments.

Still, it is incredibly enticing to attempt to uncover some sort of commonality of *what* it is that all of these people have been calling avant-garde. If one is to think of avant-garde as an ongoing *process* then we can instead ask the question of what does it *mean* for something to be avant-garde? For the purpose of this thesis the stance has been taken that the term “avant-garde” is best used to describe an ongoing *process* that explores the peripheries of convention and tradition within the evolution of art. In this fashion one can comfortably label two otherwise widely different works of art (i.e. Salvador Dali’s *Elephant* and Lennie Tristano’s “Intuition”) as being avant-garde in that they were both part of this process of exploring the peripheries of their respective mediums. That being said, the term still fails to accurately describe characteristics of either of the works contents.

To help alleviate this issue of ambiguity surrounding the usage of “avant-garde” it is of importance to examine a few movements widely accepted as being “avant-garde” in an attempt to understand the creative source used. If that can be understood in any fashion then a characteristic aesthetic can be arrived at which becomes much more descriptive than being simply “avant-garde.” It is the goal of this work to show how shared avant-garde aesthetics during the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century America would end up permeating throughout experimental circles of art.

To do this, this thesis is divided into seven main chapters. Chapter 1 will look into the experimental movements of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, uncovering shared aesthetics and philosophies that serve as the basis of what has been called “avant-garde.” Chapter 2 will attempt to piece together how these shared aesthetics and philosophies begin to create a new culture within America by the 1950s. Chapter 3 will discuss how the aesthetics and culture of jazz parallel the avant-garde developments discussed in the earlier chapters through a brief overview of its history. Chapter 4 begins a more in depth look into the experimental years of jazz history and how bebop created new artistic potential within a tumultuous marketplace. Chapter 5 looks at how all of the avant-garde art circles begin to become infused with jazz by looking at the early development of three pivotal musicians, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. Chapter 6 will discuss the difficulty in analysis of avant-garde art and attempt to use unique models to show a new perspective on Ornette Coleman’s composition, “Free Jazz” as well as John Coltrane’s piece, “Giant Steps.” And Chapter 7 includes an interview conducted with current free jazz musician Daniel Carter as he discusses the music’s role in today’s society.

## Chapter 1

### An Overview of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Western Worldview

“I cannot further cooperate with those...[whom] I believe to be corrupt (consciously or unconsciously) and who, I believe, are further and further leading humanity toward degradation, immorality, catastrophe, and total chaos.”

Richard Pousette-Dart<sup>1</sup>

There seems to have been multiple circles of both academic and artistic backgrounds that came to discover the same remarkable reinterpretations of a once accepted worldview. On a grand scale, there appears to have been a fatigue felt with the leading ideologies based off of Western culture. This culture was fascinated with ones place in the world and interpreting the logic of nature and reality. Science empirically and systematically unraveled what were mysteries of nature. Increasingly, the scientific model began to structure society itself. New ideas such as social Darwinism looked to apply evolutionary models to the social developments of culture. This model did an outstanding job of explaining the material world and how contemporary man interacts within it.

For many, this modern Western model of progression was taken in stride and if not downright liked was at least accepted in society as the way things are. For others, it

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 63. See also Gail Levin, “Richard Pousette-Dart’s Emergence as an Abstract Expressionist Artist,” *Arts* (March 1980), 125.

raised questions as to whether or not it was the only way. For others still, it was seen as downright anathema to the future goodwill of humanity. The skepticism and fear that was characteristic of the latter group could be traced to a number of factors. Perhaps the most pungent of these factors were human atrocities brought on by war that reached a global audience via rapid globalization. The sharp splintering of social and political groups that created dichotomies such as capitalism vs. communism would be another factor. Secularization began to take a foothold as science increasingly provided the answers to some of life's most mystifying secrets that were one once answered through religion. This created a spiritual void in some who saw importance in religious practices that was becoming more and more incompatible in the Western scientifically dominated worldview.

The fundamental characteristics of the scientific model revolve around rigorous methodology, logic, mathematics and consistent replication of specific causes and effects. What it failed to grasp was the immaterial world of the mind and unexplained phenomena of dreams, emotions and collective communal identity. All of these factors combined to create new social environments where questions could be raised against the standard modern worldview. It was the collective answering of these questions from a wide variety of distinct groups that would begin to coalesce in a new worldview—a process that is still occurring to this very day. The defining characteristics and imagery conceptualized by this worldview is what forms the basis of what is commonly recognized as the “avant-garde.”

## Windows Into the Unconscious

“Let yourself be led. Events will not tolerate deferment. You have no name. Everything is  
inestimably easy.”

André Breton<sup>2</sup>

Tristan Tzara was a poet and writer within the experimental art scene of Europe during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He and a group of like-minded individuals had convened in Zurich, Switzerland in 1916 at a nightclub called the Cabaret Voltaire to put on performances in protest of the war. This was the beginning of an artistic movement later to be called “Dada.” The Dada movement glorified nonsense and complete rejection of artistic convention. As Tzara self-proclaims, “There is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness.”<sup>3</sup> Tzara makes use of telling and specific imagery to convey a sense of a rejuvenating purge within art. The philosophical means in which Tzara aimed to accomplish this was through a “state of madness” by means of “great...destruction” in which a “cleanliness” would reveal itself. The Dadaists ultimately desired a clean slate where art could flourish completely outside the frameworks of institutional art academies.

One representative method of achieving this was through an inside-out approach in which Dadaists glorified the absurd from within established art circles. Rather than

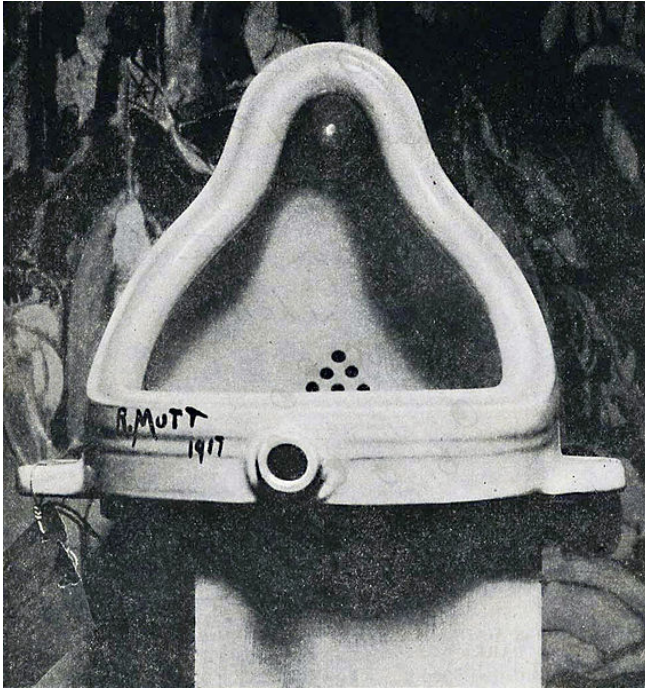
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<sup>2</sup> André Breton, “First Surrealist Manifesto” 1924.

<sup>3</sup> Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918” in *Dadas on Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 19.



pursuing the traditional means of artistic training and development there was a deep desire to turn the entire concept on its head. An exemplary display of this was Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (Figure 1) that was on display in New York in 1917.



**Fig. 1:** *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp. Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz at the 291 Society of Independent Artists exhibit, 1917.

The overt display of what is essentially a urinal as a work of art forces the audience to ask questions regarding what *is* art and wherein lies the authority to call it as such? The questioning of artistic authority would most likely be a much-desired result of the Dadaist movement as it invites the notion that there could potentially be something *else*.

The Dadaist absolute rejection of formal convention was an appetizing idea that caught wind among others in the European experimental fringes of the time. Figures of this experimental fringe included Guillaume Apollinaire and André Breton, both writers and poets who had some direct engagement with Tristan Tzara. In the years leading up to

1920, Breton and Apollinaire were undoubtedly interested in the intentions of Dadaism. Breton founded and published the journal *Littérature* in March 1919 with fellow writers Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault. *Littérature* served as an outlet for writers that exemplified an alternate literary tradition. Along with Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Éluard, Tristan Tzara was also among those published in the journal. The intermingling of these experimental figures highlights the shared desire of alternative art theories among growing niche communities in Europe.

While the Dadaists engaged in their destructive artistic pursuits, Apollinaire and Breton found something profound in the rare state of complete detachment that sometimes resulted from the “state of madness” engaged in by the Dadaists. Breton and Apollinaire aimed to place themselves in situations that would encourage a sense of spontaneous inspiration or profound sudden realization of beauty. As Charles Russel points out:

The surrealists, like Apollinaire, enjoyed directionless walks through the streets of Paris, leaving themselves open to chance occurrences and inspiration, attempting to find moments of unexpected beauty and instinctive connection with the physical, urban environment. Just as Apollinaire suggested that with beauty “everything is in the effect of surprise,” Breton echoed “the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful<sup>4</sup>

It was in this state of detachment that Breton saw unexplored creative potential. Taking the Dada philosophy of complete rejection of artistic convention even further, Breton obsessed over turning *himself* off to it all together, relinquishing not only outside authority but even ones own. Breton found the ability to do this by invoking the unconsciousness through various methods, one of which was the process of automatic

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Russel, *Poets Prophets and Revolutionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 128.

writing that himself, Apollinaire and Louis Aragon engaged in alongside their work with the *Littérature* journal. Breton writes of an interest in a “systematic exploration of the unconscious” in an essay titled “Pour Dada” (“For Dada”) that was published in the literary magazine *La Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1920.<sup>5</sup> Breton’s exploration of the unconscious would culminate in the publishing of the *First Surrealist Manifesto* and the start of the Surrealist movement.

### **Surrealism and the Creative Unconscious**

“SURREALISM, noun, masc., Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.”

André Breton<sup>6</sup>

In the landmark publication of the *First Surrealist Manifesto*, André Breton lays the groundwork for a new creative effort that will ultimately become a critical element in 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-gardism. Breton postulated that there was a ground of “true” thought occurring in the unconscious mind that was constantly clouded, tucked away to the background and ignored by everyday life and reason. Breton saw one example of the creative power of the unconscious in its ability to construct vivid and highly believable dreams. He writes:

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<sup>5</sup> Collected in *Les Pas Perdus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1924), translated into English by Mark Polizzotti as *The Lost Steps* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> André Breton, “First Surrealist Manifesto” 1924.

**The mind of the dreaming man** [bolded in text] is fully satisfied with whatever happens to it. The agonizing question of possibility does not arise. Kill, plunder more quickly, love as much as you wish. And if you die, are you not sure of being roused from the dead? Let yourself be led. Events will not tolerate deferment. You have no name. Everything Is inestimably easy.<sup>7</sup>

A crucial component to Breton's philosophy surrounding surrealism is his emphasis on frictionless thought and ease. A truly unconscious process should occur completely without any conscious action or effort on part of the person involved. He constantly uses language referencing a sensation of letting go as in, "let yourself be led" and "absence of all control" and to "surrender." There is a remarkable similarity between this notion and the ancient Hindu concept of "moksha" which comes from the Sanskrit word for "liberation" and refers to the moment of release from the cycle of rebirth ("karma").<sup>8</sup> The concept of "moksha" is of tremendous value to Eastern religions of Hindu ancestry, notably Buddhism and Zen Buddhism. In an accidental way, André Breton uncovered through his own means a deep sensibility towards a somewhat abstract religious concept.

In attempting to create a surrealist work, according to Breton, one would engage in "pure psychic automatism" effectively entering a state of mind where there is an "absence of all control" and a flow of which one would then attempt to transcribe "either verbally or in writing." In a sense, every work of surrealist art is an attempt at logging or

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* translates "Moksha" as "The final release of the soul from a cycle of incarnation; the bliss attained by this liberation." It is worth noting that "moksha" in its strict religious context would be the ultimate to attain; i.e. *complete* submission into a perceived realm outside all consciousness. The word is mentioned here because of the remarkable similarity of terminology both Breton and religious philosophers use to suggest attaining this "pure" state (i.e. "surrender," "let yourself be led," "let go" etc.) Breton's interest in the unconscious could also be compared to that of striving to achieve a state of "Zen," itself being a flavor of the concepts surrounding "moksha." For a brilliant and concise summary of these complex concepts and Eastern philosophy I recommend Alan Watt's book *The Way of Zen*.

recording a trip into this unconscious state. Breton describes the time he accidentally stumbled upon this process personally in the *First Surrealist Manifesto*:

One night, before falling asleep, I became aware of a most bizarre sentence, clearly articulated to the point where it was impossible to change a word of it, but still separate from the sound of any voice. It came to me bearing no trace of the events with which I was involved at that time, at least to my conscious knowledge...Immediately I had the idea of incorporating it into my poetic material, but no sooner had I invested it with poetic form than it went on to give way to a scarcely intermittent succession of sentences which surprised me no less than the first and gave me the impression of such a free gift that the control which I had had over myself up to that point seemed illusory and I no longer thought of anything but how to put an end to the interminable quarrel which was taking place within me.<sup>9</sup>

He continues to describe the quality and character of such images and ideas as one bears witness to them as “absurdities” of a particular type that defy any sense of logical categorization given that they arrived via illogical means (i.e. from the unconscious via “pure psychic automatism”).<sup>10</sup>

The Surrealist notion of the unconscious as an artistic territory to be explored created a methodology and philosophy of art effectively and completely divorced from all possible constraints of convention and established institutions. The surrealist mode of creation occurs *outside* the intellectual way of thought and furthers a path started by the Dadaists that suggests there *is* alternative merits outside of artistic dogma. There is no authority that can verify the legitimacy of one's own dreams.

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<sup>9</sup> André Breton, “First Surrealist Manifesto” 1924.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



1931.<sup>11</sup> Europe at the time had an abundance of collections of art from native Northwest Coast cultures and numerous books were published on the subject. Among these published in Germany at the time, *Tlingit und Haida. Indianerstämme der Westküste von Nordamerika* (1922) by Ernst Fuhrmann based on collections of German museums in Hamburg, Dresden, Bremen and the Museum of Natural History in Vienna. *Nordwestamerika Indianerkunst* (1923) by Leonard Adam based on the Jacobsens' collections of the Berlin museum. And *Primitive Art* (1927) by Franz Boas.<sup>12</sup> Marie Mauzé points out, “within the Surrealist circle, the ‘discovery’ of Native American art had occurred collectively as well as independently” as likeminded artists coalesced into close proximity of each other in Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Why would the Surrealists have this affinity towards Native art? The answer to this question has much to do with the Surrealists desire to further understand the unconscious as it relates to reality. When Breton had written the *First Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924 he pointed out the goal of Surrealism as a means to reach a synthesis between the outward reality of consciousness and the inward reality of the unconsciousness. As he writes, “I believe in the future resolution of these two states—outwardly so contradictory—which are dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak, I am aiming for its conquest, certain that I myself shall not attain

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<sup>11</sup> Marie Mauzé, “Totemic Landscapes and Vanishing Cultures Through the Eyes of Wolfgang Paalen and Kurt Seligmann,” *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 2 (2008), 2-3. The auctioned collection was “33 pieces in total, among them six masks, seven carved horn spoons, five model totem poles, four argillite pipes and other small sculpture.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 3.

it, but too indifferent to my death not to calculate the joys of such a possession.”<sup>14</sup> To Breton and his colleagues, the thesis of Surrealism was beginning to be supported in the growing understanding of these primitive cultures and way of life. The core foundations of these societies were complete polar opposites of the conventional post-colonialist worldview. By recognizing the value of a society completely divorced from the Western scientific model, the Surrealists had found the purest example of a way of life in which there were still living remnants of.

Thus, two members of the Surrealists circle would eventually make the jump beyond merely seeing collections of Native art in European museums, and visit the tribes first hand on their Native soil. These two were painters Kurt Seligmann and Wolfgang Paalen who were good friends and had both settled in Paris in 1929, eventually becoming intermingled with the Surrealists around André Breton.<sup>15</sup> Seligmann, both influenced by the Surrealists as well as with the help of a mandate from the Musée de l’Homme in Paris to bring back artifacts to be displayed in the museums collections, traveled to British Columbia in 1938.<sup>16</sup> Seligmann’s mandate was to bring back artifacts not adequately represented in the current collections of the museum.<sup>17</sup> The most valued and desired artifacts of the region were the great totem poles of the Gitksan (Figure 3). As Mauzé points out, “totem poles came to represent the symbols of Indianness for tourists. Native

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<sup>14</sup> André Breton, “First Surrealist Manifesto” 1924.

<sup>15</sup> Mauzé, “Totemic Landscapes,” 3. See also Amy Winter, *Wolfgang Paalen: Artist and Theorist of the Avant-Garde* (Westport, Conn. And London: Praeger, 2002) and Stephan E. Hauser, *Kurt Seligmann 1900-1962: Leben und Werk* (Basel: Schwabe & Co, 1997) for detailed biographies of Wolfgang Paalen and Kurt Seligmann.

<sup>16</sup> Hauser, *Kurt Seligmann*, 147 and Matrica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1995), 23.

<sup>17</sup> Matrica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1995), 23.



monumental sculptures were regarded as icons of British Columbia and were incorporated in the national heritage at a time when Canada was building its national identity.”<sup>18</sup> Seligmann stayed with a Gitksan community for four months and was successful in acquiring a totem pole but his respect, admiration, intellectual curiosity and ethnographic approach towards the Gitksam appeared to outweigh the desire to fulfill the museums mandate.<sup>19</sup> Seligmann quickly became very interested and entranced by the mythology and culture surrounding the Gitksan community he spent four months with. He wrote about a “totemic meaning” behind the monuments, in reference to the idea of the totem as a symbolic representation of the Natives spiritual connection between man and nature.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mauzé, “Totemic Landscapes,” 4. Also see Aldona Jonaitis, “Totem poles and the Indian New Deal,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* IX (2), 1989: 237-252; Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage, The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985); Leslie Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> In fact, Seligmann went to great lengths to acquire the totem pole that was, perhaps unsurprisingly, denied by the groups chief. Seligmann went as far as to “agree to be ritually adopted by the clan of the original owner through a symbolic marriage to a deceased women of [the] clan.” See Mauzé, “Totemic Landscapes” 7-8 and Hauser, *Kurt Seligmann*, 149.

<sup>20</sup> Hauser, *Kurt Seligmann*, 146.



**Fig. 3** *Tsimshian Totem Poles at Kispayax, British Columbia, 1939.* Eva Sulzer (Swiss, 1902-1990).

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. ©Succession Wolfgang Paalen and Eva, Sulzer, Berlin.

It seemed as if the more the Surrealists learned about primitive art, the more they began to notice that the aesthetic purity they had been striving for was already fully realized by the Native cultures. As Wolfgang Paalen writes to André Breton in August of 1939 just before traveling to the Pacific Northwest from New York:

I think I've arrived at a new way of looking at this art, which is much greater than we suppose in Europe, the awareness of a long walk in a deeper darkness than that of the forest, which would allow me to catch sight of the last ray of one of the most amazingly splendid cultures in an impregnably wild nature—here we are at the end of our journey to the North-West.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Written from Long Island, Correspondence Paalen-Breton, Bibliothèque Jacques-Doucet, BRT.C. 2232. Quoted in Mauzé, "Totemic Landscape," 11.

It appeared that Paalen had found what he was in search of, for he went on to publish the highly influential journal *DYN* in 1942, dedicated to promoting and raising awareness of a newly realized aesthetic centered around primitivism. In the words of scholar Jackson Rushing, “Paalen had a sustained interest into the spiritual dimension of Native Art and expressed the idea that an understanding of myth and totemism was necessary to the development of a new consciousness for modernity.”<sup>22</sup> It was through *DYN* that Paalen expressed these ideas to an artistic community much larger than the Surrealists. Just as experimental artists of New York (Jackson Pollock, Adolf Gottlieb, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman to name a few) had noticed something of interest in Native American art, Paalen’s *DYN* arrived at a ripe time to satisfy their curiosities. The journal *DYN* acted as a turning point in further solidifying the creative potential of a new aesthetic grounded in a Nativist perspective of art and life.

### **The New Image of *DYN***

“The Indians have the true painter’s approach in their capacity to get hold of appropriate images, and in their understanding of what constitutes painterly subject-matter...their vision has the universality of all real art.”

Jackson Pollock<sup>23</sup>

Wolfgang Paalen published an essay titled “Totem Art” in a special “Amerindian Number” issue of his new journal *DYN* in 1943. This essay best illustrates the

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<sup>22</sup> W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 121.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Robert Motherwell, *Arts and Architecture* (Feb. 1944).

culmination of what Paalen had found so important in the Native art he became so entranced by. It also acts as a fascinating look into the interdisciplinary and heterogeneous approach often used in avant-garde publications. As Gustav Regler remarked, “[‘Totem Art’ is] a study about the native art of the north-west-coast, highly appreciated by leading authorities in this field as the first serious discussion of the age and the psychological problem of this art.”<sup>24</sup>

Paalen in “Totem Art” discusses how the spiritual dimension of Amerindian culture as the binding force between man and nature can be realized as a “vital essence” within everything the culture creates, from totem poles to canoes. “According to [Paalen], totemism linked to the integration of supernatural forces in human life is expressed, in various performances and artistic productions, through emotional mimetism.”<sup>25</sup> Paalen posits using—perhaps now dated—evolutionary frameworks of the time that “primitive” cultures did not have the evolutionary capacity to fully distinguish itself from the world in which they lived. Therefore, “all pre-individualistic mentality in whatever race, not distinguishing clearly the subjective and the objective, itself identifies emotionally with its environing world [...] and it is this affective identification which creates the magic climate in which totemism is to be found.”<sup>26</sup> This emotional identification with the world perhaps explains the “totemic meaning” that Kurt Seligmann had wrote about while

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<sup>24</sup> Gustav Regler, *Wolfgang Paalen* (New York: Nierendorf Editions, 1946), 36.

<sup>25</sup> Mauzé, “Totemic Landscapes,” 12.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Paalen, “Totem Art,” *DYN* 4-5 (December 1943), 18. Paalens use of the term “pre-individualistic mentality” is best outlined in his earlier essay titled “The New Image” *DYN* 1 (April-May 1942) in which he distinguishes between contemporary societies as being individualistic centered and primitive life being communal and “pre-individualistic.” This idea will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

entranced by “the mysterious powers [totems] give out, the enigma of their wide open eyes staring at the snowy horizons, and dark borders.”<sup>27</sup>

While the idea of primitive culture being deeply emotionally rooted to the environment in which it lived was certainly not a brand new idea, Wolfgang Paalen acutely observed how this related in profound ways within their art. As he noted, “the [way] great anonymous Indian sculptors of the Northwest Coast, for instance spoke of their work in terms of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ implies their perfect interrelations with the fundamental problems of the community which produces them.”<sup>28</sup> Paalen contrasts this notion of “right” vs. “wrong” with the notion of “beauty” vs. “ugliness,” for in the observed Indian cultures, sculpting and art creation was thought in the same light as a moral obligation. According to Paalen, thinking art creation in such cultures is an attempt at creating something beautiful is a wholly incorrect attempt at understanding the art. To Paalen, the metric of “beauty” was a contemporary evolution as a means to judge art and to think of it as applicable to all art is only to show oneself as imbedded in a contemporary bias.<sup>29</sup>

In his essay “The New Image” that appeared as the first work in the first edition of *DYN*, Paalen uses this observation of Indian sculptors as the crux in his argument that judgments of beauty as a means to an end in art is arbitrary. The importance of this essay should not be overlooked as it expands upon surrealist ideology and describes an interesting characteristic role of avant-garde artists throughout history. Paalen begins by

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<sup>27</sup> Untitled typescript, n.d., Canadian Museum of Civilization, Library and Archives, Fonds Kurt et Arlette Seligmann (Vii-C-103M). Quoted and translated by Mauzé in “Totemic Landscapes,” 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Paalen, “The New Image,” *DYN* 1 (April-May 1942), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

first assuming that art is a representational form of reality and that “each conception of the world of a given culture has a corresponding ‘cosmogony’ of pictorial representation [...] Thus each culture has its own specific imagery.”<sup>30</sup> The avant-gardists of a particular culture skirt convention by being the first to represent this imagery visually. As Paalen describes it, they take part in “showing” before it itself becomes the “habitual fashion of *seeing*.”<sup>31</sup> It is this quality of avant-gardism that evokes initial backlash or distaste among people, as the imagery is “prefiguring” a new worldview not yet widely understood by the masses of the culture. Eventually convention catches up and the previously avant-garde imagery is now the “representative image” or widely accepted and no longer foreign image of the culture. This artistic game of cat and mouse is apparent throughout history as new artistic epochs become fashionable only to be set aside as new understandings of philosophy, astronomy and science allow wholly new representations to take form. As one example from “The New Image” points out:

To contemporaries of [Paolo] Uccello it seemed like an absurd ambition to want to trick the eye of spectators, asking them to *enter into* the picture. (Isn’t it [Giorgio] Vasari who relates that it was not comprehended why in those *new* [Renaissance] pictures the buildings became actually smaller laterally—or why the figures became surprisingly diminished in size, approaching an “arbitrary” horizontal line?) In following centuries those same “laws” of perspective were so completely taken for granted that until Picasso their application was supposed to be indispensable in all pictorial work.<sup>32</sup>

While this is an attractive notion of avant-gardism as a process involving foreshadowing new conceptions of reality, it is not the point of the essay. Ultimately, Paalen concludes that in modern society the effort of the avant-garde artist to “prefigure” what is eventually

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 9.

to become convention is in a sense, a fool's errand. By following his own logic into "our time," Paalen states how the "representative image," or the "ideal standard of realism in art" of our culture is fully realized in photography. Thus, "since photography alone can reflect reality directly and mechanically, all efforts to represent reality have become subordinated to the criterion of photographic resemblance."<sup>33</sup> In this fashion, any artist of this time is effectively trapped within the standards of convention revolving around realism and would be definable as "conventional" if they work within such a "representative image." This idea can help explain a key criticism Surrealists had with Salvador Dali for although he painted images of dreams, he did so using this "representative imagery" and by extension is submitting himself to the conventional. Paalen himself says rather bluntly, "to dream is an automatic activity, but to relate a dream in an academic style is with equal certainty not an automatic activity. Salvador Dali has thus never made paintings which could be qualified as automatic."<sup>34</sup>

As Paalen concludes in "The New Image," if one wants to truly be free from convention in contemporary culture they must completely free themselves from such associations altogether. Rather than continue the cat and mouse game that has defined the avant-garde movements over the centuries, Paalen points to an escape within a totally different framework where such distinctions between "convention" and invention didn't even exist. This, of course, being "the Golden Age of so called 'primitive' and 'savage' art [where] there is no full consciousness of the distinction between what is perceived and what is interpreted."<sup>35</sup> An illusive but intriguing message within "The New Image" is that

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 10.

the entire history of avant-garde artistic development has been rooted within the developing Western model of “progress.” It is precisely this evolutionary model that Paalen argues is exploitative through a capitalistic system rooted around individual desire for profit.<sup>36</sup> The objective of “The New Image” is two-fold: Firstly to point out how our conception of art history, even in its most explorative moments, is but a self-contained model of which does not have to be the only one; And secondly, to show that a “New Image” is to be found in the absolute freedom from the burden of having to always interpret what is perceived. The “Image” specifically, is found in the cultural realities in of Native American communities.

The observations within Wolfgang Paalens *DYN* were revolutionary in that they were among the first attempts within the art world at detailing a new consciousness as observed from tribal culture. Wolfgang Paalen and Kurt Seligmann were among those who were able to witness first hand cultures in which daily life is imbued with mythological symbolism and reverence. The totem poles and artifacts of Amerindian cultures represented in Seligmann and Paalen an essence and living proof of a different consciousness in which man does not separate itself from nature or its environment. The “resolution” of André Bretons “contradictory” inward and outward states of reality was not a contradiction to these tribal societies for they never were separate from each other. Through his essays in *DYN*, Paalen passionately conveys how tribal cultures not only exemplified a unified consciousness, but also in the same way had a unified sense of mankind’s oneness with nature. This rediscovery of Native culture within a new

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<sup>36</sup> As Paalen himself says, “A business age founded largely on the idea of individual profit could of course not achieve a spontaneous collective expression” and “in a civilization in which the true motive is exploitation of one another, every expression in anyway related to this motive is necessarily proscribed.” Ibid. 8.



psychological context not only explained art of a fundamentally *different* form and source, but it also was an anthropologic look at the possibility of a fundamentally different way of *life* as it related to contemporary society. With *DYN*, Wolfgang Paalen had invigorated the growing discourse on primitivism during the 1940s in the United States and abroad.

## Chapter 2

### **Rene d'Harnoncourt and John Collier**

As mentioned in the section “The Discovery of a Primitive Aesthetic,” Kurt Seligmann’s excursion to the Northwest was aided by both a mandate given to him from the French Musée de l’Homme as well as the Canadian government. During the same time the United States had similar interests in investigating Native American Indian culture. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in 1933, he came to office during great economic crisis. In order to help turn the economy around he promised change would come in the form of what was branded the “New Deal.” The “New Deal” aimed to reinvigorate the economy through various policies that would relate to a wide range of communities throughout the nation. Through the creative and progressive efforts of a handful of individuals within newly created governmental programs related to New Deal policies, some of these programs ended up directly involved in the creation of greatly influential Native American themed art exhibitions in the 1940s and 1950s.

One of these individuals was Vienna born Rene d'Harnoncourt. Although born to a very wealthy family, after the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1924 of which he was a descendant, his fortune (a part of his great-grandfathers estate) became property of the new Czechoslovakian government.<sup>37</sup> By somewhat of a strange inclination d'Harnoncourt decides to move to Mexico where he surmised his sudden lack

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<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Hellman, “Profiles: Imperturbable Nobel,” *New Yorker*, May 7, 1960, 64.

of money would impact him the least.<sup>38</sup> Initially struggling to find a job, d'Harnoncourt eventually ran across an antique collector and dealer who he had known back in Austria. He began working for the antique dealer as a delivery agent. One of these deliveries sometime in 1924—in what would turn out to be a very fortunate circumstance—was to an American living in Mexico City by the name of William Green who was the executive vice president of the Huasteca Oil Company (a Mexican subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey).<sup>39</sup> William Green ended up taking a liking to d'Harnoncourt's knowledge of the antiques that he had on display in his home and decided to hire him to find more and start buying for him. This was the first real job in which d'Harnoncourt was making decent money in Mexico and so he made an effort to seek out stores that sold rare and unusual objects, or "curios." Eventually he ran across another American named Frederick Davis who owned the Sonora News Company that had a department that wished to collect and sell such objects. Davis had offered d'Harnoncourt to run the collection to which he did to great effect, collecting enough of the local Indian arts and crafts to arrange an exhibition in 1927.<sup>40</sup>

D'Harnoncourt's position at the Sonora News Company was the start in a chain of events that would eventually lead up to him arranging one of the most influential Indian

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<sup>38</sup> D'Harnoncourt: "it's much easier to be poor far away from home than very close. I wanted to go to China [...] but I didn't have enough money. Argentina was also too expensive, and I wasn't on the quota for United States, so I decided to go to Mexico as an authority on creosote." Creosote is a liquid that can be distilled from tar. It had various uses in industry and medicine as an antiseptic. Rene d'Harnoncourt had published a thesis on "The Creosote Contents of Certain Soft Coals of Southern Yugoslavia" while enrolled at the University of Graz. He remarked in the same article that he "ran across a copy [of his thesis] a few years ago and couldn't understand a word of it." Ibid. 64.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 70. The rest of the text is to be assumed to be taken from the "Profiles" article until further noted.

Art exhibitions in American history and to become the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York by 1949. D'Harnoncourt had begun to achieve enough of a recognition as he ran the art department of the Sonora News Company that American ambassador Dwight Morrow—who was interested in collecting such art—had become a patron of d'Harnoncours. They developed a friendship together and shared an interest in promoting the Indian art in America. D'Harnoncourt says of his time in Mexico, “the thing about Mexico that was most important to me was my discovery of pre-Columbian art. It has a strong impact; you start seeing differentiations, and then it becomes an organic whole.” This statement evokes similar imagery felt in Seligmanns and Paalens comments on the enigmatic qualities of the art of the Northwest American Indians of which they were to soon observe. With the help and mutual interest of Ambassador Morrow, d'Harnoncourt was able to put together a massive collection of “twelve hundred paintings and specimens of native workmanship from the days of the conquest to the present” for an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in October of 1930.

What began as a combination of a hobby and a means to make a living for d'Harnoncourt had turned him into an expert authority on pre-Columbian art with friendly connections to the American government. A very important figure in this regard was the public official John Collier who was appointed the commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1933 under the newly elected president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. The BIA dealt with the management of the millions of acres of Native American land that was held under the government. As commissioner, Collier aimed to restore Indian tribal communities and undue oppressive assimilationist policies that had historically emerged from the Dawes Allotment Act of 1877 that had forced Native Americans to abandon

their own culture “by making them into competitive individualists.”<sup>41</sup> Collier helped to bring back to public awareness the colonial aggression imposed on Native Americans by simultaneously promoting the uniqueness of their culture and allowing public dialogue of it flourish. He accomplished this by enacting the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and creating the Indian Arts and Crafts Board also in 1934.

By 1937 Rene d’Harnoncourt had toured the country displaying his pre-Columbian art exhibition that he had premiered at the MET in 1930. He was also supervising a radio broadcast titled “Art in America” and an active instructor at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. John Collier recognizing d’Harnoncourt’s reputation and seeing a potential political ally appoints him as the general manager of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in 1937.<sup>42</sup> In the years to follow these two figures will have effectively prepared the public consciousness with a familiarity of Native American and Indian culture. It is largely through the work of Rene d’Harnoncourt and John Collier that artists began to pursue similar artistic explorations into this art as the surrealists. By the time Paalen publishes the Amerindian issue of *DYN* with the translated help of Robert Motherwell 1942, an American experimental audience is primed for its message.

### **The Politics of Primitivism**

With Rene d’Harnoncours new place within government programs, he now had a much larger voice in impacting public opinion on the image of Native Americans. By the

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<sup>41</sup> Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>42</sup> Hellman, “Profiles: Imperturbable Nobel,” *New Yorker* (7 May 1960), 89-90.

1940s, D'Harnoncourt had become a voice within America that began to espouse Native culture and to overturn the idea that to be "primitive" was to be inferior. Through unambiguous language d'Harnoncourt remarked about how Western civilization had a, "childish fascination with our own mechanical advancement [which] has made us scorn the cultural achievements of all people...unwilling to follow...in the direction of what we believe to be the only worthwhile form of progress."<sup>43</sup> This remarkable statement could be read within the context of African American civil rights and still have the same connotation. As will be discussed in later chapters, this aspect of "primitivism" applied to the context of the development of jazz within America is a key component to understanding the development of the avant-garde within the music. According to d'Harnoncourt, in examining the civilization of these societies of the past it becomes obvious that there was a wholly different model of development to be learned and benefitted from. As he states in 1939:

The American Indian has in the past shown an admirable ability to cope with his physical surroundings, to build a well-ordered society and a highly specialized culture even in the most unfavorable environments, and...his achievements are of such value that were they more generally known they would become a real contribution to our contemporary life and would thus give the Indian his deserved place in the contemporary world.<sup>44</sup>

These words and the implications behind them had echoed throughout artistic communities.<sup>45</sup> The abstract expressionist painter Barnett Newman wrote in 1944 after seeing an exhibition of pre-Columbian sculpture at the Wakefield Gallery in New York,

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<sup>43</sup> Frederick H. Douglass and René d'Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941), 12.

<sup>44</sup> Rene d'Harnoncourt, "North American Indian Arts," *Magazine of Art* (1939): 164.

<sup>45</sup> See "The Poetics of Primitivism" section later in this text for a more detailed view of poet Charles Olson's direct involvement in government during World War II.

“a full appreciation of these works should force us to abandon our condescending attitude towards the ‘primitive’ label with all its confusing implications of child-like perception.”<sup>46</sup> Another abstract expressionist painter Richard Pousette-Dart writes, “I felt close to the spirit of Indian art. My work came from some spirit or force in America, not Europe.”<sup>47</sup> Jackson Pollock similarly comments that, “the Indians have the true painter’s approach in their capacity to get hold of appropriate images, and in their understanding of what constitutes painterly subject-matter...their vision has the universality of all real art.”<sup>48</sup> Pollock’s comment on the “vision” and “images” of the Indians carries a similar connotation in the words of psychologist Carl Gustav Jung who when in describing his concept of the “collective unconscious” links it with the “vision of the artist.” As he states, “this unconscious, buried in the structure of the brain and disclosing its living presence only through the medium of creative fantasy, is the *suprapersonal unconscious*. It comes alive in the creative man, it reveals itself in the vision of the artist.”<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to see Jung write of the creative facility of the unconscious mind in similar language of the surrealists. The theories and concepts of Carl Jung are worth looking at in some detail as he acted as a pivotal point of transference of abstract avant-garde concepts between the visual and literary art world.

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<sup>46</sup> *Pre-Columbian Stone Sculpture*, Wakefield Gallery, May 16-June 5, 1944, exhibition catalogue; Barnett Newman Papers, microfilm reel 3481, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute. Quoted in Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity* (The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 44.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Belgrad, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Jackson Pollock, interview, *Arts and Architecture* (Feb. 1944).

<sup>49</sup> Carl Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, 2d ed., R. F. C. Hull, trans. (Princeton: Bollingen Foundation and Princeton University Press, 1970), 9-11.

## The Avant-Garde Jung

During the same time the Surrealists had begun to explore Native Indian art and John Collier and Rene d'Harnoncourt had begun the politicizing the reinterpretation of what it means to be "primitive" within America, psychologist Carl Gustav Jung was championing similar arguments in ways that remarkably conceptualized the entire avant-garde image. The same fears and skepticism that had jumpstarted the Dadaists and eventual Surrealists also played a large role in the ideas that Jung would go on to develop. Jung's mentions how "the catastrophe of the Great War and the subsequent extraordinary manifestations of a profound mental disturbance [was] needed to arouse a doubt that everything was well with the white man's mind."<sup>50</sup> To Jung, this "profound mental disturbance" is not just a result of the horrors attributed to imperialist societies but also stems from "a rapid increase of science and technics which attracted human consciousness to such an extent that it forgot the unaccountable forces of the unconscious mind."<sup>51</sup> Jung is speaking of the spiritual or mystical element of which contemporary society is actively separating from. Jung's negative vision of contemporary society is centered on the idea that man has become disillusioned from what was a healthy spiritual and physical connection to the world in which he lived, leading to a state of confusion and inevitable conflict. In a strikingly cognizant lecture called "Archaic Man" given in 1931, Jung had the following to say on this topic:

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<sup>50</sup> Carl Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 95.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 58.



Identifications, brought about by the projection of psychic happenings, create a world in which man is contained not only physically, but psychically as well. To a certain extent he coalesces with it. In no way is he master of this world, but rather its component. Primitive man, in Africa for instance, is still far from the glorification of human powers. He does not dream of regarding himself as the lord of creation. His zoological classification does not culminate in *homo sapiens*, but in the elephant. Next comes the lion, then the python or the crocodile, then man and the lesser beings. It never occurs to him that he might be able to rule nature; it is civilized man who strives to dominate nature and therefore devotes his greatest efforts to the discovery of natural causes which will give him the key to nature's secret laboratory.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to note that Jung's comparison of "primitive man" to animals is done so in the most positive rather than negative way. Just as the native tribes Seligman and Paalen had visited represented man's mystical connection with the animal kingdom with the creation of totem poles, Jung too is making an argument in favor of the concept that man's connection with nature is healthy. The disillusionment occurs when man "strives to dominate nature" and as a result distinctly separates oneself from what was once understood as a holistic relationship.

Carl Jung's concept of what became called the "collective unconscious" was a nuanced way to articulate what he believed to be holistic qualities of the unconscious. To Jung, "the true history of the mind is not preserved in learned volumes, but in the living mental organism of everyone."<sup>53</sup> Daniel Belgrad does an excellent job of describing this otherwise abstract concept in a simplified and concise manner:

[T]he collective unconscious pre-existed the individual. Each person forged an unstable *persona* by gathering some of these unconscious contents into consciousness, while leaving the greater part unarticulated and unassimilated. Individual identity was like a wave on the surface of the sea of the collective unconsciousness; and like a wave it was prone to breaking. This process, repeated

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<sup>52</sup> Carl Jung, "Archaic Man," in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, 144.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, 2d ed., R. F. C. Hull, trans. (Princeton: Bollingen Foundation and Princeton University Press, 1970), 9-11.

several times during the lifespan of the individual, Jung called “individuation.” [...] It was during this process that the collective unconscious would assert its presence by generating archetypal images.<sup>54</sup>

Jung’s “archetypal images” are the patterns and symbols of the collective unconscious that surface again and again in society, taking on different forms in accordance to its relative society in the form of myth and folklore. For example, Gitksan totem poles could perhaps be thought of as an archetypal image manifested within tribal society representing the archetype of “oneness” with nature. In a similar fashion, Jesus Christ could perhaps be interpreted as an archetypal image manifested within a more modern society representing the archetype of transcendence and spirituality. This notion of archetypal imagery was appealing to artists in how it provided a visual language of sorts in which to represent unconscious processes.

Carl Jung played a large influential role within art circles as his philosophy and psychology started to become widely available in English by 1943. In that year the following Jung books were available in English: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, *Psychological Types*, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, *The Integration of the Personality*, and, *Psychology and Religion*.

Primitivism quickly became the foundation from which a counter-culture could stand upon and denounce the perceived shortcomings and failures of the Western-European model of progress. As a result of the retrospective look backwards at these civilizations, people found an alternative nested within the worldview of Native societies

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<sup>54</sup> Daniel Belgrad, *Culture of Spontaneity*, 58. See also Carl Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, Stanley Dell, trans. (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939).

of past. It was exactly this worldview that fueled the avant-garde and would characterize the foundational aesthetics of which came to be. The qualities of primitivism can be found in the roots of the nearly all of what was recognized as avant-garde.

### **The Poetics of Primitivism**

“...We as loose, disassociated (linguistically), yawping speakers of a new language, are privileged (I guess) to sense and so to seek to discover that possible thing which is disturbing the metrical table of values—as unknown elements would disturb Mendelyeev’s table of the periodicity of atomic weights and so lead to discoveries.”

William Carlos Williams<sup>55</sup>

When André Breton had published the “First Surrealist Manifesto” in 1924, surrealism was a literary before it was visual. The generation of painters around Wolfgang Paalen, Salvador Dali and Robert Motherwell began to synthesize the surrealist process of “pure psychic automatism” to the act of painting whilst discovering the prescient profundity of primitive worldview as it related to 20<sup>th</sup> century conditions. The literary explorations did not cease with André Breton but rather prefigured the developments of a different kind of poetry that recognized “a work of art is important only as evidence, in its structure, of a new world which it has been created to affirm”<sup>56</sup> in a strikingly similar fashion to Paalen’s notion of the avant-garde prefiguring a “new

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<sup>55</sup> William Carlos Williams, “The Poem as a Field of Action,” In *Selected Essays* (New York: Random House, 1954), 286.

<sup>56</sup> William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1951), 341.

image.” A central figure within the poetic sphere that championed such perspectives was Charles Olson.

Much like the Surrealists, Olson desired to remove logic and overt conscious input into the work of poetry and instead favored spontaneity. As he outlines in his seminal work “Projective Verse:” “...the conventions which logic has forced on syntax must be broken open as quietly as must the too set feed of the old line.” In much the same way that Breton had used his “First Surrealist Manifesto” to jumpstart an artistic exploration of spontaneous unconscious creation, so too did Olson use “Projective Verse” to call to action explorations into new poetic methodology divorced from conventional logic-based systems. Like Paalen, Olson had also discovered the primitive worldview as an exemplary means to this end as evidenced within primitive centered themes of “Projective Verse”:

It comes to this: the use of a man, by himself and thus by others, lies in how he conceives his relation to nature, that force to which he owes his somewhat small existence. If he sprawl, he shall find little to sing but himself, and shall sing, nature has such paradoxical ways, by way of artificial forms outside himself. But if he stays inside himself, if he is contained within his nature as he is participant in the larger force, he will be able to listen, and his hearing through himself will give him secrets objects share. And by an inverse law his shapes will make their own way. It is in this sense that the projective act, which is the artist’s act in the larger field of objects, leads to dimensions larger than the man. For a man’s problem, the moment he takes speed up in all its fullness, is to give his work his seriousness, a seriousness sufficient to cause the thing he makes to try to take its place alongside the things of nature. This is not easy. Nature works from reverence, even in her destruction (species go down with a crash). But breath is man’s special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts. And when a poet rests in these as they are in himself (in his physiology, if you like, but the life in him, for all that) then he, if he chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Charles Olson, “Projective Verse,” reprinted in Donald Allen, *The New American Poetry*, (University of California Press, 1999), 386-89.

Olson's continual reference to the relationship between man and nature and the mystical reference to "a larger force" mimics Paalen's notion of "emotional mimetism" and "vital essence" observed in the practice of primitive cultures and written about in *DYN*.

Olson's encountering of these primitive themes was a two-fold endeavor involving both politics and artistic desire. Olson's mentor was poet William Carlos Williams (quoted above), a progressive poet whose work featured the skepticism of colonialism. Apart from this, Charles Olson also found a place within the propaganda machine of politics surrounding World War II. Daniel Belgrad writes how "the aesthetic of spontaneity emerged in response to the wartime triumph of corporate liberalism and its techniques of 'information management'."<sup>58</sup> This corporate liberalism was the result of government favoring the cooperation of private industry during a time of war to help the war effort. However, with the intellectual support of poet and writer Archibald MacLeish (who was the head at the Office of Facts and Figures which was converted over to the Office of War Information in 1942), people like Charles Olson, Ben Shahn, John Houseman, Robert Sherwood, Owen Lattimore, Malcom Cowley, and Ruth Benedict had all joined the Office of War Information "to fight fascism and articulate a social vision for the postwar period."<sup>59</sup> Like John Collier and Rene d'Harnoncourt, people like Archibald MacLeish and Charles Olson had used the internal structures of governmental programs to create a voice that would reach people on more public scales.

Charles Olson's connection and interest in native culture is further exemplified in looking at his correspondences to his poet friend Robert Creeley in which he writes

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<sup>58</sup> Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. See also Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 8-13, 22-23.

positively about his visits to the Yucatan where he studied Mayan hieroglyphics. Belgrad writes of this correspondence, “the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico seemed ‘precisely the contrary’ of modern America. In this connection, he referred to William Blake’s ‘careful discrimination’ between the contrary and the opposite—the contrary offered a positive alternative to social and spiritual imbalance, while the opposite was merely a negative reflection, equally unbalanced in itself.”<sup>60</sup> This idea of thinking of a contrarian society rather than an opposite one mimics Wolfgang Paalen’s message of “The New Image,” where the dualities present (i.e. man vs. nature, consciousness vs. unconsciousness and object vs. subject) are false dichotomies not manifested in primitive cultures. Olson himself saw in Mayan culture the same non-existence of dualities that had become conventional in modern Western society and became fascinated with how this manifested in the language of ancient hieroglyphics.

### **The New York School, Bohemia, and *Yugen***

Poet Charles Olson’s fascination with hieroglyphics and language was not solo endeavor. During the 1940s there was an increase in artistic exploration into the meaning of language and methods of exploration and experimentation of what was previously taken as convention. A new magazine titled *Iconograph*, published and edited by Kenneth Beaudoin exemplified this developing trend as it appeared, “in conjunction with an exhibit at Beaudoin’s Galerie Neuf on East 79<sup>th</sup> Street” and “In addition to the paintings of Peter Busa, Robert Barrell, Gertrude Barrer, Oscar Collier, Howard Daum,

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<sup>60</sup> Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 45.

Ruth Lewin, Lillian Orloff, and Robert Smith, the exhibit included a Haida totem pole.”<sup>61</sup> Similarly, within the visual arts, abstract expressionist painter Robert Motherwell aided in bringing aspects of the primitive aesthetic to New York in the early 1940s. In 1941 Motherwell had visited Mexico and met up with Wolfgang Paalen and stayed to help edit *DYN*.<sup>62</sup> Motherwell later said of this experience how he “went around explaining the theory of automatism to everybody... I was trying to lay the basis of a new aesthetic based on free association... It was a surrealist technique but it had all kinds of possibilities that had really never been developed.”<sup>63</sup>

Networks of these artists became extremely concentrated in New York, forming what was later dubbed the “New York School.” Abstract expressionist painters, beat poets, experimental writers and musicians all intermingled in spots around the Lower East Side of Manhattan creating an electric bohemian atmosphere that was welcoming to anyone dabbling in progressive lifestyles. This scene was best represented in hotbeds such as the Five Spot Café on 5 Cooper Square where artists not only shared a social space but even engaged in multimedia projects that exemplified the growing modern aesthetics. Poets read alongside jazz musicians and painters performed onstage if the moment called for it. It is of no surprise that the music being performed in these intense intermingling of artists was jazz, and an increasingly avant-garde one at that. Why was jazz the musical background in which these avant-garde artists most felt at home?

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Motherwell, interviews with Paul Cummings, Nov. 24, 1971-May 1, 1974, typescript, 34-35, Robert Motherwell Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## **Rejuvenating the Primitive Aesthetic in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America**

World War I had aided in bringing some of the European experimentalists over to America. As people sought to escape war-torn Europe, many arrived in New York. New York at the time had a fledging experimental art scene of its own. The Art Students League of New York was one such school that during the 1920s had trained the likes of Jackson Pollock, John Graham, Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. These individuals would come to prominence in the 1940s and play a large role in carrying an aesthetic that would define the avant-garde scene of the times.

### **The Avant-Garde Aesthetic**

The reflection upon primitivism that began during the early decades of the 20th century had exploded by the mid century. With the help of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and Good Neighbor policy initiatives there was a dramatic retrospective of the cultures of pre-Columbian and Native American societies. The appointment of John Collier as the commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs led to a number of progressive initiatives that raised public awareness of Native American history and helped invigorate a new artistic aesthetic. The fascination of the primitive aesthetic among artists, writers and poets alike could be contributed to a refreshing quality of the foundational concept of man's inseparable connection with nature. Ironically, the modernists of the 20th century now had an historic model of old cultures that provided them with a completely new perception of the world they currently inhabited. Attempting



to perceive the world through a primitive lens was a refreshing departure from the pervading 20th century industrialized logic-based model of society.

Underneath the potential political implications and direct societal influence of the primitive retrospectives there was a collective exploration of a deeper force. Psychologist Sigmund Freud was wrestling with the mysteries of the unconscious when surrealist André Breton had published the First Surrealist Manifesto 1924. Breton latched onto Freud's fascination with the unconsciousness but it would be the ideologies of psychologist Carl Gustav Jung who would better fit the surrealist's declarations. Jung's concept of the collective unconscious provided a conceptual framework that molded nicely with the burgeoning appeal of native cultures that shared the political and aesthetic concerns surrounding primitivism. The mythological archetypes of Jung's psychology helped create a visual language that could provide insight into the primitive thought process as translated through art. Curious modern artists, in a sense, reverse engineered this language to create art of their own; simultaneously being "avant-garde" and "primitive" in their emulations of Indian life and art. In consciously and sincerely invoking ancient creative processes, the very term "avant-garde" receives an ironic twist when applied to these early experiments into abstract expressionism.

The appeal of Jungian archetypal figures was also felt by those outside of the visual arts. Poet Charles Olson coalesced Jung's imagery into the concept of the ideogram. Olson became more interested in the image or character as a package containing meaning beyond or even outside its surface. In the same sense that an ideogram symbolizes an idea or thing without indicating the sounds to say it, Olson became fascinated with the ways in which a word could symbolize something beyond its

surface interpretation. These words were what Olson labeled “glyphs” and helped form a basis of a new poetic language where meaning and associations live below the surface of the text.

All of these concepts revolved around shared characteristics that should by now begin to come to light. The Surrealists sought to explore the land of myth and dream and capture its peculiarities as best it could. Those explorations culminated in the visual art of abstract expressionist painters and the literature featured in art magazines such as Wolfgang Paalen’s *DYN* and LeRoi Jones’ (Amiri Baraka) *Yugen*. Similarly, Charles Olson’s exploration into the hidden potentialities within symbols of language led to his work “Projective Verse” and echoes the characteristics of the Surrealists, Jungian psychology and primitivism. The shared artistic thirst of every one of these developments is rooted in the desire to find meaning behind concepts not available within conventional society. The fascination with mythology and primitivism can be correlated to rapid secularization of industrialized society. The glorification of the unconscious and of spontaneity was a thesis in response to the perceived failures of science and logic. In each their own ways, these artistic explorers were taking part in a collective creation of an entirely different worldview. In placing oneself in the mindset of these artists, it becomes clear that what is commonly recognized as “avant-garde” is merely the dissonance experienced by those not sharing the same perceptions of reality. The avant-gardists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been “showing” us the imagery of an altogether different worldview that has yet to become representative to the rest of us.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See Wolfgang Paalen, “The New Image,” *DYN* 1 (April-May 1942), 9. Also see Chapter 1, “The New Image of DYN.”

By the 1950s these concepts had evolved and were flourishing within America art cultures. Within the art centers of the country the themes and characteristics of the avant-garde were always within reach. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the avant-garde aesthetic came to fruition from numerous vantage points, most of which directly aimed to disconnect from institutionalization. Niche artistic cultures where like-minded artists, poets, musicians and academics felt connected began to form collectives of like-minded individuals that upon hitting a critical mass, began to propagate into the very institutions and sectors from which they originally disconnected from.

## Chapter 3

### **Jazz: An Alternative Worldview**

In observing the developments of avant-garde trends in light of the role in which primitivism and anti-colonialist mindset and aesthetics take the forefront, it becomes clear that progressive art movements stem from a desire to achieve an “otherness.” The means in which this is achieved varies between the arts, but the creative source remains the same. Ultimately the end result of this creative process is one that is divorced from the Western post-colonial tradition in favor of a new path that reinvents the frameworks that previously defined the arts in which they emerged. The development of jazz during the 20<sup>th</sup> century exemplifies this trend in the musical space of popular culture. The originators of jazz—both geographically and culturally—are in themselves impossible to pinpoint in any one fashion and yet feature aspects of nearly everything it comes in contact with, forming a collective whole that from the very beginning was an “otherness” of a unique vantage point separate from the Western model of European music. In this fashion, the entirety of jazz could be thought of as an “avant-garde” art movement, though it doesn’t particularly become totally self-conscious of this fact until the developments of bebop of the 1940s and eventually free jazz of the later 1950s. The following sections will look at how this history of jazz is itself something separate from the Western musical tradition resulting in analogous creative philosophies to those of the Surrealists, abstract expressionists and poets of progressive circles.

## **The Difficulties of Historical Models of Jazz**

The evolution of art throughout history has left us in the current day with a multiplicity of bits and pieces to look at and analyze in the attempt to formulate some solid framework or story to its progression. In doing so we risk sacrificing and downplaying sometimes-critical apexes of history for the simplicity of a label. What one ultimately ends up with is a least common denominator that binds a particular history together at the expense of its essence. The situation can get more complicated and obscured when an historical event happens or is happening in the modern era.

This becomes prevalent when looking into 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century music. Within contemporary art music (as well as popular music), there has been a seemingly exponential growth in what has become a multitude of genres, ideologies, musical definitions, characteristics, composers, and experimentation. As technology and ease of use increases, more and more people are capable of creating music. The net result of this is a marketplace saturated with musical content. In retrospect, musical historians attempt to dig through these bits and pieces and compile threads of evolution of musical ideas and genres. Of course, one of the threads of history is that of jazz.

Every musical historian looking to put together the pieces of jazz history together is faced with an extremely complicated task. Not only does the evolution of jazz not quite follow a linear path, in many cases it creates constant debate over what even constitutes jazz. This debate rings through nearly every point of the history of jazz where a new style

branches off and conservative jazz historians argue it is a break from the traditions of jazz while progressives argue it is the future or further evolution of jazz.<sup>65</sup>

Realizing the complexity of the evolution of art forms through history, it is not the purpose of this chapter to try and argue yet more labels and definitions of jazz but to rather look at the evolution as a whole. This may be done by firstly taking a look at some of the very origins of jazz in an attempt to establish a point of reference. In establishing a basic model of the origins of jazz it becomes possible to pinpoint certain pre-existing characteristics that can act as tools of reference when looking into what instigates change or more specifically, *what* changes within the genre. This can be used to evaluate if a change had in fact occurred and that it was not just the excited opinions of critics and musicians of the times. This will also help reveal if change within a genre of music is influenced by the progression and maturity of a few original core tenets rather than a constant rewriting and deconstruction of the genre as a whole. Arriving at this conclusion would satisfy both conservative and progressive scholars as it both holds onto the idea of original threads of jazz while at the same time still evolving and pushing them into new horizons.

This chapter will look to answer such questions as what instigates a change of style of jazz (or any art music), the role of cultural settings and developments in changing

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<sup>65</sup> See Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: a Social and Musical History*, (Berkeley: University of California: 1997) and Gary Carner, "Introduction: [Literature of Jazz]," *Black American Literature Forum* 25.3 (1991), 441-48. This is ignoring the even deeper layer of debate that both the progressives and conservatives share sides on involving commercialism in which DeVeaux has the following comment: "Both sides faces the same obstacles - the indifference and ignorance of the general public, the hostility of 'commercial interests' and the cultural establishment - and knew at heart that what they had in common outweighed their differences." See DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 537.

musical traditions, how freedom from structure influences new forms of creativity, and ultimately, how all of this would set the scene of jazz in the near future?

An exhaustive range of literature exists that attempts to sew the seams of jazz history together into a logical framework. Any student wishing to read into the history of jazz quickly finds it hard pressed to locate a source of knowledge that lacks some sort of bias on the side of the historiographer. Perhaps because it still remains a relatively new form of music and that there is much to still be said about its impact, it puts the authors of these works in a difficult scholarly position. While this may seem like a poor situation to be in from the perspective of the curious student, it also makes for a highly engaging process of discovery and understanding. In looking at all of these positions and perspectives of jazz history, the debates, the people, the time period, the culture, the massive scope and sometimes illusive features of jazz music, a complex array of knowledge emerges. It would be a disservice to jazz to ignore or be naïve to the complexity and idiosyncrasies of any single part in this array of knowledge. After all, it is this macro characteristic of complexity that perhaps *truly* gives the most clear picture of what it is that jazz is all about. It never was a simple process and it never will be.

This paper will outline some of the bodies of work that may be used as a jumping off point for further research into the history of jazz. Because the point of this paper remains to look into what invigorates change within an art medium such as jazz, it will be by no means an exhaustive discussion of works on jazz history. Instead, the focus will be on covering a range of perspectives and criticism on evolution of the art medium.

### **Syncretism and Innate Musicality Within the Prehistory of jazz**

It is important to look at a work on the history of jazz that attempts to distance itself from the more dangerous position of claiming authority on the subject. Ted Gioia's *The History of Jazz* catalogues the progression of jazz into eight categories: Prehistory of jazz, New Orleans jazz, the birth of solo jazz, Harlem, the swing era, modern jazz, "the fragmentation of jazz styles" and "freedom and beyond." The strength of Gioia's work lies within his section on what he calls the "Prehistory of Jazz." The very roots of jazz has become a hazy and questionable territory of research. While it is notoriously hard to accurately pinpoint the true origin of something such as jazz, it is at the same time crucial in understanding the nature of its progression as it ultimately acts as the truest reference point for comparison. One must have a start to measure and compare with to extrapolate what evolves through time.

Gioia places an emphasis on the music of African culture as well as the complex interaction of European and African culture. Gioia pinpoints the first outcroppings of jazz in the open area of New Orleans called Congo Square.<sup>66</sup> It is here that African Americans gathered to dance, stomp, and perform music that would seem right at home in Africa and lead to the further development of what we now know as jazz. An interesting feature of Congo Square music was its ability to expand its rich African cultural influence into future generations of American musicians:

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<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting that the following references to "Congo Square" is just *one* of many attempts at pinpointing an origin to jazz. There were of course happenings of what could be called jazz throughout the country including minstrelsy troupes, ragtime developments and other traveling forms of entertainment during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century America.



This transplanted African ritual lived on as part of a collective memory and oral history of the city's black community, even among those too young to have participated in it. These memories shaped in turn, the jazz performers' self-image, their sense of what it meant to be an African-American musician.<sup>67</sup>

Because of the “collective memory” feature of Congo Square music, it is fairly safe to label it as one of the origins of American jazz as we know it today. Gioia also acknowledges that European events and cultural interactions outside of America a thousand years before the founding of New Orleans had an impact on the music that has become known as jazz. Gioia has an interesting theory of this process in which he uses the label “syncretism”:

The Americanization of African music had already begun, and with it came the Africanization of American music...Anthropologists call this process ‘syncretism’ – the blending together of cultural elements that previously existed separately. This dynamic, so essential to the history of jazz, remains powerful even in the present day, when African-American styles of performance blend seamlessly with other musics of other cultures, European, Asian, Latin, and, coming full circle, African.<sup>68</sup>

This blending and fusion of styles will remain to be a key characteristic of jazz as it develops through the generations. The ability of jazz to infuse itself with other styles could very well be nothing more than a testament to the richly diverse cultural melting pot from which it is originally stemmed from.

Before moving onward from the prehistory of jazz another viewpoint must be acknowledged. This viewpoint is of course that of the musician. As stated above, a “collective memory” carries itself back to Congo Square. But what does this collective memory encompass? If one is to establish a point of historical reference within jazz history, it would be a critical mistake to ignore what jazz meant to the musicians even

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<sup>67</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 5-6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 5.

before it would become labeled as “jazz.” Sidney Bechet offers us a useful perspective that can help us with this question when he says, “My grandfather, that’s about the furthest I can remember back...Sundays when the slaves would meet – that was their free day – he beat out rhythms on the drums at the square – Congo Square they called it...He was a musician. No one had to explain notes or feeling or rhythm to him. It was all there inside him, something he was always aware of.”<sup>69</sup> This idea of an innate sense of rhythm and feeling mimics that which the Surrealists aimed to achieve when looking to tap into the innate unconscious mode of thought. It also reminds one of the communal aspect and ritual function of tribal cultures that results in the “totemic essence” Wolfgang Paalen and Kurt Seligman were entranced by in their observations of Oceanic natives. This notion of collective memory and “Africanization of American music” begins to show the “otherness” that defines jazz as distinct from the Western musicological canon and echoes the primitivism shown in previous chapters that was central to the avant-garde movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Even before jazz became labeled as such, it was already a complex musical genre in the works, busy collecting and forming itself from cultural interactions from around the world. This is the syncretism dynamic that Gioia brings to light. The amalgamation of cultures, settings, environments and ideologies influenced the development of a style of music that has resulted in very origins of jazz on the Congo Square here in America. As such, the presence of syncretism will become one of the units of measurement used in this paper to evaluate change within the genre.

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<sup>69</sup> Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle: An Autobiography*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2002) 6.

Sidney Bechet's comment also gives credence to the influence that extended from early Congo Square musicians and gives an outlook on why, and even how these early musicians performed the way they did. They had carried within them a distinct separation from what art music was known to be. There was no knowledge of music theory, what notes were or how to play them, and no idea about common musical structure. What *was* there was a pure knowledge of what sound, feeling, and rhythm was that the culture itself had developed. This idea of an innate sense of rhythm and feeling mimics that which the Surrealists aimed to achieve when looking to tap into the innate unconscious mode of thought. It also reminds one of the communal aspect and ritual function of tribal cultures that results in the "totemic essence" Wolfgang Paalen and Kurt Seligman were entranced by in their observations of Oceanic natives. Similarly, the notion of collective memory and "Africanization of American music" begins to show the "otherness" that defines jazz as distinct from the Western musicological canon and echoes the primitivism shown in previous chapters that was central to the avant-garde movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This led to an innate sense of musicality within African Americans that was in every way different than the innate sense of musicality within the Western tradition. In a sense, this music was more unadulterated than that of centuries old art music of Europe in that it had no established laws, characteristics, function, or features to adhere to other than those of the musician them self. If we are to agree that these early Congo Square musicians—as well as other African American musicians situated elsewhere in America at the time—had within them a completely different understanding of the concept of music, and that these were people who introduced this new music in America, it should be clear that this is an important feature that led to further development of jazz. As such,

the notion of music without boundaries, set laws, or preconceptions will become the second unit of measurement used in this paper to evaluate change within the genre.

### **Genres of Jazz**

What have been commonly regarded as turning points within the history of jazz? In raising this question one quickly becomes confronted with the challenge of designating precise thresholds of change. At this point one reaches the same position they were stuck in when looking into accounts on the history of jazz, namely, figuring out how to reach a conclusion when there are many varying accounts each with their own sense of bias. In light of this problem, it would be in the best of interests' to ignore pinpointing precise dates or centers of change for now and instead acknowledge the major change in styles for which a general consensus already exists.

The following is a list of jazz labels that are most commonly used when referring to the various movements within jazz.<sup>70</sup> Ragtime, New Orleans (or "Hot" music/style, or later, "Dixieland"), Big Band, Swing, Bebop, Free jazz, and beyond. Within this list are various subcategories (particularly with Bebop, Free jazz, and the modern age). The next sections of this chapter will look into each of these movements of jazz in greater detail in order to uncover the nature and impetus of progressive change within them.

It has already been outlined that the prehistory of jazz took place during cultural shifting overseas before a note was even played in Congo Square in America. While

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<sup>70</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Barry Kernfeld, "Jazz," *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

defining the seeds of jazz remains a delicate topic, the current cultural state of affairs of African-Americans at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cannot be ignored. It goes without saying that race has been a central theme of jazz and we would be doing a disservice to ignore the issue completely. Just as it is beneficial to recognize that race became an issue in jazz, it is also important to not take it to any one extreme.

### **Jazz Rhythms and Developments of Early Ragtime**

When one begins to think of ragtime, the Scott Joplin classic “Maple Leaf Rag” probably rises to the surface first. Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” was a highly mature and complex form of the genre that arguably remains a definitive piece of the genre, but is by no means representative of ragtime origins. Before Joplin popularized ragtime it had been in the form of piano music performed during minstrel shows around the turn of the century before becoming separate compositions on their own. Ted Gioia writes, “Ragtime rhythms appeared in print as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, but the first published ragtime piece is generally acknowledged to be ‘Mississippi Rag’ (1897), composed by William Krell.”<sup>71</sup> Many jazz scholars accredit large amounts of rhythmic syncopation with ragtime.<sup>72</sup> In fact, syncopation appears to be the consensual defining characteristic of the genre. This is further supported by the very etymology of “ragtime” as it is thought to have risen from listeners of the music who described the rhythmic nature of the music as “ragged-time.”

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<sup>71</sup> Gioia, *This History of Jazz*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> *The New Groove Dictionary of jazz* defines ragtime as a term that “...came to be used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe the idiomatic syncopation characteristic of a style of popular music, predominantly for the piano, that emanated from the South and Midwest.”

It is an interesting experience to look at ragtime in retrospect as an early form of jazz considering how on the surface, it appears very different from what most are familiar with when one thinks of jazz. Ragtime was methodized into technique and even popularized into method books during its peak craze (which appears to be contradictory to the idea of jazz being free from conceptualized forms of music composition). It was a music that was highly compositional and lacked improvisation, which is so easily touted as a jazz definitive. If one were to listen to Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" and then any jazz piece 30 years later, it would be very difficult to discern any connection between the two, let alone to come to the conclusion that they are both the same class of music. This is of course, the illusive nature of historical progression at work and a perfect example of how dramatically fast a musical movement changes and evolves in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. What then, makes ragtime an example of early jazz?

In recognizing that syncopation is a prime characteristic of ragtime music, it becomes a perfect mode of reference that which we can apply the first tool of measurement. Does the nature of this syncopation lend itself to an air of musical freedom, ease, and naturalness that the musicians of Congo Square exhibited? It would appear so. The syncopation that exemplifies ragtime is the result of a complex amalgamation of musical developments of African culture and popular music within America at the time. As such, ragtime matches both tools of measurement proposed—that of syncretism playing a key role in its development, and being a music that fits the mold of early African American musicians mentality of musical freedom—proving to be very fittingly jazz.

In order to reach this conclusion one must take a look at the progression towards syncopation in ragtime music. To understand where it came from, what influenced its progression, and what it had developed into, Samuel Floyd Jr. and Marsha Reisser took an extensive look at rhythmic tendencies in early American music in their article, “The Sources And Resources of Classic Ragtime Music.” They reached the conclusion that:

Classic ragtime’s melodic practices stand as excellent examples of the syncretic process, featuring melodies that are pentatonic/major in mode. Other features created through syncretization are: the straight-bass/additive-rhythm polarity between treble and bass; the embellishment of main pitches; frequent shifts from additive to divisive rhythm in the melodic line; large skips in the melody, with altered pitches being approached and resolved by half-step movement; and occasional parallel octaves and octave/block-chord combinations between the hands.<sup>73</sup>

These features are syncretic in that on a whole, the structural, harmonic and melodic tendencies are derived from European styles while the rhythmic features are strict influences from African music. While these statements seem to be in relation to more refined and perhaps later ragtime, these peculiar rhythmic styles were present at the very beginning as well. Before ragtime became a methodized and compositional music, many performers played differently by using embellishments and personal liberties unique to the performer. One precursor rhythmic figure that played a role in the development of ragtime rhythmic styles is the “patting juba.” Beverly Tucker perhaps best describes this pattern:

The beat is capriciously irregular; there is no attempt to keep time to *all* the notes, but then it comes so pat & so distinct that the cadence is never lost [...] Such irregularities are like rests and grace notes. They must be so managed as neither to

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<sup>73</sup> Samuel A. Floyd and Marsha J. Reisser, “The Sources And Resources of Classic Ragtime Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 4 (1984), 51.

hasten or retard the beat. The time of the bar must be the same, no matter how many notes are in it.<sup>74</sup>

Here we have a prime example of a sense of musical freedom in terms of rhythmic expression that falls in line with our second measurement. Now that we have established that ragtime has both characteristics of what we have established as a set of core jazz tenants, it is safe to recognize that ragtime is, in fact, an early form of jazz music. Once the history and development of the genre is looked at closely, the parallels to other jazz movements become obvious.

### **New Orleans Jazz as an Amalgamation of Musical Productions**

In recognizing ragtime as an early function of jazz, it is important to keep in mind the path at which it took before it started to fade away. Ragtime music became a compositional form of music that spawned method books and many publications of sheet music during its peak. This helped lead to the popularization of ragtime as it became a way for an interested piano player to put their abilities to the test and learn the instrument. The evolution of ragtime music mirrors that of later jazz movements in how a split emerges and great debate commences between traditionalists and progressives. Before reaching this point this next section will examine New Orleans music of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It goes without saying that New Orleans is widely regarded as a central breeding ground of jazz music. While debates run rampant as to the precise origin and place of

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<sup>74</sup> Beverly Tucker quoted in Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 142.



jazz, it cannot be ignored that New Orleans serves as an undeniable center of jazz evolution. The reason behind this is largely in part because of its geological location putting it at the center of immigration. According to Alan C. Turley this is what “made it different than other cities on the Mississippi River, and its ecological development shaped its character. The different racial communities in New Orleans possessed an interesting history as a French outpost in the New World, and these different communities produced a culture that defined New Orleans’ character.”<sup>75</sup> The character of New Orleans gave rise to what has become known as “Dixieland jazz.” This music, Turley argues, “gave birth to all of the jazz forms that followed it, such as Big Band, Be-Bop, Cool and Fusion.”<sup>76</sup> Turley effectively shows that immigration, social class and race relations, and communities all played a crucial role in shaping the development of jazz music in the area. He argues that two main racial groups being the Creoles and African Americans, had developed different musical methodology and styles that when combined, resulted in syncretic jazz music:

Classical music, operas, waltzes, and syncopated orchestra music were the basic elements of Creole music production. Marches, drum ceremonies, gospel, blues, ragtime and pre-jazz ensembles were the foundations of black music production. When the musicians of both these communities began to associate together, because of the Jim Crow laws, there was a ‘cross-pollenization’ of musical influences.<sup>77</sup>

This may be a definitive example of syncretism playing a crucial part in the development of music. It becomes clear that Dixieland jazz grew from a melting pot of cultural

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<sup>75</sup> Alan C. Turley, “The Ecological and Social Determinants of the Production of Dixieland Jazz in New Orleans,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 26 (1995), 108.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 109.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 119.

musical productions of the time; productions which themselves are of varying cultural backgrounds of influence. This begins to show a glimpse of the complexity that quickly arises as each generation passes down a form of music to become further developed. It is this characteristic, a sort of diffusion through generations of cultural heritages that cultivates and allows for the change and progression of music. jazz, being from the start already a product of diversity, epitomizes this feature, as we shall see when we look into its later forms.

Similarly, because Dixieland jazz received direct influence from ragtime in the form of the African American music production of the time, it had effectively carried over the (even if dormant at the time) sense of an innate musical feeling of rhythm and freedom that had, in retrospect, been influenced by an even earlier African music. To add to this, a central characteristic of New Orleans jazz was in instrumentation and tone production; in particular, tone experimentation and freedom. This is brought to light by a quote of Richard Hadlock as printed in Ted Gioia's text: "Richard Hadlock, recalling a music lesson given to him by Sidney Bechet, conveys something of this fastidious New Orleans attention to tone production:

‘I’m going to give you one note today,’ he once told me. ‘See how many ways you can play that note- growl it, smear it, flat it, sharp it, do anything you want to it. That’s how you express your feelings in this music. It’s like talking.’<sup>78</sup>

This quote shows how a goal of this particular music was to escape from its conventions and do whatever it takes to express ones feelings to make it as natural of a process as

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<sup>78</sup> Appears in Ted Gioia's *The History of jazz* as a quote from Whitney Balliet's essay "Le Grand Bechet," in *Jelly Roll, Jabbo and Fats: 19 Portraits of jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 37-38

talking. In this fashion it helped to develop a new aesthetic based on ideas surrounding music as a form of casual communication among players.

At this point it is interesting to note that at this early stage of jazz, the characteristic of syncretism and an innate feeling of music in the form of rhythm and musical freedom—as tools of reference on perspective—are nearly tied hand in hand with one another. However, these features soon depart and appear to become the very source of much debate and argument about the direction of jazz as it takes on many different forms.

### **The Swing Era and the Paradigm Shift in Jazz**

In the previous sections, much time was spent examining the early forms of what would eventually become the popular jazz that many know and think of today. During the 1920s and 1930s, jazz had begun its upward climb in national (and global) popularity. It is also the time in which jazz began to spread into different forms and could be seen as the source of many branches in jazz form. What led to this shift into this new jazz age? For one, this change can be attributed to an increase in solo performances that began to out shadow the focus on blending instrumentation of New Orleans music. Gioia shares this idea and cites Louis Armstrong as a key figure in its change. “Armstrong’s individualistic approach also comes across as disturbingly subversive. Is it not a deliberate undermining of a collective aesthetic? Both in the flamboyance of his melody lines, as well as in the power of his tone, [...] Armstrong’s work calls attention to itself [...] in the setting of the Creole jazz Band it disrupts the seamless blending of

instrumental voices that is the crowning glory of the early New Orleans style.”<sup>79</sup>

Naturally, as Armstrong grew in popularity he attracted many imitators and became a role model for many younger generations of musicians. This would help push a more “individualistic approach” into the mainstream of jazz, ushering a new solo-focused aesthetic.

The following section will look at and determine how Big Bands and specifically the Swing movement fit into the mold of jazz. This will help up establish a basis for which the development of Bebop and other more experimental forms of jazz arose from. To do this, it is beneficial to recognize that this era of jazz music is no different from previous forms of jazz in its example of syncretism. According to Paul Lopes, “Swing music was the culmination in the syncretism of the tonal qualities, rhythm, song form, and instrumental improvisation of southern folk music with the legitimate instrumental techniques, instrumentation, popular song form, and arranged composition used by professional musicians.”<sup>80</sup> With Swing music there was a very strong compositional and arrangement component that formed a more rigid framework of the performance. Within this framework, there was a somewhat limited soloistic freedom possible to the musicians. When relating the swing era back to the very roots, it’s not as easy to find evidence of an innate sense of musical freedom and departure from conventions. In fact, it may seem like the opposite as jazz musicians attempt to legitimize their music at the professional level and in doing so, conform to increasingly popular musical conventions.

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<sup>79</sup> Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 51.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Lopes, “Diffusion and Syncretism: The Modern Jazz Tradition,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566 (1999), 31.

Within swing and big band style the soloist is burdened by a confined harmonic framework leaving behind a sense that what was the “Age of the Soloist” is becoming the “Age of the Composer/Arranger.” According to Frank Barrett, swing jazz “...is guided by a non-negotiable framework that constrains what the soloists can play. [Soloists] follow these chord changes like they’re a road map. To play outside of those chord changes is to break a rule. You can’t do that.”<sup>81</sup> This of course raises the question, if Swing jazz had rules and confinements, is it really comparable to the very original roots of the genre? Well it would be naive to say that this is not jazz music as its heart. At this point in the historiography of jazz the aforementioned split begins to take place. Jazz musicians had been part of a lower class of musicians that reached eventual recognition through a combination of cultural syncretism and personal musical discovery. This began to change during the swing era as these same musicians started to gain more mainstream appeal and acceptance, even among white professional musicians. The jazz musicians of this time were also seeking professional legitimacy and in doing so were attempting to define their music as being analogous to other American professional music of the time. Paul Lopes writes about what he sees as a shared artistic drive among both white and black jazz musicians: “White and black professional popular musicians in the first half of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century shared a basic ethos as well as the development of a modern jazz tradition.”<sup>82</sup> Even if these musicians weren’t consciously seeking some sort of professional legitimacy within the American community, they were still part of a greater

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<sup>81</sup> Frank J. Barrett and Ken Peplowski, “Minimal Structures Within a Song: An Analysis of ‘All of Me’,” *Organization Science* 9.5 (1998), 558.

<sup>82</sup> Paul Lopes, “Diffusion and Syncretism: The Modern Jazz Tradition,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566 (1999), 29.

cultural process. Jazz was becoming recognized as a masterful art but was at the same time was a very different and refined music of its past roots.<sup>83</sup>

The interesting feature to note here is that syncretism, the very feature that has been part of jazz since its very prehistory, has led jazz towards a path somewhat different from where it started. Is it therefore safe to assume that syncretism can hold up as a core tenant of jazz even if it carries it towards unrelated styles? This of course would mean defining what is unrelated. One thing that has remained constant with each phase of jazz there is a large element of a growing African culture that has been present in the syncretism. It would not be enough to say that an African musical cultural presence in the music would define it as “jazz”—given that the roots of the jazz history were not the product of strictly African influence—but this cultural presence being part of the syncretic process alongside other cultures surely satisfies a criteria of what is jazz. It should be safe to assume that syncretism with a particularly large African cultural influence is a core tenant of jazz and can remain as a reference point. It was this element of mixed cultural “otherness” that allowed jazz to become a separate art outside of the Western musical tradition.

The swing era creates a wrinkle in that it easily fits one tool of measurement (that of featuring syncretism) but falls somewhat short on the other (a sense of non conformity and desire for musical freedom). However, in becoming a legitimate professional popular music of the time, these musicians were in a sense, declaring their freedom and capabilities to produce music worthy as such. In this fashion the notion of musical freedom present in earlier decades jazz also favored the progressive profits of syncretism

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<sup>83</sup> See Leonard Feather, “Jazz Is Where You Find It,” *Esquire* (Feb. 1944).

more by diffusing with the popular professional music of the time in allowing jazz musicians to climb the social and financial ladder unlike ever before. With the increasing of social power and cultural recognition, jazz musicians were free to enter into a more experimental phase within the later jazz movements.

### **Modern Jazz, Experimentation and Expansion**

“Almost from the start, jazz players embraced a different mandate, accepting their role as entertainers and pursuing experimentation with an ardent zeal. This created a paradoxical foundation for jazz, one that remains to this day: for the jazz musician soon proved to be a restless soul, at one moment fostering the tradition, at another shattering it, mindless of the pieces.”

Ted Gioia<sup>84</sup>

The modern jazz age is the start of a new jazz ethos among musicians, one that involved the “shattering” of convention in favor of experimentation and originality. This movement began with bebop and later evolved into “free jazz,” the avant garde, and continues to this day. This movement, which began with Bebop, has resulted in a parallel historical progression alongside the more traditional forms of jazz. Because of this, at nearly every stage of its evolution, it was met with criticism and disdain by jazz traditionalists claiming it wasn’t jazz while at the same time the progressives argued it was the next logical step of its evolution.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 200.

<sup>85</sup> See Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25 (1991) for discussion relating to this dynamic.

Before progressing further it is worth revisiting the concept of improvisation. In jazz, observing the evolution of improvisation proves to be a simple way to understand the evolution of the music as a whole. In a sense, improvisation acts as a microcosm of the history jazz in how it begins, develops, and then breaks free of any sort of previous convention. Up until this point however, improvisation has been the *result* of the syncretism and the aforementioned innate sense of musical freedom and as such, was not included as one of the core initial tenants of jazz. The interaction between syncretism and an innate sense of musical freedom resulted in the development of improvisation in much the same way the improvisatory nature of other avant-garde art circles emerged. Those art movements evolved by firstly discovering the potential of spontaneous creation and improvisation and then finally matured the creative process into identifiable genres and styles (i.e. abstract expressionism, poetry in the ilk of Charles Olson's "Projective Verse," etc.) In other words, even though improvisation may be traceable all the way back to Congo Square musicians in New Orleans, it was not unique to just jazz music. Instead, it should be understood that the concept of improvisation emerges out of either the direct or indirect activation of spontaneous and largely unconscious processes. In much the same way that avant-garde artists discovered this within their retrospective looks into primitivism, so too did jazz musicians activate this potential, for they were a complex cultural African-American ethos of musical spirit that originated from more primitive and foreign roots.

As it was outlined in the previous section, within swing jazz, improvisation acted within a framework of set harmonic progressions. Soloists could improvise melodies but



had to pay careful attention not to stray outside and hit “bad”<sup>86</sup> notes. These “bad” notes would end up becoming the basis of expression used in Bebop improvisation. As Michael Zach notes, “bebop extended the notion of what could be considered good music by using those notes formerly considered bad to create new and interesting harmonies.”<sup>87</sup> This later progressed towards the point of complete improvisation of chords, chromatic notes, rhythms, and the entire structure of a piece as musicians sought to perform “on the outside,” or playing outside the norm. These features of improvisation resulted in the very experimental nature of bebop as it progressed towards more avant-garde forms of jazz from hard bop and beyond.

Michael Zack constructs an interesting table on the extent of improvisation within “Classical”, “Traditional jazz/swing”, “Bebop”, and “Postbop.” Within this table, improvisation under the Classical genre is rated as “Minimal to none”, for the “Traditional jazz” genre it is “Constrained within strong structure”, for the “Bebop” genre it is “Extensive; harmony and basic tune structure can be modified” and finally for “Postbop” it is “Maximal; content and structure emerge.”<sup>88</sup> He further defines the dynamic of the improvisation for each genre as, “Rigid”, “Flexible”, “Organic”, and finally “Chaotic” as they relate to each genre respectively. With all of this in mind it becomes increasingly obvious that the bebop movement epitomizes the concept of freedom from conventions and structure. Was this a break in the jazz tradition? Where the swing era featured composition and arrangement, the bebop era was the start of the

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<sup>86</sup> “Bad” referring to a note or notes that fall outside of the harmonic range of the chord the soloist improvises over. See Frank J. Barrett and Ken Peplowski, “Minimal Structures Within a Song: An Analysis of ‘All of Me’,” *Organization Science* 9 (1998), 558.

<sup>87</sup> Michael H. Zack, “Jazz Improvisation and Organizing: Once More from the Top,” *Organization Science* 11.2 (2000), 228.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 232.

favoring of musical freedom. Although bebop may seem a highly separated from jazz of the past era, it still holds true to the core tenant of featuring an innate sense of musical freedom, only within a somewhat new cultural setting. The difference here is the notion of freedom from convention ironically stems from a musical genre that was a direct result of a lack of convention in the first place. How can this be? What caused this seemingly sudden movement in jazz? Is this just the extreme outcome of what would happen eventually?

The birth of bebop is not purely the case of a continuation of traditional values, nor is it purely a spontaneous revolution of a new musical ethos. For as one textbook puts it:

Modern jazz did not burst upon the jazz scene as a revolution. It developed gradually through the work of swing era tenor saxophonists, [...] pianists, [...] trumpeter Roy Eldridge, guitarist Charlie Christian [...] and others. Parker and Gillespie themselves began their careers playing improvisations in a swing era style. They expanded on this music and gradually incorporated new techniques; their work eventually became recognized as a different style, which, [...] was still linked to the swing era.<sup>89</sup>

To see this style as a spontaneous revolution would be forgetting “[The] headlong pace [that is] typical for twentieth-century modernisms.”<sup>90</sup> Instead, this era is a careful combination of fast paced cultural progression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coupled with a gradual evolution from swing era music. It is only sudden in where it is placed in American cultural history, and it is only revolutionary if one ignores the subtle growth from swing jazz and notices what it would eventually become to exemplify instead. Bebop came to be during a unique period of time that was accepting of change, but later through its

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<sup>89</sup> DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 7.

maturity, carved out its own distinct style separate from whence it came. This is outlined by DeVaux when he writes “...the early history of bebop suggests that [bebop musicians] originally saw themselves—if only for the want of a realistic alternative—as dedicated and even enthusiastic participants in a system that offered, at least in theory, a reasonable reward for artistic excellence. Their reaction to the Swing Era, [...] [was] frustration that things could no longer be made to work in their advantage.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, the bebop movement should be recognized not of a revolution based on revulsion of previous jazz, but as a means to satisfy an artistic curiosity through a different means.

### **Jazz and the Avant-Garde**

The historiography of jazz is as rapidly changing as the music itself. The preceding sections have shown that throughout the various movements of jazz there remained certain characteristic qualities. It is perhaps best put in the words of DeVaux when he writes:

There is no single workable definition of *jazz* [...] Attempts to base a definition even on such seemingly unassailable musical fundamentals as improvisation and ‘swing’ inevitably founder. Exceptions overwhelm and trivialize the rule. All that remains is the principle of continuity itself – the unbroken evolutionary succession of musical styles from turn-of-the-century New Orleans to the present.<sup>92</sup>

While this may appear to over generalize historiography, it proves to be a candid statement on the evolution of jazz. It is a process that is as organic as it is holistic. By changing any of the conditions at any point in this historical line, one would most likely

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 170.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 6.

drastically change the outcome and nature of its evolution as a whole. Nevertheless, the information currently available is enough to make the assumption that the music has origins in Congo Square that led to a growth of music culture that led to Ragtime, New Orleans jazz, Swing jazz, Bebop, and eventually culminated in the plethora of jazz sub-genres that exist today. In all of these movements the governing force is that of syncretism and a shared ethos in both advancing and preserving a musical heritage. This very unique aspect of organic development centered on a common (and largely African-American) identity made jazz a new aesthetic that contrasted with the pervading post-colonialist worldview.

It is of no surprise that race finds a role in this development in how the dark histories of the past color how one identifies oneself in the world. While it may not be recognized as such, jazz taken as a whole is an avant-garde development within 20<sup>th</sup> century America in much the same way that Dadaism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism were themselves avant-garde developments. The fundamental tenants of each of those movements revolved around the aesthetics of primitivism as a result of exploring the unconsciousness, spontaneous creation and the desire to find an alternative worldview. Jazz most naturally contained all of these characteristics from the start leading to a very different style of music. Starting with the developments of bebop, jazz musicians began to become more self-conscious of their unique position within the arts and began experiments of their own. By the late 1950s—largely as a result of these experimentations—jazz was becoming recognized by the avant-garde art community as the musical example of the their *own* anti-colonialist aesthetics and philosophies. The

following chapters will discuss how jazz arrived to this point, starting with a more in-depth look at the development of bebop.

## Chapter 4

### Bebop: The Growth of a Niche Marketplace

Like the webs of connections between styles, genres, subgenres and characteristics of jazz music itself, the notes coming out of a musician's instrument are inseparable from some form of outside influence. Whether historians draw linear narratives of lineage from artist to artist, or bring to light a complex web of connections and shared ideologies, the simple fact stands; jazz music thrives in diversity. As much as a concept or characteristic appears to tease and taunt us as an inseparable part of jazz, there seems to always be something new being made of the old (or vice versa). It is because of this that there has been such an issue in defining what it is that jazz is. The same issue rings true when trying to pinpoint and define what the avant-garde in jazz means. Perhaps Robin Kelley states it best when he says:

The term avant-garde obscures as much as it reveals. There have been many self-proclaimed avant-garde movements in music and in the arts more generally, and depending on how one defines avant-garde or the specific historical context in which these movements emerged, one might argue that jazz's unique position as neither "folk" culture nor a product of mainstream Western arts institutions, combined with its ever-changing improvisational character, renders the entire genre avant-garde.<sup>93</sup>

Typically, jazz historians and scholars like to place the avant-garde movement in the hands of the musicians from the 1950s generation whom became the key figures of the movement during the 1960s. After all, this was the decade in which there was an obvious

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<sup>93</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, "New Monastery: Monk and the Jazz Avant-Garde," *Black Music Research Journal* 19 (Autumn 1999): 136-137.

and conscious agenda towards something new and different.<sup>94</sup> But as has been shown in the preceding chapters, an avant-garde aesthetic based around the images and characteristics of an anti-Western worldview was already underway within the visual and literary art scenes by the end of the 1940s. In going off the idea that jazz lives and breathes in a diverse culture of connections and perspectives it is safe to assume that these developments began to seed into jazz?

This chapter will look at the bebop movement as a whole—and Charlie Parker as central figure—with the intention of uncovering how this music developed and what makes its development unique within the context of jazz historiography. To approach this topic it would be advantageous to look at the bebop movement in a similar perspective as an avant-garde movement. Is there any evidence of the primitive aesthetic within bebop? How does bebop lead into the developments of free jazz of the later 1950s? The next step would be in analyzing the role of Charlie Parker within the bebop movement. Did Parker have a central role in this movement? What brought about his popularity? And what conditions allow an experimental music form to gain popularity within an already established mainstream industry?

### **The Beginning of a Great Divide**

By the 1940s the jazz scene already had begun to split into multiple directions. Jazz as a musical movement as a whole had developed through its early stages. It was at

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<sup>94</sup> See Philippe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli, *Free Jazz / Black Power*, (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1971), and Ekkehard Jost, *Free Jazz*, Reprint, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975).

this point in time in which a curious onlooker of jazz could logically assume that there was more change to come.<sup>95</sup> Throughout each jazz epoch, there has been a constant dialogue between critics. The dialogues of this era of jazz history raised questions and concerns as to the state of jazz and what it meant to be “modern.” The best examples of this can be found in the writings of the time in which traditional leaning “revivalists” and progressive leaning “modernists” argued different values of jazz. It was during this generation where the disparaging term “moldy fig” became attributed to revivalists by the modernists. Jazz writer Bernard Gendron labels this back and forth exchange between “moldy fig” revivalists and modernists an “aesthetic discourse.” Of this he writes:

The debates between swing modernists and New Orleans revivalists sufficiently reconstructed the issues, alternative characterizations, and standards for discoursing about jazz to make it possible, and indeed to make it seem very natural, to refer to jazz as an “art” music and construe certain genres of jazz as “modernistic,” “experimental,” “formally complex,” and “avant-garde,” even before bebop made its appearance. In effect, what was being constructed in these debates was an aesthetic discourse for jazz, which was later to legitimate its breaching of the “great divide” between mass culture and art.<sup>96</sup>

To Gendron, this “aesthetic discourse” paved way for more serious discussions on jazz as art music with the benefit being the introduction aesthetic definition that had not been applied to serious discussions on jazz in the past. In the writings between the New Orleans revivalists and modernists we have some of the first examples of what it means to have “modern” jazz. The label of “modern” as applied to jazz during the 1930s and 40s carried with it a much simpler meaning than we may be led to believe by today’s use

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<sup>95</sup> This is evidenced by the more forward thinking writings on jazz during—and shortly after—this jazz era in which the authors began to envision future developments of jazz. See Marshall Sterns, “Bop and After,” *The Story of Jazz*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 218-237.

<sup>96</sup> Bernard Gendron, “‘Moldy Figs’ and Modernists: Jazz at War (1942-1946),” *Jazz Among the Discourses*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 33-34.



of the word. The “modernists” were simply calling whatever jazz was the newest trend (i.e. “swing” music) modern jazz. In other words, the newest music of the time was “modern”, without any extra defining characteristics needed. The modernists—namely Leonard Feather and Barry Ulanov who contributed largely to *Metronome* and *Down Beat* magazines—supported the continuation of any new jazz that would arrive on the scene.

It’s worth spending time to point out that delineation of the modernists’ use of the word modern in an effort to raise another point. The “moldy fig” revivalists favored jazz that was more unconventional and more akin to what was labeled the “hot” style. To the revivalist, swing jazz lacked the improvisation and a certain zeal that they found so prominent in early New Orleans jazz inferring that revivalists were carving out a very specific aesthetic to apply to jazz and judge it. On the other hand, the modernists had a more broad view of jazz that valued the current trends of the music within the commercial realm. This interplay between revivalists (and their arguments to value certain aesthetics) and modernists (and their arguments to value more broad-reaching, but current conventional commercial jazz) brought out many issues that come back again many times in the coming years of jazz history. In this way, the resulting aesthetic discourse that it has provided, serves as a frame of reference in which to look at the rise of bebop amid a vastly commercialized jazz scene, as well as the development of what has been called the avant-garde in jazz.

## **On Defining Artistic Value**

The idea of true art as being timeless treasures that can be appreciated and loved by generations upon generations is an easy idea to hold. While the timelessness of nature of art is not a commonly disputed concept, it is dangerous to assess current artistic trends in this light. A problem arises when one wishes to study art the art of today with this viewpoint in mind. There is ultimately no way for a current day scholar, critic, or writer to claim to know what art of today will obtain the golden “timeless” quality. Instead, the scholar, critic, or writer wishing to assess the value of current artistic trends look into a realm they themselves are part of. The cultural environment from which art is cultivated becomes just as important to study as the nature of the art itself. This interplay between assessing art on its own sake and studying the environment from which it arose plays a part in many discussions on the study of jazz and jazz history. It is of special interest to understand the cultural environment during pivotal points in jazz history as it helps explain and color the modes of change and development. In understanding the undercurrents of the culture surrounding jazz during the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s, we can establish an understanding of the development, maturity and eventual decline of bebop. The following sections will see how the cultural environment and artistic philosophies surrounding the rise of bebop opened up a unique avenue favoring experimentation and forward thinking sensibilities in jazz. As such, bebop acts as the impetus for further experimentation of future generations.

It is worth noting that artistry cannot simply be pinpointed onto one framework of understanding. It is clear that observing the development of art through the perspective

of cultural relevance is one—of many—perspectives to make use of. Truly, in the study of jazz history—as with the study of any artistic development—it is advantageous to make use of a multiplicity of perspectives to observe the phenomenon, but in looking at the origins of bebop it becomes clear that the cultural environment plays a large role. As such, it is worth studying in this context.

### **In the Dusk of the Swing Age**

Before bebop hit the scene the dominating music of America was swing. By 1940 jazz had officially become the popular music of the day.<sup>97</sup> The trends and tides of the commercial marketplace played a large role in forming and catering to the tastes of a mass audience. The inherent issue with such an environment is that musicians who wish to create music outside of the commercial trends of the time are met with nearly insurmountable obstacles of exposure. In a market where the expectation of gigs and playing time is inseparable to the survivability of musician, this is a large problem. How would a jazz musician with fresh musical ideas the late 1930s and early 40s showcase their talents in a commercial medium that is dominated by swing jazz? By this time the modernity of swing jazz had long lost its flair and its stylistic characteristics were well known for years now. During such times of potential stylistic burn out it is easy to assume that more experimental musicians existed as the boom of swing jazz began to lose its popular edge on the commercial market. Scott DeVeaux recognized that this

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<sup>97</sup> This information is publically available. See Joel Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954*, (Wisconsin: Record Research, 1991).

was an ideal time for a change. In writing about the commercial environment leading up the bebop popularity, DeVeaux comments:

Even after the swing style had run its course, the machinery of the popular music industry continued to prop up the "threadbare" and "aging" idiom, seducing musicians into going through the motions long after they had any legitimate artistic reason to do so. In other words, mass-market capitalism contributed to a logjam in the path of musical evolution, which could be removed only by explosive force. Bebop provided the resolution to this crisis.<sup>98</sup>

Given this highlighting of the commercial setting of jazz music during this time, it is safe to assume that there would be artistic motivations behind usurping the trends. While this may have been the case for some musicians, there was still the issue of exposure to overcome. What *is* of importance here is the fact that commercial trends were in a state of uncertainty. In an aging idiom the commercial market becomes more in tune and alert to modern developments that might reclaim interests in a different light. If there was ever a perfect opportunity for an experimental movement to catch the attention of the commercial market, this was definitely it. The invisible hand of aesthetic appeal was losing its grip on the long past its prime styles of swing music. Of course not just any new style could fill this growing desire. The impact of bebop would not have been nearly as “explosive” if not for its niche hipster market that grew from both political motivations and jazz musicians growing experimental aesthetical desires.

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<sup>98</sup> Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History*, (California: University of California Press, 1997): 15.

## The Undercurrent of Politics in Bebop

While the “moldy figs” and swing music proprietors were commencing in their back and forth exchanges of authority, a group of young jazz musicians of a new generation were growing up in a musical environment that would soon become theirs. Among these were young Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie—two figures that would ultimately create and dominate bebop music. This new generation of musicians may have been the first wave to experience a significant gap from their past to the point of it having an influence of the music they were to create. In many ways, this is what fueled the zealous nature of revivalists, for they were fearful that their music was beginning to become forgotten and eclipsed by modern jazz.<sup>99</sup> This widening generational gap between early jazz and the young musicians wishing to take up an instrument helped create a unique environment that would be conducive to new music. This is not to imply that with each generation the old is forgotten, for no music (no matter how consciously artists wish to create something new) can separate itself from its past. But there certainly would exist a fading urgency and familiarity of music that is part of the culture and lifestyles of the generations for which it was in vogue.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See Rudy Blesh, “Manhattan Swing,” *Shining Trumpets: A History of Jazz*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1946): 262, when the end of the opening sentence of the chapter claims, “swing music is that of defeat.”

<sup>100</sup> Think for example, of the difficulty one puts themselves in trying to place oneself in the time of earlier periods of jazz history. We all experience a sense of increasing fog when looking into past trends outside of our own generation. To help clear this fog, we look to read up on old accounts as well as new perspectives so that we can better place ourselves in the period of interest. Perhaps the trend of new jazz studies in jazz scholarship was a reflection of this desire on an academic level.

The new generation most likely would have gone about and created new and interesting music strictly on this setting alone. But as it turns out, America also was undergoing growing political change regarding civil rights and social status. During the 1940s, especially among black Americans, there was a growing distaste towards their treatment. This was highlighted during the World War II “Double V” movement. The “double” in the phrase “double v” refers to the two victories that black Americans were “fighting” for: the literal victory overseas during the war fighting for America, and the more symbolic victory at home of achieving the civil rights they deserved. There was a large resentment in black Americans who thought it a great hypocrisy in fighting a war while they continued to be treated poorly by the very same population they sacrificed themselves to protect. Eric Lott argues that this played a role in a “psychological shift” which acted as an undercurrent to bebop music of the time.<sup>101</sup> Amiri Baraka also makes point of the political movements during this new era. Where Baraka sees the politics more closely linked and militant compared to Lott, Eric Porter does an excellent job in taking a look at both viewpoints. Porter is hesitant to agree with a driving sense of political militancy behind jazz of the era. Instead, he favors a more diverse viewpoint in which the politics are one of many concurrent factors either indirectly or more directly contributing to the creation of bebop.

Porter’s perspective that “even if bebop should not be read as a direct expression of black militancy, we can understand it as a product of a worldly intellectual orientation and experimental aesthetic” which he labels as “critical ecumenicalism” is cognizant of

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<sup>101</sup> Eric Lott, “Double V, Double-Time: Bebop’s Politics of Style,” *Callaloo* 36 (Summer 1988): 598.

both of these influential forces.<sup>102</sup> The perceived importance of politics on the music is always easier to notice in retrospect. However, it is important to not rule out the potential indirect effects of this. There is great potential for subtle effects in the music.

### **Experimentation and Charlie Parker**

“Modern music seems to me to have a much greater freedom. We can improvise on both structure and melody and we aren’t hampered by a strict dependence on the beat the way the old jazz is.”

Tadd Dameron

In listening to early Charlie Parker recordings, there is direct evidence that there was already something unique in the works before even before the political turmoil of the 1940s rolled around. In the earliest Charlie Parker recording that has been uncovered (of which the exact date is among debate, but Carl Woideck makes the best case that the earliest it could have been is sometime in January 1940 in his Charlie Parker biography)<sup>103</sup> we have evidence of him playing tri-tone substitutions, using quotations, and playing in the melodic style that is retrospectively very recognizable of Parker.<sup>104</sup> Obviously the sound and form is not as mature as later Charlie Parker solos would exemplify, but this still is striking evidence that Charlie Parker was exploring a something unique from the very start. Further evidence of Parker’s desire to explore

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<sup>102</sup> Eric Porter, “‘Dizzy Atmosphere’: The Challenge of Bebop,” *American Music* 17 (Winter 1999): 425.

<sup>103</sup> See Carl Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Life and Music* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 68.

<sup>104</sup> Woideck, *Charlie Parker*, 73-74.

something new came out when while touring in New York with the McShann group in 1942 he would jam after-hours at Monroe's Uptown House. This is where some of the real experimentation began to take root. As Parker would later recall of such jam sessions: "It wasn't that that we were dissatisfied with it [earlier jazz style], it was just that another conception came along, and this was just the way *we* thought it should go."<sup>105</sup> This conception that Parker mentions is precisely the desire for a new aesthetic that would become Bebop. It is also a conception shared by Dizzy Gillespie, whom Parker would befriend (that same year while in New York) and together would become central figures in bebop.

Scott DeVeaux recognized and agreed with the other part of Charlie Parker's statement above. The notion that bebop musicians were revolting against the commercial music of the time is not the actual story. Its artists did not contextualize bebop as a direct disregard of commercial jazz styles. Instead it was the result of a group of individuals who wanted to carry out and solidify a particular conception of the music. Those who shared this conception (or were to be floored by and subsequently enjoyed) latched onto and followed it as it evolved. Perhaps the perceptions and metaphors of the music as it applied indirectly to the politics of the time drew in a growing audience. In this way, "By 1945 Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie had indeed willed something like a new musical subculture into being. But they were not trying to disengage from the 'commercial' music so much as to find a new point of engagement with it—one that would grant them a measure of autonomy and recognition."<sup>106</sup> As such, a culture had risen around bebop. A

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<sup>105</sup> Robert George Reisner, *Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker* (New York: Citadel Press, 1962), 129-130.

<sup>106</sup> Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 17.



new jazz intelligentsia emerged as the token bebop fan. These hipsters acted in stark contrast to the dancing fans of swing. Their stoic demeanor and taste was a reflection of appreciating this new aesthetic of complexity being dished out by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. By 1950, bebop had created autonomy and recognition as “modern” jazz in a new sense. Charlie Parker himself was a forward thinking musician who appreciated a desire to expand artistic boundaries. As he said himself, “They tech you there’s no boundary line to music.... But, man, there’s no boundary line to art.”<sup>107</sup>

### **A Unique Place in Time**

Within the jazz tradition there have been numerous points of aesthetic change which in turn helped bring about change in the music. There is the all too familiar story of Louis Armstrong bringing about the age of the soloist. Duke Ellington, Paul Whiteman, Fletcher Henderson and others dabbled with jazz arrangements and brought about new forms of instrumentation and form to jazz. Scott DeVaux has written in great detail about how we talk about the progression of jazz and the various models we create in order to organize and make sense of its inherent complexities.<sup>108</sup>

It took some time, but there was little consensus on defining art within jazz. Critics would debate their stances on what to value and what not. A particularly important moment of this occurs in the writings of jazz with the debates between “moldy figs” revivalists and the progressive moderns. To borrow again from Bernard Gendron, the resulting aesthetic discourse of these debates brought to the music new terms and

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<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Eric Porter, “‘Dizzy Atmosphere’,” 435.

<sup>108</sup> Scott DeVaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 6.

classifications. These terms included further definition of what it meant to be “modern,” or “avant-garde.” It was the beginning of what would become a more serious look into the future of jazz music as well as the effect and implications of the industry to which it had grown accustomed to. With jazz music now effectively becoming America’s popular music there was the issue of mainstream success and what it meant to be a jazz artist.

The eventual decline of swing music helped lead a new generation of musicians to grow up in the scene and take advantage of a potential tipping point. Bebop created a new aesthetic that favored experimentation and complexity. A culture grew around and supported this progression. It became a “movement” in the sense of its perceived departure from old styles. It wasn’t until after bebop was in full swing that jazz officially had received its long-time coming recognition in the art world. As DeVaux points out, “a half century after the birth of bebop, the status of jazz as an art form has been affirmed by such august entities as the National Endowment for the Arts, Lincoln Center, and numerous degree-granting institutions.”<sup>109</sup> There was a sense of a collective occurring among the musicians of bebop. They successfully carried out a desire to create new conceptions of music. Eric Porter argues while there was a difference in opinions among bebop musicians they still shared a part “of a broader musical and intellectual endeavor.”<sup>110</sup>

Charlie Parker had been born into a time that was ready to listen to what he had to say. From as early as 1940 he began to catch the attention of other musicians and jazz fans. Eventually while in New York—the center of modern jazz at the time—Parker had

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<sup>109</sup> Scott DeVaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 16.

<sup>110</sup> Eric Porter, “‘Dizzy Atmosphere’,” 431.

established his connection with Dizzy Gillespie and recognized others with a likeminded desire to carry out their art. Unfortunately the heavy personality of Charlie Parker had potentially cost the art even more extended boundaries. But as Carl Woideck straightforwardly states, “Charlie Parker yearned to enter a new phase of discovery, but probably because of his lack of discipline and study, he settled for an early artistic consolidation [that being his style established before 1950].”<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, while Parker may have lacked a certain resolve to continue to push the envelope in his later years, he still had become the iconic player of a movement of music that had changed jazz forever. The small windows into Parkers artistic sensibilities that one can gleam from interviews show that there was a desire and deep understanding of forward thinking art. Whether or not as an individual Parker had single-handedly changed the tide of jazz music is still up for debate, but the fact remains that he had played a role in the cultural momentum that drove bebop. As a result, bebop had created a new industry within the commercial jazz industry that recognized and accepted the complexities and of its forward thinking sensibilities. It had popularized what had always appeared before it as un-popular. Bebop had created an environment within jazz in which niche markets could now survive during a decade where audiences and artists alike coalesced into a niche demographic.

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<sup>111</sup> Carl Woideck, *Charlie Parker*, 176.

## Chapter 5

### The Arrival of Free Jazz

"If it had any musical worth at all, it definitely was not evident to the majority of listeners I viewed in the audience. I watched as they restlessly fidgeted about, trying to find something to grab on to as they were submerged in this sea of nothingness."<sup>112</sup>

Reader of *Down Beat* magazine

An incredulous span of time just passed as your head attempts to untangle and make sense of the twisted space you just were haphazardly toured through. Where was the ground? Was there even a melody there? What just happened? Perhaps this is just mess. Were you supposed to *enjoy* that? Was that for *me* or was that the language of some sort of new drug speaking out of those toy instruments? These are all questions undoubtedly floating through the heads of an audience at the Five Spot Café in Greenwich Village, New York City in the autumn of 1959. As a curious local, wishing to step in and see what all of the buzz is about, this may all seem like an alien music that came from nowhere. Perhaps it would just be a rare occurrence or fad that will pass by.

This state of confusion surrounded the dawn of a new style of jazz onto the scene which would go on to become labeled “avant-garde,” “free jazz,” or “the new thing.” Audience members, critics, musicians—jazz and contemporary—and people at large were trying to come to grips with a new music that teased at being unapproachable. In an attempt to unwrap this confusion it requires us to look at a larger picture, one in which

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<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Iain Anderson, *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties, and American Culture*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 130-31.

development and creation of new musical trends makes logical sense. The purpose of this essay is to look at the decade leading up to the year 1960 in an effort to reach an understanding as to why and how a new form of jazz came to be. The examination of the early lives of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane for certain similarities and differences—be it in a pursuit of aesthetic desire, societal defiance, or otherwise—may reveal a source to an impetus of change.

As new generations of artists grew up during the 1940s and 1950s they would inevitably become exposed to the avant-garde aesthetic in their personal pursuits of cultivating their craft. Where some would turn away at the exposure others, especially those coming from more isolated artistic backgrounds, found an exciting new home to develop their art. The jazz community was not exempt from this exposure of the avant-garde. By uncovering the many fronts in which avant-garde aesthetics entered the jazz scene, the sense that free jazz exploded from nothingness should be reversed.

A good starting point in understanding the infusion of a new aesthetic into jazz is to examine the methodology, pedagogy and overall environment in which a jazz musician learns their craft. On a very general level there exist three main pathways of learning that interested jazz students may find themselves: apprenticeship and field experience, formal training in schools, and autodidactic pursuits. Naturally, these three general avenues would in many cases be used in conjunction with each other and each has an outgrowth of further specific situations and experiences. It should be understood that these are the umbrellas from which many more learning experiences arise.

A prevailing factor that affects the degree in which one interested in jazz becomes exposed to these learning situations is their geographical location at the time of interest.

Those lucky enough to be situated around urban centers would have more opportunity to meet and even play with already established jazz musicians and would most likely find themselves learning by apprenticeship and field experience. Another important factor (largely linked to location) would be one's social status and financial situation. Those lucky enough to have a comfortable family life might find themselves learning by more formal means through school and private teachers through the support of their parents. Finally, those not fortunate enough to be part of either the above situations—or simply find themselves adverse to them—might be more inclined to follow the autodidactic route, finding their own means to their artistic end.

Regardless of the path developing jazz musicians find themselves in, the avant-garde aesthetic is present for the taking or leaving. By the 1940s and 1950s there is such an inter-connected network of avant-garde experimentation and development that it permeates branches of all three avenues from multiple fronts. By looking at the early development of three pivotal jazz musicians of this time period—John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman—one can see how each was exposed to the avant-garde aesthetic despite each following a different pathway of learning. While these three examples show how the avant-garde aesthetic reached each musician on a personal level, it opens a window that hints at just how inter-connected the aesthetic was with artistic development of the time. Further examination through this window will show how not only was jazz ripe for the introduction of avant-garde elements but rather it was inevitable.

## The Early Development of Ornette Coleman

“An individual has more expression about the things he has observed, more than you can get restricting him to what you want him to do.”

Ornette Coleman<sup>113</sup>

There certainly is no lack of literature on the man who is commonly cited as being the creator of what would become “free jazz.”<sup>114</sup> It becomes difficult to take a retrospective look on an individual who still carries undercurrents of controversy and confusion. Nonetheless, it is beneficial to look into the early years of Ornette Coleman’s life in search of critical points that would serve to instill the ideas and desires that would take off by the 1960s. Events mentioned by the musician himself help to highlight their importance in his musical development. In examining certain conditions and chance encounters within the industry, it becomes clear how they may have become key roles in influencing the direction Ornette would decide to take in his musical endeavors. Each musician of focus here will be examined in a similar fashion.

It is beneficial to note Ornette Coleman’s reaction to the music happening around him. This, not surprisingly, mainly consisted of bebop. Interestingly, when he had first been exposed to the music at a young age he was adverse to it. It wasn’t until some of his friends, namely Red Connors, sat him down and made him listen to the complexities and intricacies of the style that it began to have an effect on young Coleman.<sup>115</sup> After this he went on to love bebop and idolized its players. In Coleman’s own words, “[...] so then I

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<sup>113</sup> Howard Mandel, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 136.

<sup>114</sup> Ekkehard Jost, *Free Jazz*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975).

<sup>115</sup> Peter Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 1999), 11.

started learning bebop. My favorite composers were—and still are—Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, and Bud Powell.”<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, Coleman’s ability to study bebop in the depth that he would have liked was to be postponed as he took up a traveling gig in 1949 with a minstrel show tour. He would later comment that this experience was “miserable” and that he “hated” it.<sup>117</sup> This was largely because of the intense exposure to southern racism that Coleman had experienced during his time with the group. Coleman recalls of this experience: “I thought I had played in some rough places in Forth Worth, those gambling joints and all that, but the scenes we had in that minstrel group were something else. It was the worst job I ever had.”<sup>118</sup> The influence of bebop is a recurring theme between Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane. Naturally this was the jazz repertoire being fine-tuned, developed, and mastered during the time these musicians grew up. As such, it became part of the maturing process of musicians of the era to try their luck at this popular jazz form. For many aspiring jazz artists, making the cut in the now mature arena of bebop became the sole artistic drive. In contrast, to Coleman, Taylor and Coltrane, their interest in bebop was only the beginning of furthering new conceptions.

It is worth making brief mention of Ornette Coleman’s unconventional lifestyle choices during the early 1950s. For one, he would play on a plastic saxophone, which appeared like a mockery or joke to other musicians. By age nineteen, he also had long hair, sported a beard, was a vegetarian, and had a high-pitched voice that led many to accuse him of being homosexual.<sup>119</sup> All of these characteristics were viewed as being

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Originally from an interview with Feather in 1981.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 12. Originally from an interview with Spellman in 1966.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> John Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life*, (Great Britain: Quartet Books Limited, 1992), 37.



offensive and essentially acted against Coleman's favor in many social settings. When trying to make a living as a live performer how one is perceived in social settings can have a large impact on their success.<sup>120</sup> It goes without saying that Coleman was fighting an uphill battle in this regard. Whether or not he was conscious of this and doing it on purpose is debatable, but the fact remains that Ornette Coleman was outcast, bullied, and harassed because of his appearance and those experiences most likely had an impact on further development of his character and subsequently, his music.

In large part because of the issues mentioned above, Ornette Coleman had some difficulty fitting in with bands. As stated earlier, he had traveled with a minstrel show tour and hated it. Band mates also criticized Coleman for both his appearance and his apparent inability to play correct chord changes. As he remembers, "They said I didn't know the changes and was out of tune, but I knew that wasn't so. But something, I thought, must be wrong. I didn't know what."<sup>121</sup> Coleman's problems with fitting in most likely stemmed from his unusually small amount of formal training in the music. He did what he could to learn on his own, but without any serious teacher or direction he ran into the same troubles many beginning musicians have. Charlie Parker had only thought there was one key to play in until he was embarrassed off the stage and forced to learn otherwise out of humiliation.<sup>122</sup> The interesting peculiarity with Coleman is that rather than succumbing to humiliation and learning what others thought he should know, he went on to develop a new approach of his own.

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<sup>120</sup> For a first hand account from Ornette Coleman himself on getting harassed and beat up outside a Louisiana dance hall, see Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman*, 37.

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, *Ornette Coleman*, 16.

<sup>122</sup> Charlie Parker, interview by Marshall Stearns and John Maher, May, 1950.

There is evidence that as early as 1953 Ornette Coleman was playing outside harmonic constraints. As recalled by trumpet player Bobby Bradford, “Bird and Sonny (Rollins) would use the device of playing half a step above the key for one phrase, just to add that little taste of piquancy. But Ornette would go out and stay there—he wouldn't come back after one phrase, and this would test your capacity for dissonance”<sup>123</sup> Similar accounts are also recalled by Eric Dolphy in 1954 and Ellis Marsalis in 1956.<sup>124</sup> The common theme in Coleman’s approach was his favoring of individuality and not feeling limited by harmonic constraints. This early individual experimentation happening in the artists early years is also a common theme between Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane.

### **The Early Development of Cecil Taylor**

"I understand that legend has it I'm a morose person, but actually I don't give a fuck what they think, because I'm happy much of the time, because I'm doing what I want to do, and one of the things you discover finally is that no one else takes the responsibility for you wanting to do the shit that you want to do. If you want to it, yeah, you want to do it"

Cecil Taylor<sup>125</sup>

Through a similar look at the early development of pianist Cecil Taylor one can better understand where and how his particular style emerged onto the scene. This can be done partly by observing how Cecil Taylor was reacting to and influenced by the music

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<sup>123</sup> Wilson, *Ornette Coleman*, 21.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. Dolphy recognized that Coleman had a similar approaches of hearing different chords on top that which was being played. Marasalis recognized both a strange missing of the harmony and a unique rhythmic feel in Coleman’s group playing.

<sup>125</sup> Mandel, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil*, 227.

happening around him. Like Coleman, Taylor enjoyed bebop music but his most loved musicians were Duke Ellington in his childhood years and Miles Davis in the 1950s. In his own words, “And of course, for me one of the most important people of the Fifties is Miles Davis, and the way he can—in that band, maybe the most important band for me after the Gillespie band. Because you see, to me that band was a compression of all the virtues of the Gillespie band into five people.”<sup>126</sup> Later in life in an interview with Howard Mandel, Cecil Taylor recalls how he could never shed bebopper influences when he states, “I’m not free of them. They’re very much part of my development.”<sup>127</sup> Like Coleman, Taylor recognized and appreciated the subtleties of bebop but rather than simply copying them outright, he learned from the music and went on to develop his own style.

Unlike Ornette Coleman, Taylor didn’t have any difficulty playing with or fitting in other groups at the time of his early years. This is largely due to having a very musical family—and mother in particular—that encouraged Taylor’s musical pursuits. He most likely started playing piano at age six as a result of his mothers “domineering” personality and pressuring towards success.<sup>128</sup> Because of this, Taylor ended up learning music through lessons and school and even ended up studying at a very unique popular music program at the New York College of Music. This route of music learning would go on to place Taylor in an advantageous position within jazz academia that we will explore in greater detail later.

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<sup>126</sup> As printed in Christopher Meeder, “Cecil Taylor: His Early Life and Music,” (M.A. thesis, Rutgers, 2003), 9.

<sup>127</sup> Mandel, *Miles, Ornette, Cecil*, 228.

<sup>128</sup> Meeder, “Cecil Taylor,” 5.

A curious example of Taylor's childhood personality is worth mentioning as it may shine some light on his creative mentality later in life. As a boy in school he recalls, "Right after Pearl Harbor I wrote this poem about December 8th—I don't even know why I remember this—and the teacher said, 'Oh, that's a very bad poem.' Well, I knew that I should write poetry then. If she said it was bad, then it must be okay"<sup>129</sup> This humorous anecdote should not be taken too far, but I feel it is worth mentioning if only to add some depth to Taylor's somewhat careless personality that existed even as a child. During his studies at the New York College of Music, Cecil Taylor began serious exploration into his style that would go on to make him both famous and shockingly unique. He made use of school time to practice new approaches. Taylor remembers how, "When I was at the conservatory I discovered how to make up my own scales. Hit one note that you like then find another note that you like in combination with that. That's how you begin to make your own music. The scale is linear. Harmony is the vertical [expression of the same pitches]"<sup>130</sup> Much like Ornette Coleman, Taylor favored an individualistic element to the creation of the music which he discusses as:

What I find very wonderful now is that each playing experience is giving one plenty to think about in terms of what I perceive to be the essential differences between this music and its organizational principles, and probably inherent in dealing with that is musicians who create individual worlds out of unique applications of their own sensory thought apparatus.

After his studies at the New York School of Music, Taylor moved into New York City in 1955 and began to gig regularly at the Five Spot Café in Greenwich Village. As we will look at in more detail later on, this spot acted as a crucial location that fostered and

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<sup>129</sup> Meeder, "Cecil Taylor," 6.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 7.

encouraged the development of experimental jazz in a market that was not yet ready for mass exposure. As it turns out, this is also the same Café where Ornette Coleman was advertised at in 1959 and subsequently became his breakthrough performance.

### **The Early Development of John Coltrane**

We now reach the third point on our triangle of groundbreaking musicians, saxophonist John Coltrane. Coltrane is a little different than the other two musicians mentioned so far and may appear on the onset an interesting choice with other obvious developing avant-gardists of the time to pick from—such as Sun Ra, or Muhal Richard Abrams. I choose to focus on Coltrane *because* of the fact that he's not exactly like these other artists in the hopes that it will fill a somewhat different perspective. How does Coltrane's early developing years compare to Coleman's or Taylor's?

For one, Coltrane had a much more prolific period of playing during the 1950s as he played with both Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis. This alone should tune us into the fact that Coltrane was very much influenced by the beboppers of the time. Coltrane loved Charlie Parker and it was through this music that he started to learn jazz theory and forms. As stated by Coltrane, "I stayed with alto through 1947 [actually until the end of 1948], and by then I'd come under the influence of Charlie Parker [and Dizzy Gillespie].... It was through their work that I began to learn about musical structures and

more theoretical aspects of music”<sup>131</sup> He would go on to extensively play Charlie Parker solos but rather than playing them note for note he would play them in his own way.<sup>132</sup>

As mentioned above, Coltrane toured somewhat extensively with Miles Davis, played a bit with Dizzy Gillespie and probably most importantly he paired up with Thelonious Monk. In contrast to Ornette Coleman, Coltrane had no problem playing with others as he had a firm grasp on the repertoire at the time. Like Cecil Taylor, Coltrane grew up around family members playing instruments and learned how to play through similar traditional methods of school and lessons. Also like Taylor, Coltrane had lost a parent at an early age, though in Coltrane’s case, this may have had a more direct impact on his musical pursuits.<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, Coltrane got to play extensively with Cecil Taylor’s favored musician of the time—Miles Davis—though the experience was bittersweet. He ran into numerous issues with Davis both personally—Davis was becoming increasingly fed up with Coltrane’s now serious heroin addiction<sup>134</sup>—and musically. Coltrane was by no means stopping people mid-dance with oblique solos, but there was an internal frustration with his difficulties in trying to artistically work with Miles Davis. He says of this:

Miles is a strange guy: he doesn’t talk much and he rarely discusses music. You always have the impression that he’s in a bad mood, and that what concerns others doesn’t interest him or move him. It’s very difficult, under these conditions, to know exactly what to do, and maybe that’s the reason I just ended

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<sup>131</sup> Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 42.

<sup>132</sup> Porter, *John Coltrane*, 44-49.

<sup>133</sup> See Porter, *John Coltrane*, 18, where there is discussion of how Coltrane’s grades dropped and he took a heightened interest (obsession?) in music once he reached high school.

<sup>134</sup> This led to the eventual firing of Coltrane from Davis’s group on April 28<sup>th</sup> 1957 while gigging at Café Bohemia in Greenwich Village. See Porter, *John Coltrane*, 105.

up doing what I wanted...you always have to listen carefully to stay in the same mood as he.<sup>135</sup>

Here we have an example of Coltrane's desire to pursue his own musical direction. This has been a common thread shared by each musician discussed so far.

In 1946, Coltrane began studying with Isadore Granoff at Granoff Studios.

Granoff was born in Russia and came to America when he was 11 years old, studied violin in New York and around 1918 opened up his own music school in Philadelphia.<sup>136</sup> This formal approach to music allowed Coltrane—much like it allowed Cecil Taylor—the time and resources to pursue contemporary trends in classical forms of music. One of the teachers at Granoff studios, Dennis Sandole had the following to say about Coltrane's interest in his studies:

I mostly teach a maturing of concepts, and it involves advanced harmonic techniques you can apply to any instrument. Coltrane went through eight years of my literature in four years...I experimented with combining notes—not only seven-note scales but eight note scales and nine. I called them nonatonic, decatonic, and so on. I had substitute chords based on dominant to minor in [Coltrane's] handwriting—he copied it<sup>137</sup>

Perhaps this kind of dedicated and interested study was what Coltrane found frustratingly lacking in Miles Davis's group. This is also evidenced by Coltrane's fond recollection of working with Thelonious Monk at the Five Spot after being fired from Davis's group in 1957. As a stark contrast to Davis, Monk was much more willing to discuss music, interact with Coltrane and show him new ideas. While in the company of Monk, Coltrane remembers, "Working with Monk brought me close to a musical architect of the highest

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<sup>135</sup> Porter, *John Coltrane*, 100.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 51.

order. I felt I learned from him in every way—through the senses, theoretically, technically” and, “He gave me complete freedom in my playing, and no one ever did that before.”<sup>138</sup> Now Coltrane was finally able to break out and explore what he had wanted. He was feeling musically nourished with his new company at the Five Spot.

### **The Lure of the Five Spot Café**

By the year 1959 we have come full circle. With each musician coming from different parts of the country—Ornette Coleman from Texas, Cecil Taylor from New York City, and John Coltrane from North Carolina—they all end up at The Five Spot Café in New York City. How did they all end up in the same spot within four years of each other? What makes this spot so special? This is an important part of the larger picture that I hope to now make clear. Now that we have examined in some detail the early lives of these three musicians, it is possible to make note of any similarities in their developmental years that may help answer this question. The first similarity between each of these men is the influence of bebop on their musical pursuits. Each one was struck by the intricacies of the music.

Ornette Coleman almost immediately began to expand outside of the bebop form as early as 1953. Coleman may have been more attracted to a new approach because of his lack of formalized musical training and trouble fitting in with fellow musicians of the time. Perhaps his adventures outside of harmony began as a lack of understanding rather than a conscious artistic approach. Nonetheless, his style had matured enough—or was at

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 111.



least interesting enough—that in 1959 it had caught the attention of John Lewis, the leader of the Modern Jazz Quartet. Making use of his vast network of connections and influence, Lewis was able to set Coleman up with a contract with Atlantic Records and for Coleman and Don Cherry to attend the School of Jazz in Lenox Massachusetts as well as hype Coleman to the press.<sup>139</sup> This became the jumping off point that Coleman needed and effectively jumpstarted his career, got him set up at the Five Spot Café and became marketed as a new player in the field of jazz.

Cecil Taylor also began with bebop and also began to expand outside of its boundaries. The same is true for John Coltrane as well. While each of these musicians grew up listening to and enjoying bebop, the important factor is in how they went about interpreting it. What made them unique was their personal desire and motivation to go beyond the simple reproduction of bebop form and style. Coleman perhaps held the most outside approach simply due to his difficulties of fitting in both socially and musically to the musicians around him. As a result, this may be the reason he ended up with the most unique and free style. After all, Coleman truly developed his style on an individual and personal level, outside the traditional methods of presented in music schools or by teachers. To both John Coltrane and Cecil Taylor bebop was a jumping off point towards more experimentation. They had both expanded upon the form and structure of the music in their own personal quest towards artistic fulfillment and curiosity while in higher education. To them, the education system that had been built up around the study of jazz music had played a very large role in their development. Cecil Taylor had somewhat of a breakthrough while at the conservatory when he discovered how to make up his own

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<sup>139</sup> Wilson, *Ornette Coleman*, 24.

scales. Similarly, Coltrane had studied hard at Granoff Studios and made great use of his teachers' resources and talents. Without access to learned teachers—particularly those with connections back to New York City—these musicians would most likely have turned out differently at best or at worst, become stuck in a creative rut longer than necessary.

Eventually their artistic pursuits led them all to the Five Spot Café in New York City. Coleman had been the lucky one and was noticed by a man of power who pulled the strings that eventually got him a gig at the Café. Cecil Taylor ended up in New York City while studying at a conservatory already there. Coltrane found his way there by firstly touring with Miles Davis and then subsequently befriending Thelonious Monk who had a large stint at the Café starting in 1957.

It appears that there are three noteworthy similarities between all three musicians that fostered their growth and led to their success as carriers of a new style. Firstly, during a time when many jazz musicians tried to make the cut by practicing and performing the repertoire of the era, Coleman, Taylor, and Coltrane each had a personal interest to pursue new directions beyond bebop forms and styles. They each shared artistic interests in different aesthetics. Secondly, they each had contact with individuals of higher education—and connection with New York City—who encouraged and fostered their artistic curiosities that they could not have done to as great of an effect in the groups from which they gigged with. And finally, they all ended up at the Five Spot Café in New York City and become part of a culture supportive of these artistic pursuits.

## The Critical Impact of Gunther Schuller's Third Stream Jazz

In researching the early lives of these musicians, the most striking revelation came when slowly but surely each musician ended up becoming connected back to New York City in some way. When exploring this peculiarity further it became clear that there was an influential academic foundation at the root of this. During the 1950s there existed an established school of artistic development that was looking for the next movement of jazz. The source of this is can be traced to a movement that Gunther Schuller called the “third stream” of jazz. According to Schuller, African-American musical traditions and Western-classical musical traditions were about to become a “confluence of two idioms [and] broaden into a self-sufficient third stream.”<sup>140</sup> By the 1950s, the academic circles with interests in “third stream” jazz developments were centered in New York City and at Juilliard School of Music in particular. Paul Bley, a successful and conservatory-trained bandleader who attended Juilliard from 1949 to 1952 said the following of the schools “third stream” perspective on future jazz developments:

We learned something about the evolution of classical music, which had gone through a parallel sequence of development seventy-five years earlier than jazz. Once you realized that, you could look at the history of this European art music to see what was coming next in jazz. It was easy in 1950 to see that the music was about to become very impressionistic, and so it did... After impressionism, atonality was next. The big mystery wasn't whether atonal music was coming; it was why it wasn't already here. European music had been atonal since the twenties—what was taking jazz so long?<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See Schuller in Cerulli, Dom, Burt Korall and Mort Nasatir, eds, *The Jazz World*, (London: Dobson, 1962), 185.

<sup>141</sup> Paul Bley and David Lee, *Stopping Time: Paul Bley and the Transformation of Jazz*, (Montreal: Véhicule, 1999), 24.

With this in mind, it becomes no surprise that when John Lewis—the leader of the Modern Jazz Quartet which had recorded an album called *Third Stream Music*—came across Ornette Coleman he made sure to promote and set him up in a direction towards New York City. This also explains why Gunther Schuller and *New York Times* jazz critic Martin Williams had been present at the Lenox School of Jazz festival where Coleman had performed—that John Lewis had personally arranged—and had left praising and impressed by Coleman’s newness. It was Martin Williams who ended up convincing the owners of the Five Spot Café to book Coleman and his group.<sup>142</sup> All of these individuals were connected to the “third stream” school and instantly connected with the new approaches that Ornette Coleman had displayed. This was the moment they were waiting for.

The same events unfolded for Cecil Taylor and John Coltrane but in more indirect means. For Cecil Taylor, in spending a large amount of time in New York City studying jazz at the New York School of Music he undoubtedly was exposed to the classical European avant-garde trends during his studies. The Five Spot Café became the epicenter for the development and promotion of new modern jazz in part because of its proximity to these New York schools—and in part because it had by the mid 1950s developed a cultural reputation of attracting the “hip” crowd of beatnik poets, authors and other artists from all over. John Coltrane spent four years studying with New York City conservatory-trained Isadore Granoff and Dennis Sandole who exposed Coltrane to contemporary European musical developments, which he would go on to incorporate into his own compositions.

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<sup>142</sup> David Lee, *The Battle of the Five Spot*, (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2006), 82-83.

While the environment in which these musicians grew up is no doubt a complex one that should not be boiled down into simplicities, there does appear to be common threads of influence as well as an established support system that helped foster creative jazz experimentation. The interesting realization here is that with the maturity of jazz studies within the academy—and an increased interest in “third stream” jazz—a professional support system had been created that permeated throughout the jazz landscape. In effect, there was a strong link between musicians who shared similar artistic interests of this shared aesthetic and their means of success.

## Chapter 6

### Process Analysis: An Approach to Avant-Garde Analysis

When confronted with the task of analysis in regards to avant-garde art, one very quickly runs into difficulty. The frameworks of analysis that exist within respective fields of music, literature and the visual arts are in nearly every case precisely the frameworks the avant-garde artists had consciously attempted to create their work outside of. The new image that the avant-gardists create and explore within inherently is unconventional and as such, incompatible with conventional analytical tools. If one is to attempt an analysis of the avant-garde it is of critical importance to understand the imagery, perspective and *process* from which they create from and within.<sup>143</sup>

This incompatibility arises because the “process” or “active” means in which an avant-garde work of art is created from strives to divorce itself from conventional logic-based frameworks. This is most commonly achieved through utilizing unconscious creative processes that give rise to new functions of familiar frames of reference which ultimately results in a new “image” that appears “avant-garde” in its new setting/perspective. In order to better understand some avant-garde work it helps to understand the following steps of this process:

- 1) Unconscious or non-logic based creation via spontaneity, leads to;

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<sup>143</sup> This notion is not to imply that conventional analytical methods have no value in application to avant-garde processes, but rather they would do more to display what the work is *not* rather than what it *is*. For example, a conventional harmonic analysis of an atonal piece of music is incompatible in that it would ultimately fail to describe what the music *is*, but would still function as a means to show that it is *not* a conventional harmonic piece of music.

- 2) Completely new or very cloudy frames of once familiar reference, leads to;
- 3) New functions of once familiar frameworks, leads to;
- 4) “Avant-garde”/unfamiliar new image

The confusion and sometimes shocking nature of avant-garde art could most likely be attributed seeing only the final resulting unfamiliar image without any context of the process used to create it (as well as its place within said process).

### **The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Jackson Pollock**

Abstract expressionism as exemplified by painter Jackson Pollock demonstrates visually the result this process. Robert Motherwell describes this art in the following fashion:

The content of abstract expressionism has to do with energy... an energetic field of force... All that we abstract expressionist were doing was shifting from the object to forces [and to] ... emphasis on “process”... which is Rosenberg’s loaded pr [public relation] term “action painting” can mean if you look at the pictures instead of being hypnotized by his rhetoric.<sup>144</sup>

Motherwell’s dissatisfaction with the term “action painting” stems from what he believes is an inarticulate over justification of a process that Motherwell feels is simply a natural act. Nevertheless, his statements highlight the creative process of abstract expressionist painting as based within “an energetic field of force” rather than “object” and helps one understand the first step of the process. This process results in confusion of figure and ground of the painting creating a confusion of once familiar frames of reference. As Belgrad points out, “Strokes merge into figures, which soon dissolve while new

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<sup>144</sup> Robert Motherwell, April 1979, quoted in Stephanie Terenzio, *Robert Motherwell & Black* (Storrs: University of Connecticut Press, 1980), 130.

combinations of strokes assert themselves as figures. This dynamism contrasts sharply with the traditional representational painting, in which a static and hierarchical figure-ground distinction is defined by the painting's composition with the subject of the painting foregrounded." With the breaking of the "figure-ground distinction," figure and ground now serve a different function than before. This new function (or non-function) of familiar distinctions allows for further experimentation as the artist explores new possibilities of form. The end result is the creation of a new aesthetic that became recognizable as "abstract expressionism" that represents the creative process as a whole. Lee Krasner describes how, "[Jackson Pollock's work] breaks once and for all the concept that was more or less present in the Cubist derived paintings, that one sits and observes nature that is ... out there. Rather it claims a oneness." Thus, in analyzing abstract expressionism as a process, it can be represented as such:

#### Abstract Expressionism

- 1) Creation via an "energetic field of force" without concern of the "object," leads to;
- 2) A confusion or complete break down of the familiar function of the figure-ground relationship, leads to;
- 3) Figure and ground no longer used as focal point and instead documents strokes and highlights movement, leads to;
- 4) Visual representation of the creative process as a whole. A single snapshot of the "oneness" that the artist was a part of during the act.

### **The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Charles Olson**

This analytical framework can be applied to the poetic work of Charles Olson in the same fashion showing how this process can result in written work. Olson describes his desired creative process in his essay "Projective Verse" in the following manner:



One perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception. It means exactly what it says, is a matter of, at *all* points (event, I should say, of our management of daily reality as of the daily work) get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen.<sup>145</sup>

The immediacy and flow described favors spontaneous action in writing and is an active process that occurs through time “at all points.” This spontaneity and speed is a means to bypass having to consciously strive for logical syntax of poetic meter. Instead, meter is a representation of an author’s perceptions as they flow “immediately” from one to the next. Represented in the analytical framework it may be described thusly:

#### Charles Olson’s “Projective” Process

- 1) Creation via spontaneous immediacy with disregard to conventional poetic meter, leads to;
- 2) A confusion or complete break down of conventional poetic syntax as it appears on the page, leads to;
- 3) Quick phrasing, empty space and words with multiple meanings in different contexts as related to a perception of events, leads to;
- 4) Poetic representation of the creative process as a whole. A single recorded snapshot of the flow of perceptions of the author. Example below:

When the attentions change / the jungle  
leaps in  
                    even the stones are split  
                                    they rive

Or,  
enter  
that other conqueror we more naturally recognize  
he so resembles ourselves

But the E  
cut so rudely on that oldest stone  
sounded otherwise,  
was differently heard

as, in another time, were treasures used:

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<sup>145</sup> Charles Olson, “Projective Verse,” reprinted in Donald Allen, *The New American Poetry*, 386-89.

(and, later, much later, a fine ear thought  
a scarlet coat)

### **The Avant-Garde Process as Represented by Ornette Coleman**

Similarly, “free jazz” as exemplified by the music of Ornette Coleman demonstrates musically the results of this process. Pianist Benny Green writes the following about Coleman’s playing:

Coleman claims that if at any given moment he feels the inclination to play a certain note or phrase which does not happen to fit the relevant harmony, he will play it and be damned to the harmony. In this way, he says, the musician regains his freedom, and the tyranny of harmonic sequences is overthrown once and for all.<sup>146</sup>

The improvisation of Ornette Coleman is truly “free” in the sense that it is truly not concerned with conventional harmonic frameworks. In listening to free improvisation there is a loss of tonality as the melodic content disregards what the ear usually matches to a harmonic background. In much the same way a Jackson Pollock painting visually obscures the eyes figure-ground distinction, so too does an Ornette Coleman tune obscure the ears ability to hear a melodic-harmonic distinction. The end result is a recording of a *process* in which a musician or musicians are experiencing real time events.

#### Free Improvisation In Jazz

- 1) Creation via free improvisation with a disregard for harmonic placement, leads to;
- 2) A confusion or complete break down of the familiar function of the melodic-harmonic relationship (i.e. no longer used as a means of auditory tension and release,) leads to;
- 3) A different kind of emphasis on sound and interaction that creates new sensations of tension and release, leads to;
- 4) Aural representation of the creative process as a whole. A single excerpt of the freeform interaction of musicians.

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<sup>146</sup> Benny Green, “A Matter of Form,” *Jazz Journal*, 15.6 (June 1962), 11.

## Ornette Coleman and Jackson Pollock

“I paint sometimes myself. I know what’s behind wanting to paint. You want to touch something you can’t see. This term ‘abstract-art’—what it means is something that causes you to see more than what you’re looking at.”<sup>147</sup>

Ornette Coleman’s seminal record, “Free Jazz,” widely cited as the record in which the genre of free improvisational jazz music received its name, features on its cover a Jackson Pollock painting (**Fig. 1**).



**Fig. 1:** Ornette Coleman’s “Free Jazz” record featuring Jackson Pollock’s painting *The White Light*.

When observing a Jackson Pollock painting or listening to Ornette Coleman’s “Free Jazz,” it is easy to understand how the two are artistically connected. Within their

<sup>147</sup> Ornette Coleman, interview with Fred Kaplan in “Serendipitous Convergence Hooks Up Sax and Splatter,” *The Observer*, <http://observer.com/2006/06/serendipitous-convergence-hooks-up-sax-and-splatter/> (accessed January 20, 2013).

respective art worlds, each does the same deconstruction of form: For Pollock it is an abandonment of the figure-ground relationship in the same way that for Coleman it is the abandonment of the melody-harmony relationship through the freely improvisational active means of creation. It is then perhaps of no surprise that a Pollock painting is featured on the cover of “Free Jazz,” especially considering how close in time the two were actively recognized. What may not be so obvious is in how little of an actual relationship the artist had to each other, either personally or of their work. In November of 2012, I met with Helen Harrison who currently is the director at the Pollock-Krasner house to discuss with her Pollock’s relationship with jazz.<sup>148</sup>

The following excerpt of an interview with Jackson Pollock’s wife, Lee Krasner is widely cited as a reference of Pollock’s relationship with jazz:

He would get into grooves of listening to his jazz records—not just for days—day and night, day and night for three days running until you thought you would climb the roof! The house would *shake*. Jazz? He thought it was the only other really creative thing happening in this country.<sup>149</sup>

While it is indeed a glowing endorsement of jazz, it doesn’t take into consideration the vast variety of jazz music that Pollock could have been so enamored by. Helen Harrison revealed to me that Pollock did not listen to the experimental jazz in the style of Ornette Coleman but rather listened to jazz of very much the opposite. In showing me Pollock’s personal record collection, Harrison told me how at one point, a girlfriend of Pollock had attempted to get him to listen to a Charlie Parker (bebop) record, giving him one as a gift.

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<sup>148</sup> The following information was gathered from the author’s correspondence with Helen Harrison, the current director of the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center located in East Hampton, NY.

<sup>149</sup> Interview quoted in Pepe Karmel, *Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles, And Reviews*, (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2002), 34.

Harrison pulled that album off the shelf and slid out the record only to reveal that it was in fact a completely different album, of the Dixieland style, suggesting that Pollock discarded it in favor of older traditional style jazz. Harrison also explained to me how there was no electricity in the studio in which Pollock painted and that his record player was located in his living room inside a separate house. This destroys the romantic image of Jackson Pollock moving around his art on the floor of his studio with jazz blaring around him in inspiration.

With this new information it may seem strange to draw a connection between the two artists, but that would be ignoring the importance in fact that both had achieved similar artistic aesthetics *without* any sort of intellectual interaction. This sort of consilience of avant-gardism is just one more factor among many that help document how these artistic pursuits were happening across the spectrum.

### **The Internal Structure of “Free Jazz”<sup>150</sup>**

When presented with a complex scenario theme or concept, the human brain is hardwired to search for the best way in which to sort it out. Complex systems have been itching at the brains of everyone from mathematicians to biologists to artists. The search for order among the disorder under the assumption that there is simply some underlying form that has yet to be discovered is an itch that begs to be scratched. This of course ignores the proposition that perhaps one does *not* have to find order within chaos. What if chaos is simply chaos? One may assume that avant-garde artists are doing their best to

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<sup>150</sup> See Appendix C for the graphical analysis discussed here.

make sure that there is not any definable order within their work and that disorder is the ultimate goal. Of course, the ambiguity and seemingly borderless definition of “avant-garde” implies that every artist will have their own agendas, ideas and philosophies, it is still nonetheless a large opinion of audiences that avant-garde works are largely chaotic, messy, and can only appeal to those in search of such an aesthetic. As mentioned briefly in earlier sections, the sensation of disorder most likely stems from the listener only experiencing the final result of a work of art that through its own creative process, creates completely different frames of reference. Even so, there *are* typically moments of more conventional frames of reference either by chance or by the artists own desire towards convention.

Within jazz, free jazz is a genre of music that carries with it a mainstream apprehension of seriousness due to its striking atonality. This music should be admired and respected for its contribution towards a unique musical language. Ornette Coleman’s piece “Free Jazz” is one example of this style and was chosen for analysis in hopes of highlighting a different perspective in which to understand potential structure within freely improvised music. It was originally approached with a mindset of wanting to primarily represent it visually, but to also see if and what any possible internal structure of the piece may be. Even unfocused listeners ears will perk up at similar sounding points or what appears to be designations of beginnings or ends of a sections, but what is more interesting is the flow the piece had in the form of energy and tension and if those aforementioned points acted as more than just an auditory cue. What was found was that there is a surprising amount of internal consistency and form even down to individual pitches performed. The rhythm sections were intentionally omitted to focus on the upper

ranges and “riffing” that occurs. That is by no means to say the rhythm section does not play a *key* role in the pieces performance but only to say that looking into those parts would be another analysis in itself.

### **Explanation of Analysis**

Rather than laboriously transcribing the piece note-by-note a form of graphical notation was used that could be read in a way that could both show the overall form of the piece as well as be interpreted in such a way to be potentially performed (not note by note, but rather section by section in a similar fashion as it is heard on the record). Under the subjective interpretation that the piece was largely centered on a rising and falling of “tension,” set criteria of such a term were devised as referential tools. This resulted in a loose scale where the more criteria that were met (as well as to what level met), the more “tension” that particular part would have. My criteria for tension is as follows:

1. Volume (how loud is this particular part, especially in consideration to surrounding parts and its immediate surroundings)?
2. Tempo/Speed/Momentum (how brisk is the pace of this particular part, especially in consideration to surrounding parts)?
3. Texture thickness (large vs. small instrumentation. Can relate to amount of “noise” or “cacophony” of many intermingling indiscernible parts happening at once).
4. Dissonance both harmonically (vertically) as well as melodically (i.e. very angular or jumpy contours).

With those criteria in mind each instrument was mapped out (not including the rhythm section, although it could be done) to different levels of intensity through time throughout the piece. This is shown visually with a colored line corresponding to each instrument. As time progresses along the X-axis, tension is represented in the Y-axis. In other words, a

long rising hill followed by a steep falling crest would represent a gradual increase of tension over time followed by a sudden lull. Do not confuse the lines of each instrument as a denotation of pitch. They are purely a graphical representation of the different levels of “tension” over time. The final product is a graphical representation of the ebb and flow of the piece over time of a character of music not usually notated.

While it is understood that this is but one interpretation of “tension” of many, including and following the guidelines of criteria should at least encase it in some form of objectivity. Others—especially those who do not know this particular set of criterion for tension—will still loosely interpret the final map of the piece. Nonetheless, the final map will hopefully at least act as a guideline to be freely interpreted in performance in ways that in retrospect could be seen as being loosely related to the original piece.

There are a few instances of importance transcribed that acted as very clear designations of the end or beginnings of new sections and were the instances where everyone in the group played together at the same time. These are the moments labeled as “cluster” chords and each being played by each instrument have been notated. These transcriptions show very deliberate and specific recurrences of particular pitches in particular instruments. A surprising discovery was in how the cacophony followed by cluster chords at the start of the piece is played as an “outro” of the section at 5:11 minutes in, in exact retrograde. The resulting effect is a very clear delineation of a section of the piece as if they were musical parenthesis. It also is a clear indication that the “cluster” chord moments themselves are not simply cues but actual preconceived composed structural elements.



### Section by Section

1. **Section 1** (00:00 – 05:38) [Featuring Eric Dolphy]
  - a. Intro
    - i. Everyone cacophony
    - ii. Everyone plays cluster chords
  - b. Solo Space 1 (Eric Dolphy)
  - c. Group Space 1 (Everyone)
  - d. Solo Space 2 (Eric Dolphy)
  - e. Group Space 2 (Everyone)
  - f. Outro
    - i. Everyone plays cluster chords (in retrograde of a->i.)
    - ii. Everyone cacophony
2. **Section 2** (05:38 – 10:05) [Featuring Freddie Hubbard]
  - a. Solo Space 1 (Freddie Hubbard)
  - b. Group Space 1 (Everyone)
  - c. Solo Space 2 (Freddie Hubbard)
  - d. Group Space 2 (Everyone)
  - e. Solo Space 3 (Freddie Hubbard)
  - f. Outro
    - i. Everyone plays cluster chords
    - ii. Everyone plays a theme in unison
    - iii. Everyone plays a single cluster chord
3. **Section 3** (10:05 – 19:47) [Featuring Ornette Coleman]
  - a. Solo Space 1 (Ornette Coleman)
  - b. Group Space 1
  - c. Solo Space 2 (Ornette Coleman)
  - d. Group Space 2
  - e. Solo Space 3 (Ornette Coleman)
  - f. Group Space 3
  - g. Outro
    - i. Everyone plays theme above again in unison
    - ii. Everyone plays a single cluster chord
4. **Section 4** (19:47 – 25:27) [Featuring Don Cherry]
  - a. Solo Space 1 (Don Cherry)
  - b. Group Space 1
    - i. Freddie Hubbard and Eric Dolphy play cluster chords during this
  - c. Solo Space 2 (Don Cherry)
  - d. Group Space 2
  - e. Outro
    - i. Everyone plays same theme again in unison
    - ii. Everyone plays a single cluster chord
5. **Section 5** (25:27 – 37:04) [Featuring rhythm section] Part II of title?
  - a. Solo Space (Charlie Haden)
  - b. Ornette Coleman and Freddie Hubbard play a single “cluster” chord (pitched at Ab)
  - c. Solo Space (Scott LaFaro)

- d. Everyone cacophony
- e. Everyone (except Don Cherry) plays a cluster chord
- f. Solo Space (Ed Blackwell)
- g. Don Cherry and Freddie Hubbard (and possible Ornette Coleman, hard to hear) play a cluster chord
- h. Solo Space (Bill Higgins)
- i. Outro
  - i. Everyone cacophony
  - ii. Everyone plays cluster chords

### **Augmented Trichordal Structure of John Coltrane's "Giant Steps"**

John Coltrane's seminal work "Giant Steps" exemplifies compositional techniques and features that cement Coltrane's music in a time of experimental and avant-garde change. The deceptive harmonic qualities of the piece have given rise to many analyses attempting to pinpoint a particular tonal center. Andrew Jaffe asserts that the primary key center is in B, while David Demsey disagrees with and cites a key center of E-flat instead.<sup>151</sup> While much has been written on the harmonic structure and logic behind the chord changes of the tune there has been little analysis of the melodic content. Demsey, referencing Jaffe, states, "there is a system of pitch control present [...] [Jaffe] notes that when a seven-pitch set is formed using all the pitches from mm. 1-8, the five remaining pitches comprise a transposition of the motive seen in mm. 1-3." Demsey also points out that, "when a nine-pitch set is formed using all of the pitches from mm. 9-16, the remaining three pitches form an augmented chord which is a transposition of the cyclic key relationships found in the piece."<sup>152</sup> These observations, as well as the ability

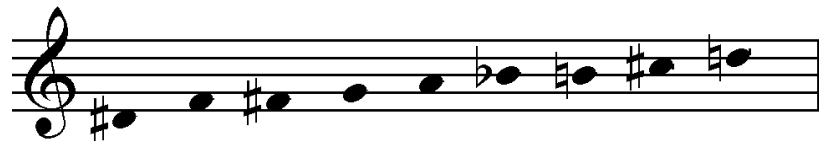
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<sup>151</sup> See Andrew Jaffe, *Jazz Theory* (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, 1983), 170 and David Demsey, "Chromatic Third Relations in the Music of John Coltrane," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 5 (1991), 171.

<sup>152</sup> Demsey, "Chromatic Third Relations in the Music of John Coltrane," 172.

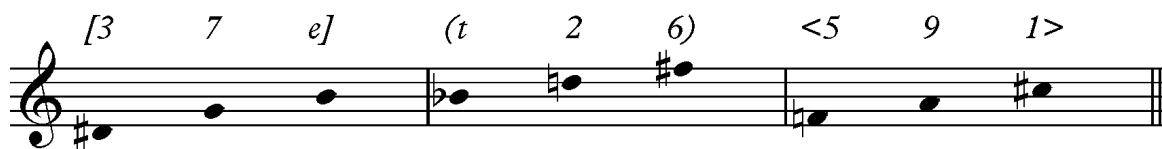
to construct a symmetric scale using all the pitches causes Demsey to raise the following questions: “Could this degree of pitch control have been a coincidence, or simply a natural occurrence as a result of the harmonic properties of the piece and a high degree of sequential material?”<sup>153</sup>

In an attempt to answer these questions a closer look was taken at the pitch class content of the tune with the help of Allen Forte’s atonal classifications. As Demsey pointed out, all nine pitches used in the melody (including the bass) can be arranged into a symmetric scale (Example 1)



Example 1: Symmetric scale constructed from “Giant Steps” pitch content

From this scale, three augmented trichords can be extracted: [3 7 e], [t 2 6], and [5 9 1] (Example 2).



Example 2: Augmented trichords contained within the symmetric scale of Example 1

Coltrane’s “Giant Steps” can perhaps be analyzed as a tune centered around these three augmented trichords. Coltrane presents all three trichords in a packaged, descending

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 173.

manner in measures 1-7 (Example 3)<sup>154</sup> and then through the use of a motivic melodic function, unravels them in an ascending manner in measures 8-15 (Example 4).

Example 3: mm. 1-7 of “Giant Steps” with augmented trichord overlay

When the tune is looked at with these trichords in mind, a very deliberate logic seems to be at play, leading one to believe that this is not a coincidental outcome. The occurrence of each pitch class follows the same logic of each respective trichord. For example, (6 2 t) in mm. 1-3 “resolves” to (2 t 6) in mm. 5-7 in same way that [e 7 3] in the bass mm. 1-3 “resolves” to [7 3 e] in mm. 5-7. Similarly, [e 7] in m. 2 “resolves” to [7 3] in m. 6 in the same manner in which <9 5> of the bass mm. 1-2 “resolves” to <5 1> in mm. 5-6.

Measure 4 features a motivic “machine” of sorts that allows Coltrane to cycle through every trichord that *always* arrives at a pitch class of the [3 7 e] trichord in the bass (via

<sup>154</sup> The different brackets, “[],” “(),” and “<>” are used as a means to more easily distinguish between the three trichords.

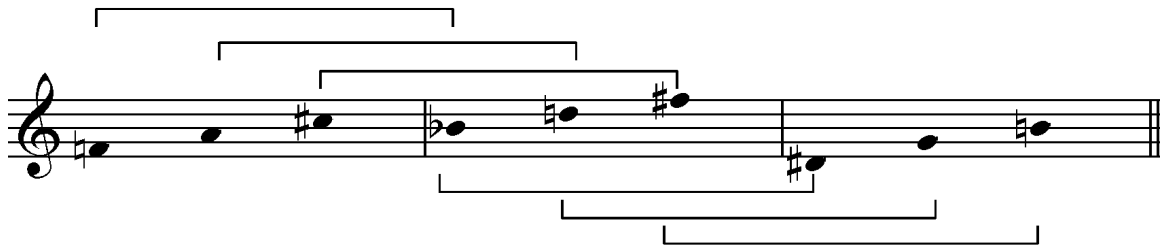
the “ii, V, I” motion) and at a pitch class of the (t 2 6) trichord in the melody. It is this motive that acts as the main gear of the tune that through turning, Coltrane is able to cycle through every trichord in a methodic manner. This is exactly what happens in mm. 8-15 (Example 4).

Example 4: mm. 8-15 of “Giant Steps” with augmented trichord overaly

Every successive note of mm. 8-15 is part of an augmented trichord as they cycle once through before ending back up where they began. These measures also show the relationship between the three trichords as each successive pitch locks in with same respective pitch of the related trichord.

Part of the reason “Giant Steps” sounds so tonally illusive is in the nature of symmetry involved. Each pitch of a trichord is a perfect fifth apart from another trichord, giving the sensation of an infinite “ii, V, I” feel that never seems to land on a solid tonality. For example, the B-flat, D, and F-sharp pitches comprising the [t 2 6] trichord give an aural sensation of a “V-I” when used before the pitches of the [3 7 e] trichord

given that they are a perfect fourth (or perfect fifth, depending on the direction of approach) away from each other. In the same fashion, the pitches of the [5 9 1] trichord are perfect fourths away from the pitches of the [t 2 6] trichord, effectively creating an interlocked “V-I” relationship between all trichords (Example 5).



Example 5: Interlocked perfect fifth relationship between augmented trichords [5 9 1], [t 2 6], and [3 7 e]

The entirety of mm. 8-15 is based entirely around this relationship between the trichords. In the melody the F leads up to the B-flat metrically before the E-flat in the bass, which leads up to the B-natural in the melody, kicking off the cycle again until ending back up an octave higher in measure 15. It could maybe be argued that there is more of an emphasis on the [3 7 e] or (D-sharp/E-flat, G, B) pitches in how they ultimately are the final resting place of each cycle in both parts. Those pitches are also the whole notes in the bass of the final measures and also play metrically important roles in the first seven measures.

While the tonal center of “Giant Steps” remains to be solidly locked down, it is fascinating to see such logically consistent interlocking between the pitches used. Every pitch effectively has a purpose and it never falters from this logic. Coltrane brilliantly obscures the logic of these pitches in the opening measures of the tune, which only truly comes to light once the pattern of the mm. 8-15 is fully realized. Pieces like “Giant Steps” show undoubtedly how the musical experimentation Coltrane came to fruition in

his own works. Demsey quotes ones of Coltrane's teachers of the early 1950s, Dennis Sandole talking about some of the material Coltrane was interested in:

[Coltrane] asked me about bitonality and polytonality, combining more than one key signature, I [discussed] tetrachord techniques and pentatonic...scales, and he was soon playing arpeggios on all of them...He also studied...modal scales, pedal point clusters and harmony derived from melodic lines, with no chord structure involved.<sup>155</sup>

It comes as no surprise that Coltrane would also be interested in the work of musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky to the affect of making some direct use of the material in *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*.<sup>156</sup> "Giant Steps" serves as an exceptional example of how the contemporary experimental music scene had become infused into the realm of jazz by the 1950s.

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<sup>155</sup> Quoted in Demsey, "Chromatic Third Relations," 154. Originally from J.C. Thomas, *Chasin' the Trane* (New York: Da Capo reprint, 1976), 51.

<sup>156</sup> Demsey, "Chromatic Third Relations," 156-57.

## Chapter 7

### **On The Jazz Avant-Garde Today: Daniel Carter Interview**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 I met with the modern saxophonist Daniel Carter. Carter is currently living and playing in New York City. Having been on the avant-garde jazz scene since the 1970s, Daniel Carter proved to be a very interesting person to talk to about the music, providing an interesting perspective of how it functions in a very different society today. Below is the transcript of the conversation:

I begin by talking about my background growing up learning music through the "classical route."

Daniel Carter: You know...as I was walking over here I was just thinking about how easy it is for, even if a person is in circulation with people doing things, as far as their concept and philosophy about things, could still be relatively isolated. What I've noticed personally over the years is that it's not like you don't get any sense from certain guys you play with about their philosophy or worldview...you do...but what I find, anytime I have the time (and that's another big issue, not having any time right?) to actually read up on some of the people I played with, it's remarkable to me thoughts about things that I had no idea [they had]! I may have known them for 20, 30, 40 years and say "oh wow, I had no idea!" Not to mention not having any idea with who some people have played with. I don't know if the mentality today is different so that maybe younger people routinely just go to the internet and check out stuff and get the low down...I'm not sure.



Trevor Hudson: I think it really depends on what you're trying to get into. It's funny you talk about that. I was curious how you come across other musicians you play with, if you ever just sit down with them and just talk to them about other things besides music. Like, "what books do you read?"

DC: Right right. I just rehearsed with a guy last night, he's a drummer. He's a little different from many because he seems to have a kind of a scholarly/intellectual bend even though he's very critical of those institutions. He's even said to some extent that he's experienced help in them, right? But he seems like somebody who's going to want to check out things and to share knowledge.

TH: He wants that perspective.

DC: Yeah, right. But what I was going to say...I started off on that tangent coming from, you know, when you said you came up classically trained. The thing that has come up for me in the past again and again in the past could be as much as, 30 plus years...and in certain ways even longer than that, even before I came to New York (I came to New York in the 70s). When I talk about things I constantly have to digress...there was a guy from Long Island who when I was in the Army in 1966-1967 (I was stationed in Italy playing in the Army band over there) and the people I was really into at the time...you know the usual suspects: Trane, Miles, Ornette, Albert...different things that were coming out on ESP Records. Sun Ra I was aware of, did I say Cecil Taylor? And of

course, one thing that many of us have in common whether we're more on the improvisational or free jazz side or more of the straight ahead side, is that many of the veteran jazz guys we have in common and we admire. Whether it's Ellington or whether it's Charlie Parker. People on the free side they might...if somebody is going to ram the Church of Charlie Parker, you know it's like the difference between the Christian Church and Jesus...being underlined right now with the whole Pope thing. But umm...this guy, he went to Catholic University and he studied education himself but was a formidable player. If you think economics...let me put it this way...we didn't think economics was cool *then*, but now it's *compoundedly*, I mean *many times over worse* now. But see, you were all born into it so i don't know if before you were born you were given orientation  
\*laughs\*

TH: Only through classes and stuff but we haven't *felt* it...haven't grown up in it and felt the change ourselves.

DC: Right right! But somethings you've adjusted to and don't think it's out of the ordinary because it's your generation. Whereas I might look at that and say, "My god! How can anybody endure" It's almost routine mostly I know when they come to New York (young guys) they gotta be ready for the next three, four, five to ten years of having this other job other than their main love to play music. Whereas back *then* in say the 50s, 60s I think some of us could have looked and looked and said "Hey man, we're going to put in a couple years to try and let people know that we exist, that we're serious and then hey we start to make a living!" \*laughs\*

TH: That was going to be one of my questions actually. How different of a scene is it to get involved in now as opposed to when you started out back then? What kind of process do you go through to get involved in that scene? Does it come to *you* or do you have to go to *it*?

DC: Well...right away I think...well I told my wife before I left "Mr. Opinion is leaving the premises" in reference to myself. Because so much stuff...you know your memory gets a little faulty. You don't really want to say things as if they were nearly one hundred percent accurate and even if they were, only from one point of view, you know?

But...one thing comes to mind about Cecil Taylor which may or may not be accurate that I've heard, that it was recommended to him or he had an idea in his head or whatever of at a certain point...lay a little low. I don't know at which point this was or if it's really true that...I guess he has a certain reputation...what's that uh... "Four Lives in the Bebop" thing or something that talked about Eric Dolphy and Cecil Taylor? What was that called...You know there was that one book, I think it may be an essay or article in which Cecil Taylor was mentioned in the then LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka book. One title was "Black Music" or it might be another title. And Cecil is saying to Sonny Murray, "you know a lot of these musicians don't like *me* and they don't like you so we gotta stick together." So you know like back then, which is before I came to New York...I was more close to, if there was any point where there was a big bang of this stuff. And I think that to the extent that something like that is true that can have a big effect! I don't know how they thought of themselves as being revolutionary people who were going to really turn

things around *at the time* but when you look back on it you say "hey man, that could have a big effect!" Just in *two* guys and you multiply that out by people who may be less highly sung. You add it all up and before you know it, and the documentation of ESP Records, I mean whatever controversy there might be whether Skullman came correct all the time as far as dealings with this music, I mean what record company *does*? But if he didn't document that stuff it'd be a lot more difficult to have an idea.

TH: One of the things I've kinda thought of too, is that even if it wasn't Cecil or even 'Trane that it would have been someone else who would have picked up on it and taken it where it went.

DC: Seems like it. Cause you know, there's different cycles.

TH: There's stuff in the air.

DC: Stuff in the air, yeah! I mean there was stuff in the air coming out of the 19th century into the 20th century like Expressionism. German Expressionism. And there was other interesting stuff. They talk about the CIA funding of avant-garde culture. There's this book this women wrote, it's kinda a thick book. So to me, that doesn't mean that Jackson Pollock or [Robert] Motherwell were trying to be the arm of the CIA but the CIA could be insidious.

TH: One of the things in relation to that is how the Native American Art scene grew out

of government programs and funding. People were sent out to collect Native American artifacts and art to display in museums here in America in order to build relations with South America [Good Neighbor Policy]. This ended up in exhibitions where Jackson Pollock and all of those people saw it and they were all into that. There was definitely government stuff, whether good or bad that promote that kind of new image that got taken away.

DC: Whatever the motives were of that is like you know Schoenberg before. I mean, from Gregorian Chants going through the Renaissance and Baroque, Classical and the Romantic period there was such a build up of contrapuntal and what notes can work together and the idea of dissonance and what notes can work together and you know, consonance, settings things up, resolution, cadences, chords, substitute chords, chromaticism. And the degree of chromaticism that existed as early as Bach or earlier.

TH: It's like one of the things I've been learning about in my jazz theory class is like the whole idea of the tritone sub is pretty much the same thing that people like Bach and Beethoven have used and was called "French augmented sixth chords" and the tritone sub has the same function but its used in a different context in jazz. These people didn't even know that it had that kinda root behind it.

DC: You know to me its amazing sometimes the difficulty I'm having of how to apply what I've been learning from the theoretical and analytical side to a *situation* of playing. For me personally, that's something I'd love to know how other musicians I work with are

thinking about things like that.

TH: Sure yeah.

DC: And for me, I just feel like you can be educated and you can study up on things and even practice some things but how is that *actually* applied to, "ok, now it's concert time."

I would imagine there's a whole range of answers to that question. Maybe what people practice in rehearsal is very *very* applicable to when they play or maybe some people do all of this and it familiarizes them with all these intervallic chordal voice-leading things but when it comes time for playing all bets are off.

TH: For me personally, I grew up knowing people who learned guitar on their own with no idea of music notation or any of that stuff. And I was from the side of where from an early age I was learning music and all of that stuff and I was almost jealous of them *not* having that.

DC: I hear you.

TH: I don't want to be biased by that happening.

DC: Like I play with this trumpet player right now who's just remarkable in how he seems to be able to have a working way of playing at a session, jam session, concert or recording that just seems to be kind of a remarkable effective synthesis of whatever he

studies, whatever he practices and whatever he's gonna do. It's like it holds together, it has integrity yet for the life of me, I can't figure it out!

TH: Like some kind of hidden code behind it or something?

DC: I really don't know how he does it! It's like I'm playing and...like some kind of ways people play are intuitive for another person than other ways. Person A plays with like Person B and says, "Oh I kinda see how that works" and person A can just "Hey, there's enough overlap between how I do stuff and the other person does stuff" I'm always seeing this person and he'd be saying "Yeah man that was some good stuff...I'm glad I recorded it 'cause I'm gonna go back over it and pick out certain tunes that are emerging and work on that and whatever...reflect on that" and I'm thinking, sometimes man, if you're on the same page as somebody people can sort of smile at each other and say "yeah man, that was a grooving thing!" and I can't do it cause I'm just trying to keep up! I can sort of halfway smile and kinda look at the guy. He's constantly doing that like "Yeah man that was cool..." and I'm like \*laughs\* "you have no idea how much trouble that's been giving me."

TH: That touches on something else I was curious about like the communication happening on the spot. I read something about you playing with this group where you weren't even looking at each other but were still somehow super close together whereas other people play they'll be like looking at each other and getting into it.

DC: Right right right. I try to play a lot kind of with my eyes closed or semi closed or not really consciously trying to look to any musician for direction but you know certain times my eyes are open and maybe its an unconscious thing, you know, like an intuitive/instinctual thing. But for me personally I'll give you a kind of extreme example. There was this guy who could just be peering at you and I'm like "You're making me nervous man!" \*laughs\* I try to be aware that he's doing that and go about my business whereas some people it doesn't bother them at all cause they're right there with it. There must be a range. Because for me the sound and the way things are moving that's the visual for me. I don't have to see it with my eyes. Sometimes I get vague pictures of how it's going, the ups and downs. And that's the thing that I find I'm saying about this dude I was rehearsing with last night who I've known for maybe four, five or six years and it's just been a constant challenge man, a constant challenge. And so I feel like...and I don't want to give up but it can be sometimes frustrating. I say, "how come I can't get this?" And then I have to count my blessings because I'm engaged trying and he's digging it so if I translate that in more traditional terms, I say you know...I don't like to use the terms "teacher" or "student" but if I must use em, I feel like a big time student to this cat cause I'm trying to understand. And I don't give up so maybe it's the kind of thing that gradually I get a little bit of something a little bit of something and just realize there seems to be so much further to go whereas for some other people it doesn't even occur to me, I mean it's not a cinch, I gotta work on it, but I can sort of see a lot of the light at the end of the tunnel and maybe sometimes the light is already, just about you know.

TH: So is this guy a lot more complicated? What do you mean when you say it's hard to



get?

DC: Well the dude...he's a classically trained--oh! See this gets back to that other thing. I'm going to have to see which one of these tangents I can totally lose. Classical thing, right? You say you studied classically he studied classically, this dude plays trumpet, you play trumpet. And when you said about the piano I thought about when Dizzy told Miles, "Man, you gotta like study piano."

TH: I feel like the piano is the visual way to see the music theory

DC: That's what Dizzy was talking about with Miles. But anyway, this guy he went to NEC. I guess his mother thought, "ok, my son is squared away. He's studying classical" right? But then he heard somebody in a rehearsal room playing a record or something, "Lonely Woman" and said "Man, I'm moving to the jazz department..." He found some formidable players up there. Some of them went to Berklee. So he was hooked. He said, to try to give a sort of clue, obliquely to your question, he told me, "You know something? I went and studied classical. I won awards when I was little. Like in high school, grammar school, middle school, whenever but when I was sprung over to the jazz department and just kept on developing and fast forward to today he has found he doesn't fit anywhere but he shows through his playing that he loves it all. He loves classical and he loves jazz and he loves rock and aspects of punk or noise. He's got total insane electronic thing for his trumpet. A lot of people, there might be a lot of people who have yet to make a big mark in following Miles doing he wah-wah pedal and all of that. But

most trumpet players I know won't even attempt it, right? I don't necessarily know if their against it just like a lot to take on, you gotta learn some sort of equipment. But this dude just took it on. His favorite trumpet players are Miles and Don Cherry and I forget who else, maybe Lee Morgan. Didn't dig Freddie Hubbard \*laughs\* I said, "Man you don't dig 'Free Jazz'?" the Ornette Coleman record or "Out To Lunch" man? He said, "No, Freddie spoils it for me." \*laughs\* Interesting guy, man. But I notice everything he does hangs together. There's a logic to it, the way the progressions the melody...but it's at an angle to almost anything that I've heard. He loves Miles...but he's doing stuff that Miles didn't do.

TH: Yeah that's the thing it's because he came from all these different things. It's all put together in a whole different new theme.

DC: He says that a lot of jazz dudes that he played with in the past felt that he played too much. He said like it's not too much to him! \*laughs\*

TH: What's his name?

DC: Damien. Damien Richardson. Oh and by the way man, this dude I think would absolutely love because he just sort of-- I don't know if you know a guy named John Blum a pianist, Lewis might know of him. He's a stone radical on the piano, man. He knows *every* tune and at the same time it's kinda like his bane because he feels like he's forced to make a living to do that. So he'll travel and do that but really basically, some people might say his goal is to destroy the piano but I wouldn't say that I mean it's just

that he too has put a lot together between all of these things and he knows that he's not just one of those dudes who plays like Cecil Taylor. It's true that Cecil Taylor had opened up some new possibilities that a lot of people wouldn't even try but then within that you make your own--you know it's like Schoenberg, Berg, Webern.

TH: That's the thing. It's like today there just so much more out there with electronic stuff alone.

DC: Mhm. You see, that's driving some people crazy. Plus if you add the economics to the situation... So I brought up the subject hackers "Anonymous" you know those dudes that wear the mask?

TH: "Anonymous", yeah.

DC: This guy was telling me about it and he knew more about it than I did. So I asked him more about it. And he said, "You know something? I was maybe halfway cool with these until they started talking that whole line about ownership and property" so I asked him, "Why does that bother you?" I mean I don't want somebody coming up and taking my house and I doubt that's what these guys were all about going off the little I know of them. But anyway so I asked the dude "Why does it bother you?" and he said "Because I'm putting stuff out and I don't just want anybody to just download it for free and all of that" But then I said to him, "Why can't regard what Anonymous is saying as provocative to provoke you into thinking about and provoking all of us into thinking about we have

been sucked into barking up the wrong tree on this whole money deal." We want to get money, but the whole money system is against us! Look, I mean I can totally understand if you got a job and they're paying in US dollar bill you aren't just going to throw the money down the toilet, but maybe while you have the job maybe you can invest some other time and get with people and say, "hey man, can we come up with some *alternative?*" even if it takes a lot of work and even if it takes decades but even to just *begin* to think about the fact that they got us in this trick bag!

TH: Do you think these collective groups have a better way of going about that?

DC: When you say collective groups do you mean musical or political?

TH: Musical

DC: Man...that is so subjective. Like I said I came out of the house saying I'm Mr. Opinion. Me, I feel like I might an old dog and it might be very hard to teach me new tricks. And I might be hallucinating because I just believe there is a difference between a group where people are really throwing down with each other as each individual as much as they can. Because you might have a group where one dudes economic situation is different from the others. Which a lot of times can be so different, not to mention philosophical differences or aesthetic differences, can split groups up. I mean one or two people might have all these gigs and they're going to Europe all the time and the other ones don't have anything...that doesn't help unity within the group. I just feel like, for

example in speaking about Damien, I think for me, I feel like this dude is totally into sleeping on the value of some cats who are just totally dedicated to playing music, right? But at the same time he can see why people have to take the reigns and make something happen, in that case it might have to be the leader of the group to instigate, it's not an either or with him. But if you spoke with him, you know you'd get it from the horses mouth but that's the sense that I get. And myself, as for what I'm mostly into...99.9% of the time I don't want to be the leader of a group and I don't really dig as much being a sideman. I have been a sideman and again I say 99.9% of the time because when that happens those cats know how hard hitting I am and I just want to work the way I want to work and they don't bother me too much. But, I say that not at all to...I mean in this world we live in now, I feel like there some examples that almost seem like cruelly and sadistically crude and monstrous to make but they enable me to sort of make a point that if somebody said something like the Christian tenant "Love Thyne Enemy" that doesn't mean you're a masochist...that just means you know your enemy is also a human being and then you can sort of logic it out. So if you really and totally don't dig and might even hate the things that cat's doing, plus the fact that he might want to kill you...in fact not only that he might even be in the act right now! Something that really fascinates me is the idea that you can love this guy on the deepest level of being a human being and at the same time take practical measures to defend yourself against even if it meant that you have to shoot him before he shoots you. Whereas people a lot of times think it's an either or: you *couldn't* love somebody that you had to kill because he's trying to wrongfully kill you. So therefore if I say I can feel that way about the worst mass murderers of the planet then certainly I can try to love and understand the people who feel they gotta be very

severe leaders...like you hear stories about James Brown \*laughs\* I mean James Brown is probably looking at the situation and saying, "I do not know another way, y'all know another way? Could y'all tell me a better way to do this?"

TH: So do you think it's better to work in smaller groups because that's less of an issue as opposed to bigger groups? What's too big in this kind of setting?

DC: Well I think theoretically nothings too big but practically...Man, since at least probably maybe even the 1970s because in the 70s I used to get on the phone and call twenty, thirty, forty people and say "let's go play some concerts" and they'd be like, "well what are we going to do?" "just play!" Some people enjoyed that for others it was torture. I remember Billy Banes saying "Man, somebody gotta take the reigns!" \*laughs\* I remember one time in the 80s...this was after I started getting tired of trying to do that, like twisting arms and trying to make people do stuff they didn't want to do...but Sun Ra did something in around '81 I think it was and had something like 60 or 100 musicians. This bass player Ra Du who I knew since he was sixteen years old, played with Sun Ra, invited me because I guess Sun Ra was putting his feelers out as to who could help him build up to that 100. That was a big old group. When that happened, for 2 days that happened, we played about four or five hours and we waited till sun-up before we got paid. But the *energy* that he and those Philadelphia people plus us, I mean Tommy Turintine was playing, Rasheed Ali I believe was there, I think there was three drummers at least...and it was beautiful! I mean Tommy Turintine was just wonderful. At that time of his life, it wasn't the brightest part of his life but there was something about the whole

Sun Ra chemistry and energy that just brought everybody to their best. And the energy in New York that he left with that group, with that energy it caused me to revisit the idea of bringing a bunch of people together. So I brought a bunch of people together including this hardcore punk guitar player. And my man, the tenor player...his name will come to me, the sun of...anyway...famous jazz arranger and composer of the 50s and 40s.

TH: Did you find that the punk scene was picking up on some of that energy, or what? What tuned you in on that?

DC: Well....I think they might have been picking up some of that energy on a cosmic sense but on the day to day hardcore punks living in the lower east side and the avant grade free jazz musicians living all over the lower east side, I don't think that from what I saw that there was a huge working bridge between them. In fact, members of the hardcore people that I knew felt like they were dissed by some of the jazz people.

TH: Really? Like they weren't welcome?

DC: Well you were just an angry kid...or maybe an angry white kid or whatever and plus you probably don't really even know how to play. You're just angry emotionally. There were a few notable exceptions to that. There was this one cat who was older than me who respected them. Will O'Connel, alto player, very very strong player. He played with the Horace Stepp group out there Sabhir did too. So, I think the energy cosmically, like I said, I think it might have been picking up on the further turn of the spiral because the

avant grade coming out of the late 50s and 60s and now maybe it's like a cyclic energy thing where at some point *some things* gotta blow. I mean the punks already did this stuff in the 70s and that folded into new wave. You got Blondie or whoever else and then some people say, "Hey wait a minute, we're not finished" and just to make *sure* they then went hardcore and speed stuff up. I call it "UFO music" cause it'll stop on a dime and turn into a whole other. I was very inspired by that stuff. And what's interesting is that Howard Mandel you know the critic...one of the few times I heard like a prominent who was on NPR and I'm not a huge fan of NPR...even though there are some things that-

TH: Howard was on there?

DC: I think it was probably the 80s sometime because it had to be after hardcore had emerged like 79, 80 or whatever. It was a commemoration on NPR of Coltrane's music and he was narrating. And he said since Coltrane did his thing the only intensity and energy that he heard anything like that was in hardcore punk and he might not have said that ever again! Cause he's not noted I don't think as covering that area. I say "Go ahead! My man..."

TH: He has a book out on Free Jazz.

DC: Is that a recent thing?

TH: I want to say it came out in the 90s...yeah I'm pretty sure it came out in the 90s



called *Future Jazz*. And yeah, he's definitely into that stuff now. That's great to hear that even back then he was.

DC: The Sound Unity Festival, from when German artists came to the aid to some people here who were trying to do some stuff, William Parker, Patricia Parker and a number of musicians in the area. This was pre-pre-vision festival I mean there were a lot of intervening years between the time this festival happened and before they started Improvisers Collective when then became Vision Festival. But that was The Sound Unity Festival and by the way my wife, Marilyn came up with the name "Sound Unity Festival." They had a number of nights and number of people played over a broad range.

TH: What year was this?

DC: Don't quote me...I'm not certain if it was 82 or 83?

TH: Like early 80s?

DC: Yeah. Patricia Parker...Don Cherry did some stuff there. I think maybe possibly Charles Gayle and the trumpet player that passed away that taught at Bennington...good ol' memory here...but anyway, in that thing there was this cat named Earl Freeman who played fretless electric bass, Rashid Bakr who changed his name now back to Charles Downs, and that girl, the same girl that I called the hardcore punk girl played guitar. It's very interesting...I've never through about it before but Howard Mandel reviewed that

and he dug it! \*laughs\* He didn't say anything about hardcore but..

TH: That's always refreshing to hear

DC: Well it's almost generational and me man, you know, a lot of guys I played with got European gigs and were doing stuff earlier than me and so I kinda felt like I was left to explore what was going on among a lot of the younger kids who came and among those things was the hardcore thing and I said, "wow!" I mean it was too loud for me I probably got tinnitus... I think to this day, that energy and what I call that "UFO" aspect and also the responsiveness to what was going on in society like Reagan youth, black flag, napalm death and all of those groups that hardly anyone even knows about. Of course you have Bad Brains but like to me it was like something...like two avenues that not a lot of people would think of in the same breath...rap and hardcore punk both expressions of some people who a lot of people were just like "forget about it." Have you ever heard of that group "Melt Banana?" Japanese group.

TH: No.

DC: There might be a number of them. I don't know about the whole range of people who actually put aspects of both together you know, hip hop and hardcore. I think they had somebody scratching. They might not even be around anymore but they started I think maybe like 10 - 15 years ago. So that's an example something I like to following up on. I just find myself inundated schedule wise. But now with youtube to facilitate all of that.

TH: Now it's just all over just over saturation I feel like now though.

DC: See that gets back to another thing we were talking about before. What we call over saturation, which is totally understandable, might be a function of the fact that nobody has the time but it might be the challenge to *make* time to say that whatever we're doing, we don't know how to quit our jobs, we don't know how to do this right now, *but* there is something wrong with the picture where we don't have enough time to contemplate what's going on! And of course people are going to argue that there's a bunch of stuff out there that's not equally good etc., but *most* people haven't even begun to fathom the good stuff yet because there isn't enough time.

TH: Yeah...that's interesting. If we all had the time I wonder how different it would be and what we could bring out of that.

DC: And the way they've hooked time with money if we had the time we'd probably not have any money or we'd transcended money all together. That gets into trying to step back from music per se, or automobile mechanics per se or English literature per se or the field of medicine or business but whatever human beings are involved with it just seems that the whole thing about money and time is weaponized *against* the people not *for* the people. In some ways spiritually talks about time as an illusion or a tool, possibly a useful tool but then say that like this tool is then turned around on somebody and is being used and making *us* into tools. I think some of us are kinda hold outs as if we just don't have to

go down that path. But unless you're independently wealthy its more greatly facilitated.

Damien Richardson works a 14 hour a day job, man. It's driving him crazy.

TH: You're right. It's like you have to make a choice between money or time. Pick one or the other.

DC: I think you're doomed if you do and you're doomed if you don't. If you choose the one and not the other that means, uh oh...now I'm homeless. If you choose the money then it's "oh now I don't have enough time to practice." It seems like it's challenging us to actually put to the test that whole realm that people might be aware of but have not yet put to the test, that is, spirituality or maybe atheists might want to use another word "energy" or "force." Resources...what are the resources.

TH: Like there's something *else*. There's a different way to do this kind of stuff.

DC: Right? And it seems like the people who are engrained in their think tanks and their, you know whether it's the Rockefeller Foundation or whatever it seems they are very astute in these areas and they make sure that we're not. Since the 60s there was a fair amount of musicians who talked about spirituality in different ways. Albert Ayler talked about love, Ornette did, Coletrane did. I noticed that people have been so beat up on, even modern musicians who were very inspired by those people, that's not the way those people represent themselves today. It's more a pragmatic thing, people just trying to get through the day, trying to get a job, trying to get some gigs and maybe hopefully play

well, hopefully write whatever they write in their resumes. It's almost like people today would think it's naiveté on part of some of those musicians to talk about God.

TH: It's really cool because when I was doing my research on what *is* avant-garde, or what does it even mean? And looking back at the Surrealists and stuff in Europe how they were trying to tap into that something else.

DC: Something else!

TH: Like maybe what we're doing right now is not the right way to be doing it so lets think of something else.

DC: Wasn't that the title of one of Ornette's record?

TH: Something else?

DC: Right! \*laughs\* But to get back to that tangent I almost lost, that classical thing. For the longest time I've felt that for me personally if I can be more involved with classical players who wanted to improvise and in a way try to engage them...because there are a number of classical players who are open, including yourself, to play free. But what I found sometimes is they don't really bring the classical sensibility to the playing.

TH: I feel like it's probably because they want to get away from that sensibility of

playing. They don't want to!

DC: And I'm trying to get to it! \*laughs\*

TH: While they try to get away from it \*laughs\*

DC: We meet in the night like two ships, "hey man where are you going?" "I'm going to the free music, where are you going?" "I'm going classical!" "Ok man, good luck!"

\*laughs\*

TH: It's funny cause you were talking about when you were in that collective atmosphere and when you're playing you're visualizing in your head the stuff that's going on. I feel like for me, when I'm in that mode, I'll visualize that stuff too, but it's not as fluid as I'd like it to be...like I'll see the notes themselves but I want something more abstract.

DC: Well try this, and remember this is coming from Mr. Opinion: What if you took it back, speaking of classical roots right...and I think someone who really got into musicology or ethnomusicology and music history that they could say way more than just Gregorian chant but for many of us who don't know so much about musical history and all of that, that's kind of a point that we've all heard of. But in a way when I think now when we have all this world music, Indian music and African music and Balinese when I hear Gregorian chant I just hear like *that's the bridge* that a lot of the primordial or third world musics came through to be one of the building blocks of Western music. Gregorian

chant, it's like one dominate note.

TH: Right I see what you're saying. That's like the fundamental starting point of building up a music for anyone?

DC: Yeah. I'd love to make the time to just go back and get a *full* sense, not just be able to drop the name "Gregorian chant," and get a sense of that context in which all of that came from.

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<sup>157</sup> All dates listed are dates recorded.

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## Appendix A

### Selected Timeline of Event

The events of this timeline are focused on the avant-garde developments parallel to those of music.

1914:

- **John Sloan** begins teaching at the **Art Students League of New York**

1917:

- July:
  - *Dada* journal published by **Tristan Tzara** in Zurich, Germany

1918:

- “The Role of the Unconscious” in *Civilization in Transition* is published
  - **Carl Gustav Jung**’s work on the unconscious characteristics of the brain
  - Mentions “collective unconscious” idea

1919:

- *Littérature* journal published
  - Founded by **André Breton, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault**.
  - Journal was an example of a transitory time of the literary scene between Cubism, Dadaism and Surrealism. Published works that acted as examples of an alternate literary tradition: **Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Éluard, Tristan Tzara** among those published.
- **André Breton, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault** and **Paul Éluard** experiment with automatic writing

1920:

- **John Graham** becomes assistant of teacher **John Sloan** at the **Art Students League of New York**
- **Adolph Gottlieb** begins taking classes at the **Art Students League of New York** with **John Sloan/John Graham**.

1923:

- *Spring and All* is published
  - **William Carlos Williams**’ work which acted as a departure from T.S. Elliot traditionalism
- **Mark Rothko** visits the **Art Students League of New York**
- **Barnett Newman** attends drawing classes at the **Art Student League of New York**. Befriends **Adolph Gottlieb** through the school.

1924:

- *First Surrealist Manifesto*
  - **André Breton** wrote and published this work outlining the mission of the surrealists

1927:

- **Frederick W. Davis** hires **Rene d’Harnoncourt** as his assistant to help find art objects to display in his pre-Columbian focused showroom in Mexico City.

1928:

- **Mark Rothko's** work is exhibited at **The Opportunity Gallery** in New York along with **Milton Avery** and **Adolph Gottlieb**
  - *Second Surrealist Manifesto*
    - **André Breton** wrote and published this work outline
- 1929:
- *Process and Reality* published
    - **Alfred North Whitehead's** work on a metaphysical based science
    - Asked, "Which [geometrical system] is demanded by the actual facts of nature?"
- 1933:
- **John Collier** appointed commissioner of the **Bureau of Indian Affairs**
- 1934:
- **John Collier** creates the **Indian Reorganization Act** initiative under the **Bureau of Indian Affairs**
    - **Indian Reorganization Act** establishes the **Indian Arts and Crafts Board**
- 1935:
- **Adolph Gottlieb** begins collecting Indian/primitive related artwork. Influenced by cubists and his friend **John Graham**
- 1936:
- **Rene d'Harnoncourt** becomes general manager of the **Indian Arts and Crafts Board**.
- 1937:
- **Carl Jung** visits America. Delivers the Terry Lectures on Religion and Society at Yale. Also lectured at the Analytical Psychology Club in New York
  - *System and Dialectics of Art* published
    - **John Graham's** work. "Synthesized ideas from Jungian psychology and surrealism into his own theory of abstract art." Pg. 62
- 1939:
- May
    - **Wolfgang Paalen** travels to Northwest Coast Indian settlements and becomes profoundly affected by the Haida totem poles that he sees there
  - **Rene d'Harnoncourt** assembles an exhibition of Indian Art at the Golden Gate International Exposition. Beginnings of the "Indian Art of the United States" exhibition at the Museum of Modern at later in 1941.
- 1940:
- August
    - **Nelson Rockefeller** appointed head of the new Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations (OCCCRBAR) by Franklin Roosevelt. Turned into the **Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs** (CIAA) in July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1941. **Rene d'Harnoncourt** was the art director at this office.
  - "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art
    - **Nelson Rockefeller** was president of the museum at the time was also Franklin Roosevelt's Coordinator of Inter-American affairs in 1940. Exhibition likely linked to Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy.

1941:

- “Indian Art of the United States” exhibition assembled by **Rene d’Harnoncourt**
  - **John Collier** helped bring to life the exhibition from his work as Roosevelt’s commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1934 – 1945.
  - Visited by **Adolph Gottlieb, Richard Pousette-Dart, Jackson Pollock, John Graham, Wolfgang Paalen, Barnett Newman**
- (Read pages 35 – 36 of *Spontaneity* to source materials here **Robert Motherwell** visited Mexico and met up with **Wolfgang Paalen**)

1942:

- April:
  - **DYN Magazine Vol. 1** (Published in Mexico City)
    - **Wolfgang Paalen** (Founder)
    - **Robert Motherwell** (Translated to English / helped edit)
- June:
  - **Office of War Information**
    - **Archibald MacLeish** (Leader)
    - **Ben Shahn** (Worked there until May 1944)
    - **Charles Olson** (Worked there)

1944:

- *Spanish Speaking Americans in the War* pamphlet published
  - Created by **Charles Olson** and **Ben Shahn** from the **Office of War Information**, for the **Office of Inter-American Affairs** headed by **Nelson Rockefeller** but with **Rene d’Harnoncourt** as superior

1946:

- Spring:
  - First publication of **Iconograph Magazine** in New York by poet **Kenneth Beaudoin** alongside an exhibition in his gallery titled “Eight and a Totem Pole or, Semeiology.” This exhibition featured the developments in a growing “ideogram” aesthetic among painters and poets alike.
    - Featured: **Peter Busa, Robert Barrell, Gertrude Barrer, Oscar Collier, Howard Daum, Ruth Lewin, Lillian Orloff, Robert Smith.**

1947:

- **Barnett Newman** draws an analogy of the split in the logic of science between Newton and Einstein.
- January:
  - “The Ideographic Picture” exhibition at the **Betty Parsons Gallery**
    - Featured: **Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, Ad Reinhardt, Theodoros Stamos, Clyfford Still**
- Spring:

1950:

- Summer:
  - **Theodoros Stamos** teaches at the **Black Mountain College** (**Charles Olsen** present at this time)

- Winter:
  - **Charles Olson** visits the Yucatán

1951:

- Summer:
  - **Charles Olson** became a visiting professor at **Black Mountain College**. Eventually went on to become a rector at the school. Puts on Mayan glyph focused event in which **Ben Shahn** contributed.
  - **Theodoros Stamos** travels to Taos, New Mexico and the Northwest Coast to see American Indian art.
- Fall:
  - **Iconograph Magazine** changed over to **New Iconograph Magazine** with new editors **Oscar Collier** and **Jean Franklin**
  - New magazine publication **The Tiger's Eye**

1954:

- **LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)** moves to New York (Greenwich Village)

1957:

- **Jack Kerouac** publishes *On The Road*

1958:

- **Amiri Baraka** starts **Totem Press** to publish his literary magazine *Yugen*

1959:

- **Charles Olson's** *Projective Verse* published by **Totem Press (Amiri Baraka)**

## Appendix B

### A Network of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Avant-Gardism

See supplemental graphic for a visual timeline of events. Blue dotted arrows represent relationships between individuals and events or places. The coloring of the lines categorize the people and events as follows:

- Orange: Events, places, government affiliations
- Purple: Visual artists
- Blue: Poets
- Cyan: Musicians
- Yellow: Academics

## **Appendix C**

### **A Graphical Representation of Ornette Coleman's "Free Jazz"**

See supplemental graphic and refer to Chapter 6, section titled "The Internal Structure of Ornette Coleman's 'Free Jazz'" for details relating to this analysis.