

Jazz and the Critical Potential of Heteronomous Expressive Form

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Oluwafunmilayo Okiji hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This dissertation shows how the socio-musical interaction involved in jazz work relates to ideas of a progressive, more empathetic and communicative, form of social organisation. Ruling out the possibility of a rehabilitation of genuine human relations under late capitalism, critical theorist Theodor Adorno has argued that an alternative mode of social existence is prefigured in the way musical works of the Austro-German tradition are composed. The study shows that in jazz, the creative tension involved in the desire to make collaborative work while nurturing the particularities of each musician reveals a form of sociality in which human distinction is able to thrive within a collective. In response to both 'traditionalist' writers, who cast jazz as a music of individual freedom, and Adorno's denial of the relevance of the African American experience to his jazz critique, the study presents a case for taking the 'communal self' that emerged as a consequence of chattel slavery as the most appropriate perspective from which to consider the music. From this standpoint, rather than the bourgeois concern with individuality and personal sovereignty, we find a desire to be recognised as a human being, and a desire for the recognition of African American alterity. This is shown to be crucial in understanding the concomitance of personal quest and collaboration in jazz. In light of this, the common portrayal of John Coltrane as apolitical and universalist is challenged. The saxophonist is presented as an exemplar of the African American 'communal self', for whom the universal and particular are not considered mutually exclusive. In particular, in its embodiment of seemingly contradictory positions – on one hand, fostering human distinction, and on the other, embracing community – jazz is shown to provide an important, though precarious, model of what Adorno calls 'reconciliation'.

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Abstract

This dissertation shows how the socio-musical interaction involved in jazz work relates to ideas of a progressive, more empathetic and communicative, form of social organisation. Ruling out the possibility of a rehabilitation of genuine human relations under late capitalism, critical theorist Theodor Adorno has argued that an alternative mode of social existence is prefigured in the way musical works of the Austro-German tradition are composed. The study shows that in jazz, the creative tension involved in the desire to make collaborative work while nurturing the particularities of each musician reveals a form of sociality in which human distinction is able to thrive within a collective. In response to both ‘traditionalist’ writers, who cast jazz as a music of individual freedom, and Adorno’s denial of the relevance of the African American experience to his jazz critique, the study presents a case for taking the ‘communal self’ that emerged as a consequence of chattel slavery as the most appropriate perspective from which to consider the music. From this standpoint, rather than the bourgeois concern with individuality and personal sovereignty, we find a desire to be recognised as a human being, and a desire for the recognition of African American alterity. This is shown to be crucial in understanding the concomitance of personal quest and collaboration in jazz. In light of this, the common portrayal of John Coltrane as apolitical and universalist is challenged. The saxophonist is presented as an exemplar of the African American ‘communal self’, for whom the universal and particular are not considered mutually exclusive. In particular, in its embodiment of seemingly contradictory positions – on one hand, fostering human distinction, and on the other, embracing community – jazz is shown to provide an important, though precarious, model of what Adorno calls ‘reconciliation’.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Listening to the Charles Mingus Sextet on a recording of a live concert they gave at Cornell University in 1964, I was struck by how well their work (that is, their socio-musical interaction) resembled ideas of the progressive, more empathetic, form of social organisation, adumbrated by critical theorist, Theodor Adorno (1973; 1997). Adorno has shown that the model of an alternative, improved way of relating to others can be glimpsed in the way certain musical works from the Austro-German tradition unfold, but he rules out the possibility of such new forms of relationship structuring real-life sociality under late capitalist, socio-economic conditions. And yet, the creative tension involved in the desire to make collaborative work while nurturing the particularities of each musician, suggests that in Mingus's sextet (and jazz, more generally) we glimpse a mode of human interaction where the differences between people and the tension that these can cause need not be considered undesirable, but might be viewed as productive (Adorno, 1973). This study is an exploration of the idea that jazz (which Adorno considers the antithesis of non-coercive, empathetic interaction) is capable of providing 'a model of possible praxis' (1997, p. 242) that shows a collectivity sustained not only through how its members identify but also through a fortification of the ways they do not.

In recent scholarship reassessing the role jazz musicians and their work¹ played in the African American protest movements of the 1960s (Dunkel, 2012; Monson, 2007; Moten, 2003; Porter, 2002; Thomas, 2008) the idea is suggested that the music itself is useful as a ‘critique of an oppressive social structure’ (Thomas, 2008, p. 105), and that it is capable of insight that we are often unable to grasp by more conventional means.² This study contributes to the recent scholarship, in its drawing together of disparate theoretical sources from critical theory, African American literary studies, philosophy of music, and jazz studies, making a comprehensive case for jazz as a form of social criticism. Within jazz studies, critical engagement with Adorno is most often confined to the debate surrounding his account of jazz as the archetypal ‘affirmative’ product of the culture industry. In its reflective use of Adorno’s ideas concerning the theoretical praxis of artworks, this study contributes to the first tentative steps beyond the impasse in Adorno, towards a more productive conversation between the theorist and jazz.

Building on work seeking to redress the focus in jazz analysis away from the often unreflective adoption of evaluative tools of the modern European music tradition (Gabbard, 1995; Iyer, 2004; Lewis, 1996; Monson, 1996; Walser, 1995; Rasula, 1995), the present work contributes to showing that the bourgeois values of individualism and democracy which underpin the notion of the ‘internally coherent’

¹ Due to the importance of interaction and process to what appears to us as jazz, I have used ‘work’ to refer to this rather than using the more usual notion of an artistic or cultural product. This decision will be discussed in the course of the introduction.

² I include Ingrid Monson and Eric Porter with caution. This idea concerning jazz’s critical potential is implied in Porter’s book but it occurs through the words of the musicians his work is intent on making heard, rather than in his own opinion on the matter. Monson, despite the main idea of her book, *Freedom sounds: civil rights call out to jazz and Africa*, suggesting otherwise, categorically denies the possibility of such an enterprise (pp. 318-9).

solo do not hold the same significance for jazz work as they do for work of the European tradition. Moreover, while of undeniable interest, the jazz solo (that is the single melodic line which has been the main focus of jazz analysis) should not be considered the epitome of jazz work, if we accept that the music has its roots in the African American community. The present study adds to work by Robert Maclean (2011) and James Buhler (2006) in its reflective use of Adorno to interrogate the tendencies to cast the music in the image of bourgeois liberal democracy (for example see Sehgal, 2008).³ It also contributes to Maclean and Buhler's perceptive work by way of its critique of Adorno's own fixation on the bourgeois in his consideration of an African American musical form.

Drawing together critical theorist, Walter Benjamin (1992), jazz scholar, Vijay Iyer (2004) and African American literary theorists, Fred Moten (2003) and Henry Louis Gates (1988), the present study contributes to the new analytical directions within jazz studies by providing a socio-aesthetic consideration of band interaction and intermusicality (Berliner, 1994; Monson, 1996; Sawyer, 2000), and the 'elasticity' of jazz musical material (Iyer, 2004; Walser, 1995).⁴ Together with these approaches that emphasize communality, Benjamin's essay on storytelling, which highlights the collaborative, intergenerational, empathetic characteristics of the oral tradition, is used to counter the common understanding of the 'story' in jazz studies, as the ability of a musician to create internal logic and linearity in his solo (De Veaux, 1997; Harker, 2011; Schuller, 1991). The study intends to provide

³ The idea that jazz is democracy in music is pervasive and has been used by critics of all persuasions as well as many musicians. My thoughts are that the usual understanding of American democracy in which individuals are free to do as they please as long as they do not encroach on others' freedom is unable to adequately take on the collaborative aspect of jazz interaction.

⁴ The notion of the 'elasticity' of jazz was introduced by Henry Louis Gates and is discussed in chapter two.

theoretical support to the new analytical directions away from traditional reliance on the toolkit of the modern European tradition.

Adorno in jazz studies

Krin Gabbard (1995) assures us that, '[w]hile Miriam Hansen has brilliantly constructed a positive aesthetics of cinema out of Adorno's largely negative writings on film, no one is likely to tease a corresponding jazz aesthetic out of essays such as "Perennial Fashion – Jazz"' (p. 105). Jazz studies engagement with Adorno has been largely confined to the debate over his provocative linking of the music to the machinery of capitalistic cultural production. In dedicated texts such as 'Über Jazz' ([1936] 1989/90) and 'Perennial fashion: Jazz' ([1953] 2000), as well as his treatment of the form within essays such as 'On the Social Situation of Music' ([1932] 2002) and 'On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening' ([1938] 2002), Adorno details his objections to what he views as an embodiment of the 'administered life' of late capitalism and a synecdoche that speaks on behalf the whole of the culture industry. The publication of an English translation of 'Über Jazz' in 1989, which happened to coincide with the 'contextual turn' within jazz studies, has resulted in a burgeoning of interest in Adorno's critique.

Among the most astute of these recent responses is Robert Witkin's (2000) 'Why did Adorno "Hate" Jazz?', which reaches beyond the well-established battle lines between scholars who consider the theorist's judgement impaired by his Eurocentrism (Andrae, 1979; Berendt, 1953; Brown, 1992; Gracyk, 1992; Thomas, 2008), apologists who wish to account for the supposed lapse in judgement by

pointing to his ignorance and lack of exposure to ‘real’ jazz (Robinson, 1994; Jameson, 2007), and those who advance staunch defences based on (often) unreflective explications of the frequently ignored socio-musicological context Adorno was working from (Daniel, 1989/90; Lewandowski, 1996; Thompson, 2010).⁵ Witkin (1998) shows that far from dismissing jazz as an inconsequential irritant, Adorno’s concentration on the music was due to it presenting a challenge to the socio-musicological ideas he was presenting, regarding the critical character of autonomous music (p. 161).

Although the prescriptive tone to Witkin’s reading is questionable, his work is of use in his guiding the eye to three points of Adorno’s argument that are of particular relevance. Firstly, that music has the responsibility to reflect an anticipative, alternative mode of social organisation in which individuals relate to each other in a non-coercive manner, coming together in their distinction. Secondly, that music needs to be free from social function and participation in extra-musical concerns in order to embody the alternative approach to collectivity. And last, the idea, supported by jazz, that real-life, empathetic social relations can be nurtured in the current socio-economic climate is deception (1998; 2000). Witkin suggests that we need to access Adorno’s response to jazz via his anxiety that individuals were powerless, and socially impoverished, and that the situation had been exacerbated by the culture industry and its products.

Toward the end of the essay, Witkin suggests that if Adorno had looked beyond the commercial appropriation and commentary surrounding the music, he

⁵ This is a very crude orientation of a broad debate. For instance, Brown’s (1992) study, while interrogative, points to ways in which Adorno’s work can be of use. Also see Hamilton (1991) and Cooper (1996).

may well have come across creative practices and social relations that look very much like the model he was advancing for critical forms (p. 168). In 'Frankfurt School Blues : Rethinking Adorno's Critique of Jazz,' James Buhler (2006) argues that Adorno *was* attuned to the potential of the African American distinction that the music originated from, but that he considered the ease with which it is put to use by the culture industry robs the form of its potential for mounting a challenge. Echoing Witkin, Buhler points to the fact that Adorno was most often speaking of music's construction in the mainstream imagination, its 'composite image... being proffered by the culture industry' (p. 122). He also corroborates the prescriptive reading of the autonomy of art put forward by Witkin. Without the historical context of art's emancipation from social function, and the crucial acknowledgement of the 'double character' of these forms (which declares their inextricable ties to society, and the culture industry, alongside their alienation), the prerequisite of autonomy in order for criticism to be valid, loses much of its depth. The historical background to autonomy keeps us alert to art music's inextricable ties to society, and most importantly, suggests that there may well be other contexts that have developed the necessary critical distance.

In a perceptive discussion concerning the 'blue note' in jazz, Buhler presents one of the few positive responses to Gabbard's pessimism concerning a more productive conversation between jazz and Adorno. In a critique of both early apologists of the music, and, perhaps inadvertently, more recent scholarship that tends to construct jazz in the image of American democracy, and echoing (albeit, unacknowledged) the work of African American literary studies, Buhler hones in on the 'double-ness' of the 'blue note' which is an important instance of 'ironic parody'

(p. 130).⁶ Buhler's socio-musical account uncovers an interesting under-explored direction in jazz analysis, one uncovered by Vijay Iyer (2004) and Tord Gustavsen (2008), who argue that we need a more flexible analysis in jazz which can scale down to the minuscule, such as the 'blue note', and out to macro 'details' that span generations of musicians, such as the standard. Buhler, also presents an African American perspective in the jazz/Adorno debate which helps to transcend the charges made against Adorno of racism and Eurocentrism. Rather than the discourse (both contemporary and that against which Adorno was reacting) surrounding the music, Buhler shows how the music itself can contribute to the debate on its affirmative character. Buhler's foray into the minute but crucial component of the 'blue note' suggests exciting new directions for the debate to move.

Buhler shows how Adorno's jazz critique is important in highlighting the way music is appropriated (not only by the culture industry but also by the commentary celebrating the music as a champion of the individual and of a supposed reconciled sociality) and tentatively suggests that Adorno was, perhaps inadvertently, delineating an area within the musical practise where creative reflectivity could exist. Robert Maclean (2011) has also picked up on the opportunity Adorno's work presents scholars interested in finding a framework from which to consider jazz's potential in providing social critique. He writes, Adorno's essay 'Über Jazz', 'opens a space for the emergence of critical musical practices in jazz, precisely by delimiting the contradictions between the ideologies promoted on behalf of the music

⁶ Buhler presents the opposing side of this dialectical reading of 'double-ness' in jazz in highlighting the motivations of contextualist readings of jazz that argue that the 'genuine' music exists in a social realm beyond that of the culture industry. Also see Harding (1995). This will be discussed in greater depth later on in the chapter. On another note, it would be interesting to know of Buhler's knowledge of W. E. B. Du Bois's set of ideas that fall under the term 'double consciousness,' and the plethora of work from African American literary studies that has extrapolated from them.

and the enchaining effects of monopoly capitalist control of the recording industry' (p. 171).⁷ The readings that Buhler and Maclean provide are a significant development in the engagement of jazz studies with Adorno work.⁸ And perhaps more importantly, this development shows new ways in which the music itself might be put to use in critical engagement within jazz studies and beyond (see for example, Keren Omry, 2007; 2008). The present study is a contribution to these cautious first steps.

Walter Benjamin in jazz studies

Having little to say concerning music, it is not surprising that Walter Benjamin features little in jazz studies.⁹ There are a few notable exceptions. A recent contribution from Tom Perchard (2012) is an intriguing partnering of Benjamin and the right-wing jazz writer, Hugues Panassié in their mutual concern with the changing fortunes of the individual in modern society, and the use that new technological advances in the reproduction of cultural products hold for mobilisation of a revolutionary class (Benjamin), and liberating the beleaguered bourgeois from the dehumanising effects of late capitalism. Karl Coulthard (2007) draws insightfully

⁷ Robert Maclean's (2011) PhD, 'After Modern Jazz: The Avant-Garde and Jazz Historiography,' contains a detailed consideration of 'Über jazz' in an attempt to account for why the music's embrace by 'white bourgeois audiences' (p. 37) has tended to exacerbate the domination of the African American subject.

⁸ Although Harry Cooper's (1996) criticism of the revisionism of the jazz critique by scholars such as Max Paddison (1982), Thomas Crow (1983) and Tomas Levin (1990) should be kept firmly in mind, these more recent examples offer nuanced and reflective use of the work.

⁹ Compare this to his influence in film and cultural studies.

from Benjamin's debate with Adorno concerning the loss of aura in the production and reproduction/reception of artworks or cultural products. Due to the influence of Benjamin's ([1936] 1992) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' it is not surprising that the focus of these works is this essay. In fact, it is surprising that the discipline's engagement with 'The Work of Art' has been so limited.

Rajeev Patke's (2005) essay 'Benjamin on Art and Reproducibility: The Case of Music,' despite its title, presents a much broader case for Benjamin's importance to music. The relevant arguments made in the 'Work of Art' are set against the context of his earlier work (significantly, 'On Language as Such and On the Language of Man' ([1916] 1996) and 'Little History of Photography' ([1931] 1999)), and the theoretical influence traced through to more recent work. What is of most interest to the present study is what Patke has to say concerning Benjamin's 'The Storyteller: Nikolai Leskov' ([1936] 1992). Patke highlights the significance of Benjamin's portrayal of the story as being made up of a multitude of 'transparent layers' to understanding the distinctive principles of construction that govern pieces that are returned to, and amplified by successive generations of musicians, what Andrew Benjamin (2005) terms 'iterative reworking' (p. 52).¹⁰ Patke, who explores these concerns through Indian musical traditions, acknowledges the significance of creative or accumulative repetition to the jazz tradition also. Notwithstanding the fact that when the 'The Storyteller' was written it was a retrospective (that is to say, that Benjamin considered late capitalism non-conducive to the form of communication

¹⁰ Patke calls this 'non-identical iteration' (p. 196) and is very similar to Imiri Baraka's (2010) the 'changing same' (p. 105) of African American music.

exemplified by storytelling), the work is crucial to the present study as it provides a bridge between Adorno's bourgeois focus and alternative perspectives.

African American context

An underlying assumption of the present study is that jazz is a form of African American expression. At its proposal stage, my intention was to attempt an aesthetic consideration that approached the music's critical potential, immanently, without recourse to extra-musical influence or contribution. It was, ironically, through an immersion in Adorno's jazz critique and other socio-musicological work, such as 'On the Social Situation of Music' ([1932] 2002) arguing the inescapably social character of all music, that I became convinced that jazz, which could not be adequately accounted for within the bourgeois modern context, demanded to be, at the very least, tentatively considered from the context of the African American.¹¹ Recasting the project to take in the African American context of jazz helped embody the music, but opened up others' concerns with essentialism, authenticity, and ownership. While the debates that surround what is seen by some as an Afrological turn within the discipline police the study's every manoeuvre, the debates are not discussed at any length in its core chapters. The most pertinent discussions are presented here.

*De- 'classicizing'*¹²

¹¹ Interestingly, Maclean reads 'Über Jazz' to be 'rigorously anti-raciological' (p. 160), although he considers this a central problem, as Adorno missing the experiential distinction.

¹² This is a term adopted from Robert Walser (1995) and is used repeatedly in the study. It sums up the project of exploration of analytical alternatives better than 'Afrocentric' or 'Afrologic' that Brown attributes to such work.

Lee Brown (1999) has stated boldly what those on the other side of the fence hold, but rarely lay out in such stark terms, namely that the recent disarming of traditional analysis is a simultaneous embrace of ‘Afrocentric’ values.¹³ In positioning the ‘internalist principles of unity and coherence’ of the traditionalists opposite the ‘improvisational freedom, even at the price of formal incoherence’ (p. 235) that supposedly characterises the ideals of new approaches, Brown defined the terms of the debate (coherence/incoherence, unity/fragments) in a formalist idiom. Traditionalist language simply does not have the infrastructure to deal with band interaction and intermusicality (Berliner, 1994; Monson, 1996), the role of embodiment (Iyer, 2002; 2004), and the ‘elasticity’ of jazz material and its forming (Gustavsen, 2008; Walser, 1995) to name just a few of those alternative principles. Brown claims the ‘critical theory of jazz’ and the ‘primitivist’ commentators of 1930s Europe both engaged in propagating an Afrocentric agenda for the music. The coupling of the two reveals a certain misunderstanding both of the motivations of writers such as Hugues Panassié and Robert Goffin, and of the driving concerns of the contemporary studies he believes are obscuring the tradition. Sorting through the confusion of the proposed identity can be used to sharpen the study’s orientation. Firstly, as Tom Perchard (2011; 2012) has shown, Panassié *et al.*, although evoking a utopian fantasy through recourse to the supposed innate talent and spontaneity of African American musicians, were doing so from a position entirely in keeping with their bourgeois concerns. Their celebration of black creativity can be traced back to

¹³ The word ‘Afrological’ implies approaches that would like to draw to the fore African and African American characteristics. There are interesting conversations being had regarding African retentions and the difficulties in isolating these within the expression of a subject formed by its interaction with European economy and sensibility. For instance, see Baraka (1999), Monson (2007) and Sandke (2010). The study takes ‘Afrocentric’ to refer to an outlook that makes the African American vantage its default.

widespread concern with the disenfranchisement of the individual. It is a markedly different position from what we read in, say, Jed Rasula (1995), who is calling for recognition of how the ‘heuristic grid of developmental history’ has attempted to mould jazz into the correct form for inclusion into the Western cultural pantheon that does not deny (in fact, may well emphasise) its racial maker, but neglects its practitioners’ distinctive way to artistic expression (p. 153).

Furthermore, we can claim that none of these approaches lays claim to a pure African, or African American, aesthetics, but most can be seen as part of an attempt to root African American music in more appropriate terms of reference. Contrary to Brown’s understanding, it is not an attempt to prove, for instance, that the ‘blue note’ is of African origin, but it is an attempt to at the very least show a consideration of its social significance. It is, to quote James Buhler (2006), who as a musicologist resides a little way from this disciplinary maelstrom, that in ‘[r]efusing to order itself to the intonation of the Western tempered scale, [the blue note] lodges a protest against the order of a world that neither lets it in nor lets it be’ (p. 129). Perhaps most useful here is Henry Louis Gates (1988) who tells us to look for the distinction in the manner or approach by which expression is formed, rather than the materials found.¹⁴ Gates’s suggestion that we should focus on process is crucial to the study. Of course, at this point we are faced with the question as to whether it is possible to identify an African American ‘way.’ This is answered in the affirmative by countless theorists working with African American literature (Baker, 2003; Ellison, 1995; Henderson, 1973; Hurston, 2009; Moten, 2003; Nielson, 1997; Pavlic, 2002; Snead, 1981). But despite

¹⁴ ‘The Monkey, in short, is not only a master of technique... he *is* technique, or style, or the literariness of literary language; he is the great Signifier. In this sense, one does not signify something; rather, one signifies in some way’ (Gates, 1988, p. 54).

the often excellent, scholarly support sanctioning my proposed perspective, exploring jazz from an African American standpoint still feels a contentious position to hold, and is one which I would feel uncomfortable pursuing if I had not been thoroughly convinced of the mediation between social significance and expression.¹⁵

Mark Gridley's (2007) unease with what he sees as a tendency in recent writing on free jazz to link its first waves with the civil rights and black nationalist movements contemporaneous is the catalyst of a consideration of certain misconceptions surrounding African American protest. Gridley denies that music is socially sedimented, and argues that, in fact, jazz's development can be accounted for immanently, unmistakably modelling the trajectory of musical material in jazz on that of the modern European tradition (pp. 143-4). He is also dismayed by the use of jazz, by musicians and radical commentators, as a means of political protest. These misgivings focus on a similar set of misgivings to those present in Brown's critique of the 'Afrological' turn within the discipline. Although not named, Gridley's characterisation of the offending scholarship, appears to point to much of the work at the forefront of testing new approaches, better equipped to deal with interaction, collaboration and indeterminacy.

*'All play and no work'*¹⁶

Further support for the African American vantage-point taken by the study was found, inadvertently, in attempting to reconcile the evasive loci of jazz work with the irrevocability of the modern European work-thing, the composition. Discussions

¹⁵ This perhaps betraying my own Eurocentrism or at least a deeply lodged need for this alternative perspective to be validated by that which it is, in part, attempting to challenge.

¹⁶ This is from the title of a 2011 article by Andrew Kania.

summarised with uncommon clarity by Andrew Kania (2005) show the jazz work-thing is ‘ontologically weak’ (that is, it is hard to locate a complete discrete jazz work), but that on the other hand, arguing that the jazz work resides in performance, loses the sense that work should be available for us to return to (pp. 167-200). His proposal that jazz has no work to speak of explains the resistance the music puts up when attempts are made to reduce it to a series of text-like works. Kania’s study lends support to the study’s focus on jazz’s distinctive principles of creation, and considers the music in terms that stay alert to the significant ontological difference between jazz and classical music. When the term ‘work’ is used in the present study it is most often to denote the creative process for making jazz, not a musical end product.

Improvisation is important in such considerations, which Kania defines in appealingly broad terms, taking in both ‘structural’ and expressive musical material. The present study adds that jazz’s creative performance is most often done with others (Berliner, 1994; Monson, 1996; Sawyer, 2000). And, perhaps more contentiously, that improvisation is contained in a broader creative process, involving a communal work by groups of distinctive, at times conflicting, musical personalities. While not claiming that African American expression has exclusionary rights over collaborative work, the portrayal contrasts sharply with much that is usually regarded as characteristic of the European tradition, and is corroborated, retrospectively, by countless instances in African American music and literature.

What and which jazz?

Arguably any study that talks to or within the discipline of jazz studies constructs an idea of what the music is. While not a stated objective of the present study, it may appear that attempts are made at every turn to answer those perennial questions of the discipline: ‘what is jazz?’ and ‘which of its numerous permutations are quintessential?’ The present study’s understanding of what jazz is considers elements such as swing, blue notes and improvisation to be sites of shared significance rather than principles of structuration or characteristics all jazz should have (Gridley, Maxham and Hoff, 1989). The opening discussions of the study constructs jazz as tied to a specific mode of subjectivity that arose from the racialization of African captives, that of a ‘communal self’. Jazz is taken to be part of an expressive continuum in which the singularity of a human being’s features, her idiosyncrasies, are actively retained and encouraged as she makes work with others. This socio-historical delineation is built upon in the following chapter where a more musicological consideration of jazz is developed. Within this orientation, the music is again viewed through the eyes of black America: jazz is defined as an (twentieth century) oral tradition structured by the mimetic outlook arising from African American intersubjectivity.¹⁷

A comprehensive exploration of the legacy of such a mode of subjectivity and of the expression that issues from it is beyond the scope of this study. Yet there are pertinent questions concerning whether this socio-historically determined reading

¹⁷ As is reiterated at numerous points in the study, this is not to deny the contribution of musicians who are not African Americans. It is an attempt to shift our vantage from the default white, European perspective that at best diminishes and very often fails to explore the possibility of other modes of subjectivity.

still has relevance in the music's contemporary scenes. Does a communal self still hold sway in African America? Does music being made by Norwegian jazz musicians also present this mimetic interaction? If so, does this not discredit the socio-historical basis on which the study rests? In order to provide what can only be the beginnings of a rudimentary answer, it is necessary to reiterate the influence of Adorno's musicology. Notwithstanding the critical reappraisal it engages in,¹⁸ the study rests heavily on Adorno's theory of musical material (see chapter four). Most pertinent to the issue at hand is the idea that social history is found 'sedimented' within musical works. That is to say that the mode of sociality that governs the distinctive form of creative work in jazz is not (only) property of a specific group of people at a specific time (although it may *speak of* them). It is, importantly for the arguments being made in this study, resident within (and indeed constitutive of) jazz work – both in and of its principles of creation, and in jazz's recorded archive. This perspective is extended in chapter three's discussions on storytelling and jazz. The communal self, while not taken up consciously, is found as the layered imprints of a multitude of re-tellings of a blues lick, a standard, or the tradition as a whole. A jazz musician need not be African American. A jazz musician need not have been a contemporary of Ellington, Parker or Mingus. Indeed, a jazz musician need not have ever meet an African American to be compelled by Muhal Richard Abrams's assertion that the music works best when we keep our own and each other's

¹⁸ The problems I find in Adorno are largely to do with glaring oversight rather than theoretical weakness. For instance, while I spend much of chapter two showing the limitations of the Adorno's jazz critique, arising as a consequence of his lack of attention to the specific African American experience of modernity, I do accept his argument that the ideology of freedom and pseudo-individuality that are often used unreflectively in jazz commentary help perpetuate 'unfreedom'.

distinction in view as we engage in communal work.¹⁹ The communal self and the mimetic attitude that accompanies it can be found, sedimented, in a jazz record collection.

The study, while drawing from musicians and work associated with the so-called ‘mainstream’ of jazz (for instance, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, the standard ‘Body and Soul’), lingers on the first wave of free jazz. It is in the music of late John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Charles Mingus (among others) that the mimetic play between individual and group which provides the principles of structuration for much black expression is laid exposed at its surface as well as in its underlying modes of creation. This contentious focus and the argument for it are explored most comprehensively in chapter five.

The word ‘jazz’ is used throughout the study, and yet this is done with deep misgivings as to its suitability. On one hand it is imbued with the concepts that assisted the racialization of Africans in America (for instance, its etymological foundation in the word ‘jass’ and the associated sexual connotation). On the other, it encompasses, and tends to refer to the miscegenation of cultures that the study recognizes as important but puts to one side in its focus on black American subjectivity as the key to how jazz works. I have considered following the lead of some musicians (Duke Ellington and the Art Ensemble of Chicago amongst them) who eschew the heavily loaded term in favour of one reflective of the heterogeneous nature of the music and also capable of highlighting the socio-historical specificity

¹⁹ See AACM Panel Discussion: Muhal Richard Abrams, Frederick Berry, George Lewis, and Roscoe Mitchell with moderator Charles Kronengold CCRMA, Stanford. May 12, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuT8r8D0w3Q>.

on which the study rests. However, due to the way the study is structured, the reader would be required to wait until its closing arguments in order to be convinced that the demarcating use of ‘black’ or ‘African American’ was more than essentialist intransigence. A critical exploration of Ellington’s and the Art Ensemble of Chicago’s preferred ‘Negro music’ and ‘Great Black Music’, respectively, in light of the arguments presented in this study, will be attempted in the future. I have settled on the no less contentious but more broadly accepted term, although these remarks concerning definition should be kept firmly in mind. When I use the word ‘jazz’ it is shorthand for ‘communal music that buttresses each musicians’ distinctive characteristics’ or for ‘music of a modern communal self’.

Re-inscribing the black experience into modernity

The study’s perspective on the incomplete or incomplete-able project of Enlightenment can be seen as broadly in line with Adorno’s (1997b), as set out most comprehensively in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but perhaps better understood in the context of the work most relevant to the study, that is, his writing on the possibility of music praxis, and on the culture industry.²⁰ The pervasiveness of the effects of rationalisation and the techno-industrial revolutions is a motivating concern. An appreciation of the limitations placed on our thought (and, indeed, of our capacity to

²⁰ Texts referred to most frequently are ‘On the Social Situation of Music’ (2002), the ‘Art, Society and Aesthetics’ and ‘Society’ sections of *Aesthetic Theory* (1997), ‘Über Jazz’ (1989/90) and ‘Culture industry reconsidered’ (1975). I am also much indebted to Max Paddison’s (1997) *Adorno’s Aesthetic of Music*.

question and seek alternatives), and of the fact that our ability to challenge is very much tied (and enabled) by that which we seek to interrogate, also guide the study. The study's unremitting questioning of the invisibility of black experiences from much European modern thought finds support in Paul Gilroy's (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, which can be read as an 'interrogation of the concept of progress from the standpoint of the slave' (p. 113),²¹ and the more recent *Hegel and Haiti*, Susan Buck-Morss's (2000) unearthing of the influence the 1791-1803 Saint-Domingue slave rebellion had on Hegel's formulation of the master-slave dialectic, a key component of the philosopher's theory of universal history.

Gilroy's work is significant in its explication of the 'ethical value of... [black] music and its status of an ethnic sign' (p. 36) in the project of reappraising the disenchantment that characterises the modern era. However, the study is most influenced by Gilroy's retention of modernity as a valid discursive and historical (although Gilroy's study is itself ahistorical in some respects) framework, in contrast to contemporaneous calls for its dismantling, or for a splintering off into a plethora of equally relevant but independent outlooks. And, perhaps most important, is the study's adoption of the idea that from the slave's standpoint (and that of its similarly disenfranchised descendants), who in its suffering has something of 'an epistemological and moral advantage' (Fischer, 2004, p. 35), we are afforded an attuned outsider's interrogation of the deficiencies of the modern age.²² While Buck-

²¹ Gilroy used these words to describe the writing of W. E. B. Du Bois but they can also be used to describe his own project.

²² Jose Barreto (2009) writes that 'the crisis of modernity is not to be found only at its end but also at its very beginning, as modernity was born already in crisis' (Available from

Morss's work builds on Gilroy's call for a 'critical revision of our concept of modernity' (p. 34), her insistence is on the centrality of the black experience in the construction of narratives in which it is conspicuous in its absence, and on the corporeality of its undeclared influence.

The case made for the importance of Haiti to Hegel's model is compelling and Buck-Morss's appeal for further excavation has been answered by Sibylle Fischer's (2004) own exploration of the place of New World slavery in the modern narrative. In closer relation to the study's specific engagement with the work of the Frankfurt School, an essay by Clay Steinman (2004) has drawn attention to the lack of consideration given racism against African Americans in *The Authoritarian Personality*, a multi-authored study carried out in 1950 to explore fascism/racism in the United States.²³ The present study's interrogation of Adorno's dismissal of African American subjectivity can be seen as a small contribution toward scholarship interested in finding what alternatives his perspective can contribute to critical theory's considerations of modernity. While offering full disclosure of its influence on the theoretical framework to be developed, I have found that Buck-Morss's skilful redress tends to minimize the significance of the silencing and invisibility of the black experience in modern narratives. The present study, following Gilroy, considers the historical absence of the black experience from modern thought (and

<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2009/10/19/human-rights-and-the-crisis-of-modernity> [10 Jul 2014]). See also Barreto (2013).

²³ In a debate with Joachim-Ernst Berendt (1953) concerning the recently published, 'Perennial Fashion – Jazz' ([1953] 2000), Adorno, claims to be, 'largely responsible for the most widely discussed American book about an understanding of race prejudice' (1953, p. 4). But the disingenuity of the claim is revealed when considered next to the near absence of the African American experience in *The Authoritarian Personality* ([1950] 1983).

from much contemporary commentary) as significant in its allowing these alternatives approaches to take root and be nurtured in relative anonymity.

Study Overview

The four chapters that constitute the core of the study are self-contained but should be taken as essential stages in the train of thought directed towards gaining a better understanding of how jazz is able to present through its creative processes a model of progressive human relations. Each chapter is dedicated to the fulfilment of specific objectives.

Chapter two: Jazz as an expression of the ‘communal self’ of African American experience – The objective of this chapter is to establish the socio-historical basis of collectivism in jazz in distinction to the claims presented by its early commentators, which I show relate more closely to the historical trajectory of the bourgeois.

Adorno’s rejection of the idea of jazz as the embodiment of personal sovereignty and liberal democracy is shown to be insightful although limited due to his assumption that all subjectivities can be subsumed under that of the bourgeois. The inattention to the possible significance of the African American is shown to be a crucial oversight as the emphasis on the ‘individual’ and its loss of sovereignty needs to be seen as subordinate in priority to resolving the crisis of dehumanisation and racialization, suffered by the African American as part of chattel slavery. The ‘communal we’ that we hear in Mingus’s sextet is a manifestation of a specific perspective of the modern

narrative. It is an expression of the tension generated from the retention of the imposed collectivity of race, and the desire to be seen as human.

The chapter also introduces a secondary, related, line of criticism tackling the inattention to the African American experience of modernity in jazz commentary, with particular reference to the debates surrounding Adorno's engagement with the music. The tendency to equate the communal nature of jazz with the values of American democracy, rather than to view it as a distinctive type of communality, are interrogated.

Chapter three: Storytelling, silence and sound – The objective of the third chapter is to establish the aesthetic terms of jazz's social character, showing the tension between the desire to showcase human distinction, and doing so as part of a community permeates the jazz form and tradition. Drawing together Walter Benjamin (1992), African American literary theory (most importantly the work of Fred Moten (2003), Henry Louis Gates (1988), Stephen Henderson (1973) and Ed Pavlic (2002)), and the music itself, a descriptive formulation of collaborative work in jazz is put forward. Storytelling in jazz scholarship has traditionally been associated with the linearity and coherence of the individual solo, with values modelled closely on those of the modern European music tradition. The chapter exposes the inadequacy of such approaches and shows jazz's principles of structuration to be those that govern other African American community settings. Building on Ingrid Monson's (1996) work on group interaction, and in particular what she terms 'intermusicality,' I add to the expanding scholarship presenting jazz

as a collaborative practise, proposing that jazz work also occurs inter-generationally in the manner Benjamin presents for storytelling.

As noted above, Benjamin's 'The Storyteller' was written as a retrospective. He, as did Adorno, believed the development of genuine human relations and communicability to be of great difficulty, particularly following the traumas inflicted by the First World War. Another aim of the chapter is to address the question as to why African American (musical) storytelling has persisted despite its subject being faced with traumas comparable to those which have robbed Benjamin's storytelling community of its ability to communicate experience.²⁴ It is shown that the slide between sound and sense, an evasion of designation but also a refusal to relinquish meaning, enabled African American music to continue to communicate content of social significance, even when living through the sustained New World trauma. It is argued that this tendency toward a more creative, expressive approach to communication presents a distinct opportunity for developing more 'empathetic' tools of scholarship.

Chapter four: Double consciousness and the critical potential of jazz – The objective of this chapter is to defend a central assumption of the study: that African American expression has been able to escape the effects of the intense rationalisation of mainstream society which Adorno argues has an inescapable hold on all modern

²⁴ The 'story' should be understood as more broad in application than its usual use has it. It means here nodes of social significance and includes the standard, reoccurring lyrics, and verbal wordless expression such as the sigh or scream. And, perhaps more importantly the communicability of these. This idiosyncratic usage was adopted in part to find a satisfactory way of presenting Stephen Henderson's (1973) idea of 'mascons', that is 'a mass concentration of Black experiential energy' (1972, p. 44) in a way that could be readily understood without needing to detour too deep into African American literary theory.

subjects. Returning to the conclusions reached at the end of the first, the chapter explicates a further consequence of the denial of humanity during slavery, the absence of recognition. A consideration of W. E. B. Du Bois's 'double consciousness' will show that the invisibility afforded by the denial is the source of African American autonomy from the mainstream.

Within this chapter Adorno's writing on autonomous art's critical potential will be explored. As part of the summary provided, the historical basis of the European tradition's critical distance is considered. I will highlight limitations his denial of African American history places on his account of radicalism in art. Double consciousness is shown to offer a significant critical opportunity through providing the requisite distance and, crucially, the cover under which expressive and communicative forms have been able to develop in ways that diverge from the mainstream. The chapter also exposes the limitation of double consciousness. Invisibility allows for the development of distinction but it also ensures that the model for change remains 'underground,' and ineffectual outside its native environment.²⁵ When expressive work such as jazz does appear in the mainstream, any elements that do not conform to existing categories or terms of reference are dropped or adapted, robbing work of its progressive moments. Across a range of situations misappropriation is shown to be a tendency - in the shoehorning of empathetic collaboration into the analytical parameters of the modern European tradition, and in the cabaret audience mistaking the clandestine signifying of Louis Armstrong as harmless minstrelsy.

²⁵ The 'underground' is an important theme in African American literature and its study. See for instance Ellison (1965) and Stepto (1991).

Chapter five: Jazz protest, aesthetic praxis and African American universalism

– The chapter is an exploration of protest and the challenge that jazz’s collaborative work presents to the types of communicative and social frameworks that dominate mainstream society. It considers the resistance that certain jazz commentators have put up against the idea that the social and political tensions of the late 1950s and 1960s are mediated through the music. It will highlight that, on the other hand, over the past decade there has been renewed interest in the civil rights and black nationalist movements, and jazz’s involvement in these. The mediation of the social and the aesthetic in jazz is given serious consideration as part of the turn in the discipline towards alternative ways of approaching the music’s creative practice. Free jazz is considered in a comprehensive framework, not only as part of the social milieu but as the embodiment of heightened rendering of the socio-musical principles of jazz.

The notion of ‘aesthetic praxis’ put forward by Adorno is explored as an alternative to what he considered the ineffective direct action of political committed work. A ‘collective self’, that is revealed in the way disparate musical components come together in composition within the modern European tradition, finds a counterpart in jazz’s socio-musical principles which see musicians finding ways to play together and developing ‘homemade technique’²⁶ in order to satisfy the need for distinction within collaborative work. In the literature, Coltrane’s personal perspective and musical approach are often presented as an antidote to the preoccupation with the African American context. The chapter suggests that

²⁶ This phrase is from pianist Jessica Williams.

Coltrane's concern for community/universality was consistent with those artists and activists calling for an appreciation for the 'alterity of blackness' he is often positioned in opposition to.²⁷ We find in Coltrane's holding simultaneous concern for the particular (his personal music quest, the African American community) and the general or universal (the tradition, other musicians, mainstream American society and beyond) he is presenting a celebration of communal non-identity, African American intersubjectivity as a universal ideal.

²⁷ The phrase, 'alterity of blackness,' is my own but heavily indebted to Bob Kaufman and James Baldwin. In agreement with Adorno, Coltrane considered music to be the most effective means to achieve the necessary change in consciousness (Kofsky, 1988).

Chapter Two

Jazz as an expression of the ‘communal self’ of African American experience

In many people it is already an impertinence to say ‘I’.
Theodor Adorno

As John Coltrane once said, the audience heard ‘we’ even if the singer said ‘I’.
Susan McClary

In her refusal to mask the disfigured face of her murdered son, in 1955 Mamie Bradley brought to the fore of American national consciousness the enduring problem of African American dehumanisation. The open casket revealed a bloated head, missing eyes and sagged cheeks. Emmett Till’s features had been removed or obscured by the attack and the three days spent tied to a cotton gin in the Tallachatchie River. The case highlighted the extreme prejudice that the black community experienced within the justice system, and, in what was the opening stages of the civil rights era, touched a nerve in a way similar injustices failed to a decade before. What is of most interest to the discussions to be had in this chapter is how the image, which shows a face, literally, stripped of human quality, also acted as a metaphor for the systematic dehumanisation during slavery that served to control

and amalgamate a disparate group of African captives, and which can be identified as a prime site of discontent for the African American subject.

It is interesting that in their book exploring the case, Houch and Grindy (2007) tell of how the publication in the press of a 'holiday picture' taken of the 14 year old in December 1954, half a year before his death was seen at the time as helping to 'humaniz[e] the Tills' (p. 20). The word 'humanize' is significant when considered in light of the particulars of the case, the disfigurement we are forced to contemplate, and, of course, a history of enslavement. In contrast to the intrusion that Till's wolf-whistle presented (the alleged trigger of the attack), the smiling geniality of the holiday photo is a sanctioned model of 'humanity,' suitable for use by African Americans.¹ Till's death represents in condensed form the anxiety surrounding the mass dehumanisation at the heart of African American experience of modernity and its expression.

Concern for the loss of personal sovereignty and the difficulties in maintaining meaningful human relations, are at the heart of Adorno's observations detailing the inadequacies of modern life, and they resemble the African American predicament of dehumanisation. According to Adorno, the individual loses particularity and the ability for independent thought within social organisations that are hostile to difference. Individuals are encouraged to conform in order to 'get on in life,' forfeiting the necessary tools for engagement with others and losing out on the chance to mount effective challenges to the societal problems they face. Moreover, in order to satisfy a human need for personal expression, 'lifestyle' and 'personality'

¹ Early local coverage attempted to portray Till as 'mentally deficient' (p. 50), the implication being no black male in his right mind would act in such a manner.

industries emerge, allowing individuals to buy back their stolen identities. The acquired markers of distinction are confined to categories that have been sanctioned by the dominating forces in society, and so pose no threat to it. Equipped with alternative identities, individuals are under the illusion that they are free. The cult of the individual, which Adorno believes jazz is a recruiter for, is shown to be a key strategy in the denial of genuine self-determination. The portrayal, by musicians and commentators alike, of jazz as a music that is able to liberate its listeners, is not only rejected but denounced as ideology. Adorno's criticism of music, both art and popular, can, predominately, be traced to the extent to which works are believed to perpetuate and mask the 'unfreedom' of individuals, and to which they attempt to add superficial depth to their shallow relationships with others. This is the light in which we should read Adorno's encounter with jazz.

Jazz has been portrayed as a conduit of unhampered human essence and as a mirror to an idealised democratic society by commentators throughout its history. The attraction of readings that attribute to jazz characteristics that have great populist appeal such as 'freedom' and 'democracy' is not in question. But for Adorno, in the context of the actual unfreedom and isolation individuals encounter in modern life, this acclaim leaves the music open to the charges of complicity and regression. However, we need not, as does Adorno, take at face value these interpretations of jazz. This chapter will interrogate the perspective from which commentary that presents jazz as the model of individual freedom is written. It will put under the spotlight the claim that the music has power to reanimate the modern subject, and will reveal why Adorno rejects jazz commentary's often triumphant tone. It will be argued that if we accept these narratives we also need to take seriously Adorno's

objections concerning the music. While sympathetic to Adorno's misgivings about these claims of freedom, and interested in upsetting the utopian, often unreflective, ideas concerning the ability of jazz musicians to find a balance between personal expression and the demands of the group, the discussion will address the omission of the African American experience from his writing on jazz.

The chapter will be particularly concerned with how 'the individual' features within this community in the light of its history of systematic dehumanisation and the elimination of human distinction as part of the process of racialization. The undermining of family that occurred during slavery, the denial of human status, and the concurrent racialization of African America,² in which a mass, based on skin colour, was constructed, is shown as centrally pertinent. This set of circumstances is crucial to understanding the appearance of a 'communal self' in African American thought and expression. In jazz commentary this communal self has often been misconstrued as a reconciliation of the alienated, embattled individual with others from whom it has become estranged. This misalignment can be traced to a lack of consideration of the African American context in jazz commentary, an omission Adorno takes on, without reflecting on it. It will be shown how this omission undermines his critique.

The disruption of the family and its authority was a feature of the declining market capitalism of late nineteenth century Europe. The declining influence of the father figure, essential to the development of individuals capable of freedom of

² In a sense, these processes of racialization produced 'Black America' but the options in attempting to term a pre-black America or African America are either too loaded or convoluted. The terms 'African American' and 'Black American' are used interchangeably and refer to black subjects from their very entry into America.

thought and of mounting challenges when necessary, was matched by the ascendancy of the culture industry as the new source of values and communion. The chapter will explore how the African American experience during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries plays out in advance the alienation and neutering of the bourgeois subject of the most recent past century and a half. However, an important distinction is to be made between the latter's loss of personal freedom and propriety, and the priority in the former of the right to be recognised as human. It will draw attention to how Adorno's preoccupation with the individual belongs to a 'history that excludes [African Americans]... from even the shared experience of fragmentation' (Werner, 1994, p. 191) in which modernist critique is anchored. It will highlight how this hinders his understanding of jazz and contributes to his undermining the potential it may hold for social criticism. Adorno will be confronted with the contention that African American expression is not focused on questions of the individual. African American expression is neither an affirmation of personal autonomy nor a reluctance to relinquish a faded and now defunct category of a previous era. Rather it can be shown to be the reflection of a desire to be seen as human.

Adorno on the individual, and jazz critique

Adorno's concern over the loss of autonomy in the era of monopolistic capitalism is intimately tied to his efforts to expose the unscrupulous underbelly of the culture industry. At the height of bourgeois liberalism, the family was the primary source of

values for an individual. 'Ego-autonomy' which was nurtured within the patriarchal setting, held the possibility of individuals developing alternative ways of living and relating to others (Cook, 1996, p. 5).³ This sovereignty demanded the respect of children, and, vitally, provided an environment for them to develop the ability to effectively resist and criticise authority. With growth of monopolising business and corporations, and the accompanying power exercised by the state, this freedom became increasingly tenuous. The economic autonomy that the bourgeoisie had under market capitalism dissipated and the respect that the family held begins to fade.

In the new 'fatherless' society the collective psyche is primed for manipulation. The ill-formed ego provides little resistance to the culture industry. The decline of the bourgeoisie which is linked to the rise of the new anonymous order in which capital becomes increasingly centralised, renders class division redundant. In this precarious milieu in which the family has lost its role as protector, a beleaguered universal class welcomes the reawakening of its under-attended superego. Adorno identifies fascist leaders and the culture industry as important surrogates for the patriarch who no longer possess the necessary moral authority.⁴ As György Márkus (2006) tells us, 'the culture industry largely takes over the function of the socialization of individuals, imbuing them at all levels of their psychological constitution with common patterns of reality-interpretation and behaviour, making

³ Although the resolved Oedipus complex shows the emerging ego of individuals to conform in large part with the values and opinions that it spends some of its formative period reacting against.

⁴ Traditional class divisions no longer held as the working class and the bourgeois became amalgamated, corrupting and eventually rendering superfluous class consciousness. This, in part, explains Adorno's focus on consumption and the culture industry rather than production. But see Jamie Owen Daniel's (2001) essay 'Achieving Subjectlessness: Reassessing the Politics of Adorno's Subject of Modernity' for an interrogation of this. Available from <http://clogic.eserver.org/3-1&2/daniel.html> [25 June 2014].

them thereby unresisting executers of the required functions of an encompassing system of impersonal domination' (p. 9). He continues, quoting Adorno: 'It is "the social cement," "the glue which still keeps together commodity society today, after it has already been condemned economically." For "the need that might have somehow resisted central control is already repressed by the control of individual consciousness"' (ibid.).

For Adorno, jazz, and the culture industry generally, are fully engaged as agents of 'mass deception.' He argues that the culture industry,

impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop. If the masses have been unjustly reviled from above as masses, the culture industry is not among the least responsible for making them into masses and then despising them, while obstructing the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit (Adorno, 1975, pp. 18-19).

The compulsion to conform is in direct conflict with the ability to become an individual and nurture empathetic relationships with others. Deborah Cook (1996), following Adorno, writes in relation to fascism that '[t]he Nazi follower had formed in his or her superego the image of "an omnipotent and unbridled father figure, by far transcending the individual father and therewith apt to be enlarged into a 'group ego'" (p. 15). Hostility towards minority groups is a consequence, and 'simply through belonging to the in-group, [the follower] is better, higher and purer than those who are excluded' (ibid.). Adorno also uses this logic to explain the attraction

of the culture industry. A person values herself to the extent that she is a member of the group that grants admittance only to those who buy into the fiction of cultural distinction (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997). Any 'interaction' is shown to be in service of the dominating forces, which punish non-conformity with expulsion from the 'in-group'. In these more recent permutations of capitalism, 'people are really atomized and separated from each other by an unbridgeable chasm' and their interaction 'issue[s] neither from their free will nor from their instincts but from social and economic laws which prevail over their heads' (Adorno, quoted in Cook, p. 9). This is the background against which it is imperative to read Adorno's encounter with jazz.

Jazz is often presented as a music of the individual. Its improvisation is given as evidence of the independence of its musicians. It is also hailed as bearer of a democratic spirit which is manifest in its inclusiveness, and its rejection of the composer-performer division of labour we find in the modern European tradition. Moreover, the spirit of spontaneity and pure expression acts as an antidote to the self-alienation experienced in most other areas of life. These claims made on behalf of jazz are the source of Adorno's misgivings concerning the music. The idea that jazz music 'provides a metaphorical solution' to the situation outlined in the section above, that it is able to 'encourage individuality without selfishness and... civic mindedness without totalitarianism' (Lipsitz, 2004, p. 14) is considered a fallacy. It is not just harmless fiction but ideology in service to that which it feigns rebellion against. As highlighted by Jamie Owen Daniel (1989/90) in the introduction to her translation of 'Über Jazz,' Adorno encourages us to view the music purely as a tool

of coercion and control. Lack of formal necessity, in which sections, phrases, and whole choruses of solos can be re-arranged without much upsetting the final work, is thought to betray this ulterior purpose. If jazz is allowed any musical significance this occurs at its surface, within aspects ordinarily considered secondary to the structuring harmonic and thematic movements of a piece.⁵ The music is organized to effortlessly produce the appearance of novelty time and again, most prominently through the use of improvisation, while recycling structural formula *in aeternum*. Adorno (1989/90) writes, 'The elements in jazz in which immediacy seems to be present, the seemingly improvisational moments - of which syncopation is designated as its elemental form - are added in their naked externality to the standardized commodity character in order to mask it - without, however, gaining power over it for a second' (p. 48). The formal principles of jazz are to allow for ease of production, marketing and reception.

In 'Über Jazz' ([1936] 1989/90), we find that jazz is characterised by the superficiality of its 'subjective expression,' towards which improvisation and its rudimental descendant, syncopation, are considered prominent tools. That which is presented as 'revolt against a collective power' (pp. 67-68) is in fact an ever replenishing supply of disposable veneers that mask the music's compliance with the dominating structure. Referring to the jazz performer, Adorno writes, 'He who is

⁵ Daniel's claim that "'Über Jazz" is not really "about" its purported subject. It is not about jazz as such, but rather about what its commercial production and consumption in the Europe of the 1930s represent' (1989/90, pp. 39-40), is misleading as one soon discovers upon reading the essay. It is true that jazz is positioned from the outset as a part of the culture industry and so, according to Adorno, [unqualified] to receive sustained musical analysis. However, Adorno spends a good portion of the essay on what he considers the music's most important musical components. When he informs us that understanding jazz works does not require 'questions like those pertaining to the autonomous work of art' he attempts to legitimise an approach that bypasses sustained analysis but nonetheless engages poorly formed ideas of the music to support the case being made against it.

reproducing the music is permitted to tug at the chains of his boredom, and even to clatter them, but he cannot break them' (p. 56). Jazz is marketed as spontaneity and innovation when, in fact, it betrays an adherence to a law of the market, that calls for work to 'constantly remain the same while at the same time constantly simulat[e] the "new." [...] [A] demand which cripples all productive power' (p. 54). On the other hand, jazz also manufactures counterfeit identities and the appearance of reconciliation between the individual and society in an attempt to conceal mass atomisation and the subsumption of difference into predetermined blanket categories. Works that are genuinely progressive do not attempt to gloss over the contradictions of modern living, and do not make light of the insurmountable challenge to personal autonomy these pose.

Critical responses that fail to address the theoretical roots of Adorno's objections are seriously undermined. Frustrated by Adorno's undeniably narrow Eurocentric perspective and his thinly veiled cultural allegiances, much of jazz studies' engagement is, understandably, preoccupied with highlighting the disadvantage jazz is placed at as a music that eludes traditional tools and categories of analysis. For instance, Gracyk (1992) correctly points out that a 'jazz [work] is misunderstood when viewed only as a composition' (p. 538).⁶ More interesting is that Gracyk completes the sentence by stating that jazz's 'emphasis is on individuality and individual performance' (ibid.), without recognising that such an admission points to a more penetrating (and more difficult) conversation with

⁶ The extent of Adorno's guilt on this point is debateable but there is no denying that jazz is viewed through lens that assume composition as the predominant site of artistry.

Adorno⁷ than he affords. The discipline's positing of jazz as a music of the individual, often in quixotic harmony with the collective, only confirms what Adorno believes is troubling about it.

A common complaint from detractors of the jazz critique is that Adorno just did not understand the music (Brown, 1992, pp. 25-26). We are told that he had not taken the time to listen to (real) jazz (Gabbard, 1995b, p. 125; Gracyk, 1992, p. 536; Schonherr, 1991, p. 86) or had given up listening to jazz after the mid-1930s 'without... giving up writing about it' (Wolfgang Sandner quoted in Paddison, 1982, p. 210; also Schonherr, 1991, p. 93). Alongside this charge of ignorance are more serious allegations, including those of elitism, and, less often, racism (Gabbard, 1995b, p. 104; Thomas, 2008, pp. 105-6). Other scholars (and the battle lines are roughly drawn between jazz studies on one side and Adorno scholarship on the other), have pointed out that his detractors have failed to grasp the subtleties of the demanding essays, taking little time to consider their broader theoretical context, and, due to this, are at a disadvantage (Hohendahl, 1994; Lewandowski, 1996). In agreement with his critics, many on this side of the fence also point to Adorno's lack of exposure to 'genuine' jazz and argue that the music Adorno was referring to 'has little to do with the richness of a Black culture we have only long since then discovered' (Jameson, 2007, p. 141; also Omry, 2008; Robinson, 1994)⁸. However,

⁷ Gracyk glosses Adorno's concerns regarding the individual and jazz by ring-fencing the issue to be one concerning the extensive use of 'standards'. Not only does this ignore the broader and more complex picture sketched above, it ignores (or fails to recognise) the broader critical context of Adorno's rejection of individuality. In his desire to show jazz to be a music of the individual he adds weight to the charge of ideology against the music, and in attempting to unshackle jazz from the popular song (what he considered the culpable party), Gracyk undermines the importance of repetition (whether of standards or originals) to jazz.

⁸ Fredric Jameson's suggestion that Adorno was referring to commercial swing bands might have some truth to it but from Adorno's text we gather that he recognised the difference between 'bebop'

they reject, even the most apologetic amongst them, the accusations of racism, pointing to Adorno's own claim to being 'largely responsible for the most widely discussed American book about an understanding of race prejudice' (Adorno, 1950; in support see Harding, 1995; Leppert, 2002; Wilcock, 1996).⁹

Similarly, others, such as Daniel (1989/90) have argued that the critique is not an aesthetic judgement but a conscious decision to focus on jazz's 'commercial production and consumption' (p. 40). However, this is somewhat at odds with how Adorno actually conducts the analysis. From the outset we are informed that jazz's 'aesthetic articulation is sparing' (p. 47) and so not suited to a musical consideration. This is in stark contrast to a contemporaneous study on Wagner to which some commentators point as evidence of Adorno's impartiality. Harding (1995) draws our attention towards a handful of scholars, including Ulrich Schonherr, and Daniel, who 'have noted that Adorno's controversial opinions on jazz employ the identical dialectical methodology that, a year after he published "Über Jazz," Adorno used when criticizing Wagner in *In Search of Wagner*' (p. 138). But these writers fail to point to the important divergences in his approach to the two. Harry Cooper's (1996) reading, in his essay 'On "Über Jazz": Replaying Adorno with the Grain', is more reliable. He argues that the suggestion 'that Adorno treats jazz "with the same seriousness and attention that he extends to music from the high art tradition" cannot

and 'swing,' and that he had had the opportunity to listen to Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington (Adorno, 1989/90; 2000). Research done by Evelyn Wilcock confirms that Adorno had in fact heard 'black jazz' (1996, p. 10). This is all a little inconsequential. As Richard Leppert (2002) points out Adorno believes that whether referring to the 'dance-band commercial' variety or 'Negro jazz... [j]azz has long been in the process of dissolution. ... [T]here is nothing to salvage' from either' (Adorno, 2002, p. 359).

⁹ *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) is a sociological work co-authored by Adorno exploring the nature of outgroup prejudice. As I suggested in the Introduction, despite its American context, Adorno *et al.* fail to incorporate the black experience into the study, showing Adorno's claim quoted above to be somewhat misleading.

be accepted or simply dismissed either' (p. 106).¹⁰ Comparing 'Über Jazz' and the Wagner study, Harding notes that while Adorno's method is consistent and the conclusions drawn 'nearly identical', rather than the meticulous musical analysis we encounter in Wagner, the jazz analysis is 'excavated by its social function' (ibid.).

In flagrant disregard of Adorno's proposed focus on extra-musical concerns, Joachim-Ernst Berendt ([1953] 2014) puts forward a case for why he believes jazz to be deserving of aesthetic consideration. He points to its distinctive formal make-up, highlighting, for instance, the music's ability to foster rhythmic virtuosity, 'largely unknown in Europe's great symphonic music' (p. 2).¹¹ For Berendt, syncopation rests on a polyrhythmic heritage and is part of an evolving rhythmic complexity, rather than a marker of pseudo-individualism as Adorno believes. Why should the steady 4/4 in jazz be considered 'sufficient to constrict composition to the point where what it demands is not aesthetic awareness of style but rather psychological regression' (Adorno, 2000, p. 270), and yet Bach be able to escape the charge? While accusations that highlight the limitations of Adorno's Eurocentricism are important and deserve to be taken more seriously by Adorno scholarship, this particular point becomes less convincing when read in light of Adorno's theory of musical material. The 'simple metrical structure' of Baroque music was appropriate and true to early eighteenth century Europe. Adorno's suggestion of the fallacy of its use in the twentieth century is not contradictory. Musical material is not nature but changes both through the dialecticism of its tradition and through extra-musical mediation (Adorno, 2002).

¹⁰ The quote in the quote is from Crow (1983, p. 262).

¹¹ 'Pro and Contra Jazz' (Adorno and Berendt, 1953). Available from http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=4443 [20 July 2014].

The best defences of Adorno's jazz critique are made by those commentators who expose the limitations of the narratives of individuality perpetuated on the music's behalf by its commentators. Scholars such as Joseph Lewandowski (1996), James Harding (1995), and Robert Witkin (1998; 2000) point to increasing isolation and the petering out of self-determination as the lived reality that discredits the image of jazz as liberation. Highlighted is how jazz often is, erroneously, presented as a solution to the conundrum of how we can be individualistic without causing harm to others. Doubt is cast on claims that jazz embodies a version of communalistic living that avoids prejudice. These scholars argue, quite correctly, that this is what is so objectionable to Adorno¹². How can a music speak in such triumphant tones when faced with the fact of wholesale alienation and degradation? As Lewandowski (1996) writes, '[w]hat jazz does is to express a kind of false happiness or positive Utopia - a claim about the possibilities for individual autonomy and happiness in the form of the "good life" of the democratic collective. Instead of registering the damaged life and depth of individual suffering, jazz's superficial privileging of style produces "pseudo-individuals" who are deprived of such a negative moment by virtue of the logic of jazz's technical syncopation' (p. 105). For Adorno, the very idea of individuality in an era in which economic and bureaucratic systems obliterate a person's ability to challenge a situation that is clearly working against them, is not a mere fiction but also itself an ideology in service of those alienating forces. The jazz musician as redeemer, spinning off-the-cuff musical retorts in opposition to the

¹² It must be mentioned that while these writers have made Adorno's case very clear, they do not necessarily share his views on the music. For instance, musicologist Witkins has been able to penetrate Adorno's cultural critique to an extent that has eluded most, but has written an excellent, even-handed account of Adorno's tussles with popular culture.

rigidity of the universally recognised banal popular song forms, is misleading as the musician is dependent on that which he disparagingly reworks. In fact, he reaffirms, through the reiteration of the individuality myth, his allegiance to the establishment. Adorno discusses the posturing of jazz as rebellion (behind which its reverence to authority resides) through a consideration of the Oedipus complex in development of the individual's ego in the late capitalist era.

In his much criticised characterisation of jazz as the oedipal child of the culture industry, whose existence is a perpetually deferring nightmare of a fear of castration, Adorno argues that, despite claims to the contrary, the 'jazz subject' is not free but implicated in activity that renders the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex unnecessary, and undesirable. Under the unfavourable conditions of late capitalism the formation of the bourgeois ego is perfectly adapted to one pertaining to a new 'universal class', as full advantage is taken of its lack of self-determination. The redundant process of super-ego internalisation becomes an unquestioning identification with the surrogate father-figure (in this case, the culture industry). But this identity, which in jazz masquerades as perpetually repeating acts of rebellion, has no intention of transcending the mock conflict. In fact, '[b]y learning to fear social authority and experiencing it as a threat of castration - and immediately as fear of impotence - it identifies itself with precisely this authority of which it is afraid' (Adorno, 1989/90, p. 66). The eventual overcoming of the fear of castration that results in original positions being found (albeit in 'consultation' with family values) by emergent individuals, and that have in the past equipped them with vital tools of resistance, is now deferred indefinitely. The jazz subject, part of a new universal

consumer class, is able to take part in totalitarian society in exchange for her ability to develop genuine subjecthood.

The 'hot subject' or jazz musician demonstrates to the consumer how to go about identifying with the dominating forces in society.¹³ He does this through the use in his music of syncopation and 'breaks' (short improvised sections) which are meant to suggest transcendence of the authority of the form, but, in fact, are not only inextricably attached to the structure of the composition but also interchangeable with it.¹⁴ Adorno writes that the 'jazz subject... falls out of the collective just as syncopation does from the regular beat; it does not want to be engulfed in the prescribed majority, which existed before the subject and is independent of it, whether out of protest or ineptitude or both at once - until it finally is received into, or, better, subordinated to the collective as it was predestined to do; until the music indicates... that it was a part of it from the very beginning; that, itself a part of this society, it can never really break away from it' (1989/90, pp. 64-5). It is argued that jazz models for the 'not yet adequately mutilated liberals' (p. 67) how to go about adjusting themselves to the dominant social rhythm of the day, while feigning

¹³ I am of the opinion that the 'jazz subject' of his essays wavers between the musician, the bourgeois and a 'mass class'. But the 'hot subject' appears to refer uncontestedly to the jazz musician. And for those who believe that Adorno only knew of white bands and musicians, even in 'Über Jazz' where he all but denies the black basis of jazz, he tells us that the music is 'frequently performed by blacks' (1989/90, p. 52). Also see Evelyn Wilcock (1996, p.10). This point has significance when I come to address the subsumption of black subjectivity under that of the bourgeois.

¹⁴ There is real confusion as to what subject is being referred to at various points in 'Über Jazz'. Susan Buck-Morss (1977) takes the 'jazz subject' to refer to the jazz musician while others such as Daniel (1989/90) seem to interpret it the (bourgeois or mass) consumer. This, I feel, is a theoretical device as well as a rhetorical one (I do not believe that it is mere carelessness). It supports Adorno's contention that ultimately we all belong to a 'universal class' and that our existence in late capitalism can be encapsulated by that of the bourgeoisie (there may be confusion as to who is being referred to at certain times but there is no mistaking this is a chapter in Adorno's story of the disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie). This vagueness has interesting implications when Adorno talks of castration, clowns and slaves, and particularly when we are told of 'oppressed people' being particularly well-adapted for jazz and life under monopolised capitalism. We find implied in the text that the African American experience plays out in advance that which is taking grip of the modern mainstream.

disdain for that authority. In fact, in jazz there is an acknowledgment of this contradiction. Its posturing as individuality and ‘superiority’ over the collective is not to be taken completely seriously: ‘the playful superiority of the individual over society, which precisely because of its exact knowledge of the rules of its game can dare not to strictly maintain them’ (ibid.).

Compounding the changes in work (and social) conditions that restrict the development of authentic relationships are the effects of the weakened ego. With the replacement of originality and independent thought with mass conformity (at times masquerading as individuality), the nurturing of difference that makes for productive, empathetic relationships is undermined. The much-lauded balance between the individual and collective in the jazz band is exposed as false. Jazz’s supposed democratic character is seen as an impossibility within a society of atomised subjects. In fact, jazz is not a mere victim of these tendencies but is an accomplice who ‘impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves’ (Adorno, 1975, pp. 18-19). For Adorno the fact is ‘people are really atomized and separated from each other by an unbridgeable chasm’ (quoted from Cook, p.9), and in claiming otherwise, jazz is guilty of perpetuating the myth of individualism that accompanies and attempts to mask the ‘totally administered society’.

‘Jazz is America’ – Individuality, liberty and co-operation in jazz commentary¹⁵

Primitivist

Narratives of the individual have featured in jazz studies from early on in its history. The idea that jazz is an antidote to the degradation inflicted on people by capitalist systems and accompanying rationalisation is evident in the work of ‘the founding fathers of jazz studies’ (Gioia, 1989, p. 136) - Hugues Panassié, Robert Goffin and Charles Delaunay. Panassié’s *Hot Jazz*, was first published in English in 1936 and is now recognised as a turning point in jazz studies, representing the best of this first bout of serious writing on jazz; Delaunay ([1938; 1948] 2000) took on what became an increasingly arduous task of compiling a comprehensive discography; and Goffin (1932), the first to publish (although the last to be introduced to an English speaking audience), dedicating his first book on jazz, *Aux Frontieres du Jazz*, to Louis Armstrong, ‘the real King of Jazz’, a barb at the self-appointment to the post of Paul Whiteman (Gioia, 1989; Balliett, 2006; Stein, 2011).¹⁶ As Ted Gioia (1989) has pointed out, the influence of the three Europeans is hard to deny, and ‘their views, assumptions, and biases served as starting points for the next generation of critics’ (p. 136).

Despite this undeniable influence, the ‘primitivist’ school of jazz criticism is all but ignored by contemporary scholars. The reason for this can be largely

¹⁵ This was the title of an essay by critic Marshall Stearns that appeared in the programme for the 1955 Newport Jazz Festival.

¹⁶ *Aux Frontieres du Jazz* has not been translated into English. Short pieces including ‘Hot Jazz’ and ‘The Best Negro Jazz Orchestras’, were translated by Samuel Beckett in 1934 (Beckett and Friedman, 2000). Goffin collaborated with Louis Armstrong on a heavily ghost-written autobiography, *Swing That Music* ([1936] 1993) and on a biography *Horn of Plenty: The Story of Louis Armstrong* ([1947] 1977). Delaunay’s *Hot Discography* was first published in 1936 (2000) but his attempt to produce a multi-volume discography was stalled - he reaching the letter H (Gioia, 1989).

attributed to their characterising of the African American musician as a unschooled, natural conduit of unfettered primal emotion and spontaneity (Gennari, 1991; Gioia, 1989).¹⁷ So we find alongside, and often interlaced with, the undeniable astute critical insight, a quasi-religious enthusiasm that manifests as casual racism. For instance, Goffin writing in 1934, in particularly evangelical fervour: ‘Oh you musicians of my life, prophets of my youth, splendid Negroes informed with fire, how shall I ever express my love for your saxophones writhing like orchids, your blazing trombones with their hairpin vents, your voices fragrant with all the breezes of home remembered and the breath of the bayous, your rhythm as inexorable as tom-toms beating in an African nostalgia!’ (2000, p. 5).¹⁸ Primitivist writing feeds into the image of the smiling, artless fool that found its most popular manifestation on the vaudeville stage but was a recurring image in advertising, film and literature in the United States. The portrayal of musicians such as Louis Armstrong as ‘simple, naïve [and] jovial’ (ibid.), mediums who were mere physicality – sweating like heavy-weights and ‘foam[ing] at the mouth’ (p. 6) while waving white handkerchief of surrender/submission – strays too close to the ‘Sambo’ character-type that adorned the stage in the form of minstrel acts, an appeasement of the threat many felt the black presence posed (Ostendorf, 1979).

The significance of jazz for Panassié *et al.* needs to be retraced past the veneer of racism to their belief that the music had redemptive qualities. Jazz,

¹⁷ In a much-needed reappraisal of Panassié’s legacy, Tom Perchard (2011) has suggested that the emotive, first person prose can be read as an attempt to present the music in terms that more usefully reflect the ways in which the music eludes traditional music analysis.

¹⁸ David Stein’s essay ‘Negotiating Primitivist Modernisms: Louis Armstrong, Robert Goffin, and the Transatlantic Jazz Debate’ (2011) is interesting not only in its showing how Goffin edited Armstrong’s memoir to fit the image he had of the musicians and African American culture, but also for showing the equivocal nature of the black vernacular.

interpreted as a manifestation of freedom from intellectualised approaches to creative expression, is argued to be born of a people with direct access to a primal human essence, all but lost by their European counterparts. Rather than the insidious calculation of the tradition with which these writers are most familiar, jazz represents an alternative, drawing from resources that bypass mere intellect. The jazz musician was seen by these scholars as a conduit to a reservoir of the ‘spontaneous urge of a whole people’ (Panassié, 1936, p. 7). Revered as prophets, the jazz musician was called upon to demonstrate to the European modern the means to escape the perils of civilisation and reunite with its essential being. Describing the experience of watching Chick Webb’s band, Panassié writes,

My breathing stopped. Hardly had he started to play in this way than enthusiastic ‘oohs’ escaped the mouths of Milton [Mezz Mezzrow] and *les Noirs* sitting around me. It wasn’t a banal cry of satisfaction. It was a cry literally *snatched* from them by the intensity of Chick Webb’s swing. The reaction of these people instantaneously augmented the force of my own. By the way they shouted, by the moments at which they shouted, I glimpsed that Webb’s playing gripped me exactly as it did them, and the simultaneity of these reactions made them grow in intensity without cease. Here we were no longer concerned with the ‘refined artistic emotion’ such as conceived by more or less degenerate intellectuals, no more than by the ‘sensual music’ babbled on about by other cretins even more degenerate, it was a question of an inexplicable joy, an *empty* joy that left room for no image, no reflection of the spirit... I suddenly understood, with extraordinary acuity, the irremediable imperfection of intellectual knowledge.... The love of God, the only way by which to know Him, is the supernatural

equivalent of that which I had just experienced in front of Chick Webb (quoted in Perchard, 2011, p.35).

The quote shows that primitivists were not solely, or even primarily, concerned with stripping black music of its intellect, they were advocates of a turn to a more elemental state for Western society. The evangelic rhetoric, which appears, more than anything else, a willed evasion of formal analysis, is a particular response to a bourgeois predicament and has little, if anything, to do with a black experience of modernity. Echoing Adorno and other social commentators from the 1930s and 1940s, they were disturbed by how alienated and lacking in self-determination people had become. How they were not only disenfranchised within the current societal organisation, and unable to communicate effectively with each other, but they had become severed from their true selves. Of course, the difference is that Panassié saw in jazz a liberating solution. For the primitivists, jazz represented a passage of return to a pre-Enlightenment sensitivity.

Liberal democracy

An enduring narrative of individuality in jazz sees the music as a mirror of an idealised American society, founded upon the sovereignty of the individual but respectful of the need for concessions that allow for a working democracy. A recent example of writing that venerates the music in this way comes from critic, Gary Giddens (1998) who writes that, ‘The one truth about jazz of which I am certain is that it incarnates liberty, often with a perversely proud intransigence, merging with everything and borrowing anything, yet ultimately riding alone’ (p. 8). Jazz is painted as an expressive form that increasingly embraces an integrationist ethos,

synthesising difference into a cohesive whole but somehow managing to ‘ultimately rid[e] alone.’ In contrast to primitivists’ staging of jazz as redemptive, through its access to a pre-rational essence, the dominating portrait of the individual and jazz shows the music to be reflective of American liberal democracy.¹⁹ Rather than representing a utopian hope, the music is posited as affirmation of the supposed reality of Western, specifically American, values. Jazz for the primitivist presented a prescriptive course of action as a way decadent modern Europeans, through immersion in the experience of a jazz performance, could be cleansed. Jazz-as-democracy locates the significant individual as the participating musician. The emphasis is not on what jazz can do for you but on how jazz works. In the programme for the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, Rep. Frank Thompson, Jr. writes, ‘The way jazz works is exactly the way a democracy works. In democracy, we have complete freedom within a previously and mutually agreed upon framework of laws; in jazz, there is complete freedom within a previously and mutually agreed upon framework of tempo, key, and harmonic progression’ (quoted in Saul, 2003, p. 15).

As an affront to the communist states of the Eastern bloc, the construction of American exceptionalism was intended to establish the nation as the moral superior. Jazz was claimed to embody the values of ‘democratic individualism’, and through its participation, particularly in light of the African American contribution, played a significant role in the promotion of the United States as foremost proprietor of

¹⁹ Although Goffin also recognises a ‘democratic spirit’ in jazz and seems to be suggesting that jazz has pre-empted political and social developments. In *Jazz: From the Congo to the Metropolitan* (1944), he writes, ‘The history of jazz has a social significance of which I am quite aware and which I am fond of stressing. At the very moment when America goes to war to defend the democratic spirit against the totalitarian challenge, it is fitting to remember that, in the last twenty years, jazz has done more to bring blacks and whites together than three amendments to the constitution have done in seventy-five’ (quoted in Stein, 2011, p. 3).

human rights. The U.S. State Department-sponsored goodwill tours of the 1950s saw musicians including Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck and Duke Ellington, participate in President's Truman's "'Campaign of Truth" to counter a Soviet policy of "deceit, distortion and lies"' (Anderson, 2007, p. 13). Willis Conover, who presented the *Voice of America Jazz Hour*, impresses on his listeners (very few of whom were American) the necessity of democracy to the emergence of jazz. He tells them that '[o]nly in such a society – and ours is the best example I know – could jazz have developed. It has its own musical restrictions – tempo, key, chord structure. But within them the artist is free to weave infinite variations. Structurally, it's a democratic music. People from other countries, in other political situation, detect this element of freedom in jazz. There isn't any elaborate reasoning process involved. They can feel it - emotionally. They love jazz because they love freedom' (Anderson, 2007, p. 43).

Critics, including Ralph Ellison, Marshall Stearns and John Kouwenhoven added weight to this appropriation of jazz as the hallmark of democracy. As Iain Anderson (2007) highlights in his excellent cultural study on free jazz, politicians and commentators alike situated jazz 'as a solution to the historical dilemma posed by Ralph Waldo Emerson between collective discipline and personal liberty, for in jazz [according to Kouwenhoven] "the thing that holds them together is the thing they are all so busy flouting: the fundamental four-four beat."' (p. 39). For Kouwenhoven, jazz is at its best when 'each player seems to be – and has the sense of being – on his own. Each goes his own way, inventing rhythmic and melodic patterns which, superficially, seem to have... little relevance to one another... yet the outcome is a dazzlingly precise creative unity. [...] [J]azz is the first art form to give

full expression to Emerson's ideal of a union which is perfect only "when all the uniters are isolated" ([1956] 1998, p. 128).²⁰ The emphasis on the supposed isolation of musicians is also made by Marshall Stearns who quoting a German jazz fan writes that a 'jam-session is a miniature democracy: every instrument is on its own and equal. The binding element is toleration and consideration for the other players' (1956, p. 4).²¹

In a similar vein, but providing an interesting distinction, writer Ralph Ellison believed genuine jazz was 'an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition' (1995, p. 234). Whereas Stearns and Kouwenhoven proceed from the isolated individual towards conformity within a group, for Ellison, the significance in jazz is freedom and distinction for the individual musician from the collective of which he is an integral part and from which he emerges. The inextricable nature of the relationship between musician and group, individual artistic expression and tradition/collective in Ellison needs to be seen in light of the ambiguity of Afro-modernism, what Robert Stepto (1991) terms 'ascent' and

²⁰ These remarks on jazz appears in an essay entitled, 'What is American About America.' The Cold War rhetoric is strong with Kouwenhoven defending capitalist industrial work which is set 'in contrast with Charlie Chaplin's wonderful but wild fantasy of the assembly line' (1998, p.134).

²¹ From article in August 10, 1956 Altoona Tribune from Altoona, Pennsylvania. Available from <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/57846467/> [20 June 2014].

‘immersion,’ as well as the commitment Ellison held to the democratic ideal shared with Stearns and Kouwenhoven.²²

Towards the end of the 1950s, as black political consciousness was raised to the surface and moved uncomfortably into the centre stage of civil life, the ideal of American democracy was increasingly questioned. The largely unchallenged rhetoric of liberty and ‘the American way,’ notion of jazz as bearer of ‘frontier’ values (Kouwenhoven, [1956] 1998) of each person for themselves with an eye on keeping societal peace, the idea that jazz was now ‘[a]n American art’ (Williams, 1969, p. ix) fully integrated in the cultural landscape of all this American, came increasingly under attack from an emergent African American critical perspective, represented most polemically by Amiri Baraka. In sharp contrast with the writing of Stearns and Kouwenhoven, Baraka ([1963] 2010) positioned jazz as a music of resistance. He argued that it was only possible to treat jazz as ‘an art,’ as a collection of works available for artistic appreciation if one ignored the social and political environment from which it has emerged. In ‘Jazz and the White Critic’ he writes, ‘Most jazz critics were (and are) not only white middle-class Americans, but middle-brows as well. The irony here is that because the majority of jazz critics are white middle-brows, most jazz criticism tends to enforce white middle-brow standards of excellence as criteria for performance of a music that in its most profound

²² ‘Ascent’ and ‘immersion’ are ‘two basic types of narrative expression’ in African American letters. The first charts the journey to ‘a symbolic North’ towards the mainstream modernism of individuality and freedom, away from ‘familial or communal postures,’ and ending up part of the ‘oppressive social structure’ within which the writer/protagonist is susceptible to alienation’ (Stepito, 1991, p. 167). In the ‘immersion’ narrative, individuality and ‘mobility’ are given up for ‘newfound balms of group identity’ (ibid.). Ellison’s ([1952] 1963) *Invisible Man* is perhaps one of best examples of these two devices in black literature but they are useful for making sense of Ellison’s own contradictory social perspective.

manifestations is completely antithetical to such standards; in fact, quite often is in direct reaction against them' (p. 20).²³

The incongruity of the jazz-as-democracy myth, and the lived reality of racial segregation and discrimination was captured well by Louis Armstrong's tirade against the government's response to the unrest surrounding the desegregation of Little Rock High School in 1957. At the time he was in the planning stage of a State Department-sponsored tour to the Soviet Union. The musician, with uncharacteristic vociferousness points to the discrepancy: 'The way they are treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell [...]. The people over there ask me what's wrong with my country. What am I supposed to say? I have had a beautiful life in music, but I feel the situation the same as any other Negro' (quoted in Berendt and Huesmann, 2009, p. 85).²⁴ This high profile reproach occurred against a background of growing political engagement amongst jazz musicians, taking in protest pieces such as Charles Mingus's (1963) 'Freedom'²⁵ and *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite*, which featured Abbey Lincoln and Coleman Hawkins, and wide participation in civil rights and black nationalist fundraising events. Many

²³ At times presented as an all-out attack on white people, the target of Baraka's ([1963] 2010) criticism in 'Jazz and the White Critic' is specifically the critic. Of white musicians he writes, 'But the white musician had an advantage the white critic seldom had. [...] Negro music is essentially the expression of an attitude, or a collection of attitudes, about the world, and only secondarily an attitude about the way music is made. The white musician came to understand this attitude as a way of making music, and the intensity of his understanding produced the "great" white jazz musicians, and is producing them now' (pp. 17-8). Although his position on this shifted a few years later, during his black nationalist period.

²⁴ The difficulty in reconciling jazz, a music of the individual and freedom, as a national music of a capitalistic society and the discontent within the African American community is directly linked to the music's resistance to attempts to construct the tradition in the likeness of that of the modern European tradition. Robert Walser (1995) writes in criticism of jazz pianist, Billy Taylor's enthusiasm of the 'America's classical music' rhetoric, 'Taylor celebrates the fact that jazz has gotten substantial support from the U. S. State Department and that it has been featured on Voice of America radio broadcasts, without considering why this may be so. [...] the use of jazz as propaganda for capitalism... distorts... the nature of the music' (p. 170).

²⁵ Recording in 1963 for *Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus Mingus* but first appearing on the re-issue in 1995.

subscribed to Malcom X's belief that 'black people did not need to be hybrids, existentially balanced between the demands of white and black America' (Saul, 2003, p. 264). At a time when many were keen to position jazz and other forms of African American expression as formed of a history of subordination, and as an alternative to what was widely perceived as the morally bankrupt political mainstream, Ellison saw no contradiction between being black and American. In fact, and this may be one of his greatest contributions, Ellison, in arguing that black expression was quintessentially American, attempted to redress the invisibility of the black experience in the modern narrative.

Despite his often self-proclaimed status as an advocate of liberal democracy, Ellison questions those ideals, in his suggestion that the music is structured by way of tension, of the irresolvable discrepancy between being of a collective and setting oneself apart as a distinct entity. One of the barriers to an acceptance of jazz's characterisation as reconciler of difference is that the idea often 'neatly sidestep[s] issues of *collaborative support and creative dissonance*, both arguably vital to jazz yet increasingly written out of the post-Truman Doctrine tenor of American public life' (Anderson, pp. 39-40, my emphasis). This top-down democracy (that is, 'freedom' within the confines of predetermined rules) that is mapped onto jazz distorts the music which can, arguably, best be seen as structured by a complex of empathetic tensions between individuals, and between the individual and the collective. Anticipating discussions that will follow in subsequent chapters, it is suggested here that jazz cannot be adequately understood through a reading that sees the individual soloist fully liberated within the confines of pre-determined rules and expectations. Nor by one that portrays a group of 'isolated' individuals who come

together and miraculously present the listener with cohesive work. It is harder still to accept the suggestion that it is the individuals' adherence to rules that makes their contribution to the collective valid. The relationship between the individual musician, collective, and tradition is much more dynamic, both more empathetic and more unstable than we encounter in these readings. The democracy narrative recognises a collective in jazz but misconstrues the complex, contradictory, irresolvable relationships, as a 'harmonious balance between individual soloists and collective improvisation' (Lipsitz, 2004, p. 14). It is this persistent theme in jazz commentary concerning the reconciliation between a supposedly free individual and a benevolent society, that Adorno finds so hard to swallow.

African American experience of modernity and the individual

Adorno overestimates the ability of the bourgeois narrative to provide a comprehensive survey of the problems that beset individuals and their relationships in modernity. The largely unreflective positing of this nominated representative, that Adorno considers to be the most advanced consciousness of the late capitalist period, as the holdall and executor for all other subjectivities leaves something wanting in his consideration of jazz.²⁶ For those unfamiliar with him, Adorno's very particular

²⁶ 'the actual consciousness of the actual proletariat... have nothing, absolutely nothing, over the bourgeoisie except for an interest in the revolution, but who otherwise bear all the marks of the bourgeoisie's truncated personality' (Adorno in a letter to Benjamin, quoted from Buck-Morss, 1997, p. 30).

tailoring of Marxist thought, particularly his devaluing of the critical and revolutionary potential of proletarian consciousness, spliced with, again, a particular reading of Freud, in which this centrality of the bourgeois as the main subject of modernity resides, can seem a little parochial. In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno ([1951] 1995) talks of the situation of the bourgeoisie in late capitalism as one of a lingering power in decline. In his rejection of the prospect of an enlightened working class, he, in turn, lingers on the bourgeoisie as the defining consciousness of the era. However, this focus, although often his work seems to betray the opposite, is more than a personal, nostalgic response to the decline of the class with which he identifies.

Max Paddison (1993), drawing from Michael de la Fontaine, provides an excellent defence of Adorno's focus on the bourgeoisie and its 'art music' in formulating his music theory, and is useful for underscoring the significance and necessity of the present section. We are told that there is no longer a distinct class that produces folk music 'whose songs and games could be taken up and sublimated by art' (de la Fontaine quoted in Paddison, p. 118). As we have suggested, Adorno argues that in late capitalism there are no longer independent classes and so no genuine expression to speak of. Rather than the 'vitality' of folk forms infusing and rejuvenating 'art music', we are faced with a situation in which corrupted forms are 'controlled "from above" by the historically "obsolete and devalued materials of art music"' (ibid.). This historical perspective is lent support by a theoretical explanation that tells us, 'the bourgeois individual is the Subject/Object which, in the form of rationality, can be seen as representing in its purest form the socially necessary degree of domination and control. [...] The proletarian individual... is regarded as

the socially derived Object, carrying socially superfluous domination within itself' (my emphasis, *ibid.*).

However, Adorno's engagement with jazz highlights the limitations of this narrow conception of subjectivity-as-bourgeois in understanding not only the music and its black subject, but, perhaps most importantly, in mining all possibilities for critical responses to the pervasive effects of monopolistic capitalism.²⁷ Driven by a comparable concern for the absence of the proletariat in Adorno, Jamie Owen Daniel (2001), writes that, 'the bourgeois modality of subjectivity, the "individual," is not the only available subjective mode, and that a different and competing working-class mode has existed, but has been representationally suppressed, not least of all in the modernist cultural production that Adorno privileges' (point 25). The assumption in Adorno that all other 'modes' of subjectivities are subordinate, 'socially derived' from the 'most advanced' consciousness of the day, assumes, at best, that bourgeois concerns are taken on by all, but under interrogation also points to a suggestion that those alternative modes are inessential to what is required for a full appreciation of the cataclysmic trajectory taken by capitalism and the accompanying rationalisation of life.

The black experience does not figure in Adorno's jazz critique. In 'Über Jazz,' first published in 1936, the African American basis of jazz is all but denied. He writes: 'The extent to which jazz has anything at all to do with genuine black music is highly questionable; the fact that it is frequently performed by blacks and

²⁷ As has been discussed in the introduction and will be considered below the idea that modern crisis became critical with the coming to dominance of monopolistic capitalism needs to be countered by a presentation of an alternative version which brings to the fore the fact that, borrowing from Jose-Manuel Barreto (2009; 2013), the modern era was born into crisis.

that the public clamors for "black jazz" as a sort of brand-name doesn't say much about it, even if folkloric research should confirm the African origin of many of its practices' (Adorno 1989/90, p. 52). Where in later work Adorno accepts the 'folkloric research' that places jazz history squarely within the black community, he argues the music retained elements of unruliness. If it were the case that a more genuine expression had not been 'corrupted' 'from above', then there might be something worth considering for critical potential (Adorno, 2000, p. 269). He writes, 'however little doubt there can be regarding the African elements in jazz, it is no less certain that everything unruly in it was from the very beginning integrated into a strict scheme, that its rebellious gestures are accompanied by the tendency to blind obeisance' (ibid.).

In rare reference to African American history, Adorno reinforces his dismissal of any possibility that African American forms may present a sufficient challenge to the inhospitality encountered in the mainstream. He argues that a music that has roots in 'Negro spirituals' and 'slave songs', with their 'lament of unfreedom [combined] with its oppressed confirmation' (ibid.) could not possibly nurture practitioners able to develop autonomous responses to their subordination. In a similar vein, he writes with regard to the inability of the proletariat to furnish distinctive, independent music forms, that '[t]he realism taught by want is not as one with the free unfoldment of consciousness' (quoted in Paddison, 1993, p. 118). And surely this would have been applied to the African American too had the connection between its experience and consciousness been deemed more tenable. Apart from the passage in 'Perennial Fashion - Jazz' quoted from above, an African American perspective is not so much written into the periphery of Adorno's narrative of

modernity as placed outside it. We can only assume that Adorno considered the black experience as pre-capitalistic and not essential to his modern narrative. Jazz, on the other hand, in his portrayal of it as pure commodity, is integral, and this is due, in part, to its perceived lack of musical history or tradition.²⁸

As a marketing tool, as ‘coloristic effect’ and brand development, the African American has an indispensable role to play in the culture industry. But in his writing, we find Adorno uses the black American in a comparable way. We find reified fragments of poorly formed ideas, bordering on caricature, concerning the black subject, which add false depth to Adorno’s jazz critique. Yet, we can do better than dismiss this as mere Eurocentric ignorance. Borrowing from literary critic Fred Moten (2003), there is a certain ‘insight Adorno’s deafness carries’ (p. 179). It is hard to believe that the allusions to slavery and black subordination were utilised without awareness of the connotations they involved. After all, Adorno was anything but unprovocative. His shock-jock rhetorical devices were not limited to the jazz essays. They are a method of choice throughout his work. But while Adorno used the African American experience as a metaphor for the experience of the new ‘universal class’ or the ‘jazz subject,’ the insight into the psychological trauma of the African American is at times astute.

The provocation of comments such as a portrayal of jazz as ‘housebroken and scrubbed behind the ears’ (Adorno, 2000, p. 275), or of the jazz subject from whom he hears ‘I am nothing, I am filth, no matter what they do to me, it serves me right’ (p. 278), serve mainly in a metaphorical capacity, but stray much too close to certain

²⁸ This denial of modern involvement whether or not intended resonates with Hegel’s insistence on the African’s lack of history as will be explored in a later chapter.

psychological repercussions of North American chattel slavery. Moten's suggestion is that we are able to salvage, by way of a critical appraisal of Adorno's misunderstanding of the African American corporeality, the basis of a novel vantage-point on modern psychological trauma. By looking at Adorno's reading of jazz we may also be able to gain insight into the predicaments of bourgeois subjectivity. The suggestion is that the African American has, in a sense, previewed, under a distinct set of circumstances, the disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie under monopolistic capitalism. Inadvertently, by basing metaphorical imagery on instances abstracted from the African American experience of modernity, Adorno invites us to enquire into this history, to which he has paid the scantest of attention. Ironically, through this we are able to challenge both Adorno's characterisation of jazz as complicit in culture industry manipulation, and jazz scholarship's affirmative narratives of personal freedom and social responsibility.

The undermining of family and patriarchal authority that has been outlined above with regard to the waning market capitalism of late nineteenth century Europe was also a defining feature of the 'peculiar institution' of slavery and the subsequent periods of rehabilitation. While the devaluation of the two subjectivities occurred along distinct historical trajectories, one initiated at the foundations of the pre-capitalist, proto-industrial economy and the sudden birth of the African American subject, and the other marking the decline in market capitalism and the loss of patriarchal sovereignty, both bear the marks of an intrusion into the family.²⁹

²⁹ Some commentators, Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman (1974), for example, regard slavery as part of capitalist system. More recently Smith has written, 'True, they did not employ free labor on

Moreover, while the loss of familial sovereignty that facilitated the assault on the bourgeois individual was previewed as part of the systematic dehumanisation of the chattel slave, the latter experience (and this is rarely acknowledged in critical theory) has produced a black subject in which the category of 'individual' appears to be contingent rather than holding the prize of place it does in its bourgeois counterpart. In place of the myth of individualism behind which bourgeois degradation works, we find the African American as slave systematically stripped of any trace of self-determination without the need of a concealed ideology to mask the fact. Indeed, the overt nature of the suppression the African American subject faced was as important in controlling the slave as pseudo-individualism is in undermining the middle classes.

The denial of parental privilege and responsibility for blacks during slavery is well documented. W. E. B. Du Bois in his 1899 study on black families in Philadelphia writes, 'The home was destroyed by slavery, struggled up after emancipation, and is again not exactly threatened, but neglected in the life of city Negroes' (1967, p. 194). At the root of this legacy we find a portrait of a patriarchal slaveholder who 'asserted himself as the paterfamilias, and reinforced his claim of being sole father of a family of both black and white' (Genovese, 1974, p. 483). This, Cornel West tells us, 'utterly demolished the male protector/provider role and the pride, dignity, and strength that came with it' (Hewlett and West, 1998, p. 181). It is a theme that recurs time and again in autobiography, slave narrative, and fiction as

their plantations. But the way slaveholders organized their workforce, the way they treated their bondpeople, their heavy involvement in the market economy, and their drive for economic profit made them much more capitalist than historians like Genovese are willing to concede' (1998, p. 13). Karl Marx writes on this, 'Where the capitalist outlook prevails, as on American plantations, this entire surplus value [of slave labour] is regarded as profit... the anticipated and capitalised surplus – value or profit to be wrung out of the slave' (Marx, [1894] 1992, p. 940)

well as in more scholarly sources (Du Bois, 1967; Dunaway, 2003; Genovese, 1974; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Hewlett and West, 1998, Patterson, 1990).³⁰ Wilma A. Dunaway (2003), writing of slave families in the Appalachia, states that, ‘In the Upper South states, one in every three slave marriages was broken by a master’s intervention. One in every three slave marriages was terminated when masters sold spouses away from their families. Moreover, one-half of all slave sales involved the separation of children from their parents’ (p. 63). As children were regarded as the property of their mother’s owner, any ‘kinship interaction’ with their fathers was at the behest of those owners. Dunaway reveals that fathers, whether absent or not, were often only, at best, a secondary influence on their children, with the slaveholder exercising ultimate paternal privilege.³¹

It has been argued that this encumbrance on the black male has created the conditions for the preponderance of the matrifocal family within the African American community. Writing in 1939, E. Franklin Frazier states that ‘under all conditions of slavery, the Negro mother remained the most dependable and important figure’ (1940, p. 41). Some sixty years later, Cornel West echoes this: ‘Even under

³⁰ The lines separating autobiography, narrative and fiction in African American literature are not clearly drawn. Works that provide insight into the restrictions placed on the slave family include Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Harriet Ann Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Booker T. Washington’s memoir, *Up From Slavery* (1901), and Toni Morrison’s Pulitzer prize winning novel, *Beloved* (1988). Recorded narratives archived by the Library of Congress are also revealing. Alice Gaston being interviewed by Robert Sonkin in 1941: ‘I was taught in that way, from my old master. Don’t steal. Don’t lie. If you want anything, ask for it.’ Available from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc9999001.5091b>. For an opposing position on the instability of slave families see Engerman (1973) and Griswold (1993), although it needs to be noted that these scholars do not deny the overall sovereignty of the slaveholder. Herbert Gutman (1976) emphasises the emergence of strong African American families after the emancipation.

³¹ The dominant paradigm of the slaveholder keeping families together at all cost, and separation being unusual has come under sustained critique over the past twenty years. One of the key problems with previous studies is that they only considered large plantations of fifty slaves or more while over 80 per cent of slaves lived in smaller plantations. Dunaway’s (2003) study is an important corrective. Studies of smaller slaveholding have revealed that slave families were often separated, and, moreover, lived in constant fear of its possibility.

slavery, females were able to fulfil their most elemental gender-specific role' (Hewlett and West, 1998, p. 181). A 1965 report by Daniel Patrick Moynihan tells us that due to restrictions on family roles during slavery, 'the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is out of line with the rest of the American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well' (1965, chap. 4, para. 2)³². Implicit in Moynihan's statement is what Angela Davis (1971) has called 'an unspoken indictment of our female forebears as having actively assented to slavery' (p. 2), a charge that an 'emasculating female' slave was complicit in slavery.

These thinly veiled accusations are countered by feminist scholars such as Davis and Hortense Spillers (2003) who point out the illogicality that any encouragement of familial authority would have involved, regardless of gender. Davis writes, 'The notorious cliché, the "emasculating female," has its roots in the fallacious inference that in playing a central part in the slave "family," the black woman related to the slaveholding class as collaborator. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the most fundamental sense, the slave system did not — and could not — engender and recognize a matriarchal family structure. Inherent in the very concept of the matriarchy is "power." It would have been exceedingly risky for the

³² *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965). Available from <http://www.blackpast.org/primary/moynihan-report-1965>. Although not referring to the alleged tendency towards matriarchal family organisation, Du Bois, identifies the family as key to African American progress. In prescribing a course of action to reverse the debilitating effects of low employment, political disenfranchisement and lack of agency within the black community of late nineteenth century Philadelphia, Du Bois prescribes what is, unmistakably, a bourgeois model. He proposes redressing the balance towards the home as the principal site of socialisation. He draws attention to the fact that '[e]ven in the best homes... there is easily detected a tendency to let the communal church and society life trespass upon the home...' (p. 125). He states his case in the plainest terms when writing, 'The mass of the Negro people must be taught sacredly to guard the home, to make it the centre of social life and moral guardianship' (pp. 125-6).

slaveholding class to openly acknowledge symbols of authority — female symbols no less than male’ (p. 2).³³ The demasculinisation of the male slave, which is facilitated, in significant part, through the stripping of parental rights and responsibilities, needs to be kept in clear sight. However, the corresponding removal of gender-specific markers in the case of slave women needs to be considered alongside this, as part of a comprehensive strategy of emptying human quality.³⁴ In fact, and crucially for this study, the degradation of woman to slave, brings into sharper focus the absence of the myth of individuality in the dehumanisation of African Americans.³⁵ Unlike the modern bourgeois or ‘universal class’ no myth of individuality or personal distinction is afforded the black slave. For the female slave, ‘the alleged benefits of the ideology of femininity did not accrue... She was not sheltered or protected; she would not remain oblivious to the desperate struggle for existence unfolding outside the "home." She was also there in the fields, alongside the man, toiling under the lash from sun-up to sun-down’ (p. 5).

The deployment of the slaveholder as all-embracing patriarch is a clear strategy of disenfranchisement, and points both to similarities and differences in

³³ Interestingly, Rebecca Comay (2000) similarly criticises the characterisation of the new ‘universal class’ as a feminisation. She summarises the position: ‘Lacking a proper father whose authority they might internalize, the masses become, in the end, a woman. "Just as women adore the unmoved paranoiac, so the nation genuflects before fascism". Or again: "Now emotion is reserved to power conscious of itself as power. Man surrenders to man, cold, bleak and unyielding, as woman did before him. Man turns into a woman gazing up at her master ... The seeds of homosexuality are sown." And thus we find Adorno, finally, chiming in with the nineteenth-century male imaginary - mass culture as woman - the fantasy of a lethal lassitude or an oceanic engulfment, the fantasy of a watery grave’ (p. 42).

³⁴ James Baldwin ([1949] 1994) points to the depth of this limitation in an analysis of Bigger Thomas, the protagonist of Richard Wright’s ([1940] 2000) *Native Son*. Bigger, he writes, ‘has accepted a theology that denies him life, that he admits the possibility of his being sub-human and feels constrained, therefore, to battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth. But our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only do what is infinitely more difficult – that is accept it’ (p.8).

³⁵ It also gives us insight into the degradation of white women that was often hidden from view or obscured by the veneer of narratives surrounding feminine sacrum.

relation to the situation outlined by Adorno for the bourgeois individual.³⁶ As to the similarities, we find in both an omnipotent figure of authority, represented as the white master, and the totalitarian leader or culture industry, respectively. The subordination of both subjectivities rests on the bleeding out of difference or homogenisation of a collective – as a strategy towards the efficacious commodification of human beings, and in the creation of a pool of pliable consumer-labour. Crucially, however, as touched upon above, the black subject required no accompanying ideas of illusory self-determination, in fact, although the slave was, indeed, supplied with a steady flow of extenuation justifying her enslavement, the fact of her subordination is regularly pronounced to her, unequivocally. While Adorno’s pseudo-individual is coached towards recognising the fascist leader as a partial reflection of herself (his suburban barber side)³⁷ and is led to believe in an alleged sovereignty of self, the African American subject is brought to address head-on the fact of its weakness and is encouraged to not see *herself* but only a marker of ‘race’. As Spillers (2003) summarises, ‘Every Black Man/Woman is the “race”’ (p. 395, emphasis in original), setting the context for thinking through ‘*African American culture... as a collective enterprise in strict antinomy to the individualistic synthesis of the dominant culture*’ (ibid., my emphasis).

³⁶ Collaboration between slaveholder and the state is established by Hortense Spillers (2003). This adds further to the idea that the African American slave experience presages that of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century bourgeois. She writes, ‘Deeply embedded, then, in the heart of American social order, the “peculiar institution” elaborated “home” and “marketplace” as a useless distinction, since, at any given moment, and certainly by 1850 – the year of the Fugitive – the slave was as much the “property” of the collusive state as he or she was the personal property of the slaveholder’ (p. 179)

³⁷ Adorno writes, ‘Hitler posed as a composite of King Kong and the suburban barber’ (2001, p. 141) to emphasise the everyday quality of the totalitarian.

In North American slave history there were a number of isolated instances of resistance, and liberties sanctioned by slaveholders. Taking in both violent revolt and conspiracy, and the careful accumulation of property through the advantages afforded particular instances of benevolence, the popular image of the absolute powerlessness of the black slave is challenged. This present consideration does not include a survey of restriction and freedom the African American encountered, nor does it want to suggest a complete passivity on the part of those in captivity. Yet, as historian David Brion Davis (2006) has convincingly argued, dehumanisation should be considered a strategy of control, a mandatory device to ensure subservience. He writes, ‘even the most privileged slave – the wealthy farm agent in Babylon, the Greek poet or teacher in Rome, the black driver, musician, blacksmith, or boat captain in Mississippi – could be quickly sold, or stripped and whipped, or raped, or sometimes even killed at the whim of an owner. All slave systems shared this radical uncertainty and unpredictability... Whatever privileges she or he may have gained could be taken away in a flash – leaving the slave as naked as an animal at an auction. [...] This may be the very essence of dehumanisation’ (p. 57).

Compounding this base-line lack of self-determination are strategies that act to strip the slave of human distinction. It is here that we encounter ‘race,’ a tool of total conglomeration which melds particularity.³⁸ The conglomerate of race which arises as part of the dehumanisation of African Americans during slavery and beyond is what Spillers calls the ‘mass-in-the-individual,’ and what Frantz Fanon ([1962]

³⁸ David Brion Davis (2006) points out that ‘long before the eighteenth-century invention of “race” as a way of classifying humankind, a different phenotype or physical appearance made the dehumanization of enslavement much easier’ (pp. 72-3). However, the physical distinction of African slaves was welcomed by ‘Europeans who struggled for centuries to find markers that would help justify class polarities... and help identify... people who could be classified as “natural slaves”’ (p. 73).

2008) is referring to when he depicts the unease that his presence generates on the 1950s Parisian boulevard (the unescapable ‘fact of blackness’ (p. 82)). Fanon and Spillers show us that this marker cancels out human particularity, replacing human difference with a predetermined, one-size-fits-all racial clod. What Du Bois calls the ‘badge of colour,’ denotes a natural marker that sets black people apart, and was echoed in the demarcation of a Jewish ‘race’ by the required display of the Star of David in Nazi Europe. It is important to point out that it was not only the fact that domination occurred along racial lines, or that race was used to justify slavery, but that race itself was constructed as a tool of control.

Strategies of dehumanisation are rarely unmitigated successes. In a late essay discussing a study carried out in 1966 that explored the German public’s reaction to a televised high profile wedding, Adorno shows that the manipulative influence of the culture industry, despite its pervasiveness, is never complete. Indeed within the employment of self-deception by complicit consumer-captives, we find pockets of autonomy which could, perhaps, be turned away from affirmation towards more critical ends. Adorno writes, with regards to the viewing public, ‘It is possible to perceive symptoms of a double consciousness... Apparently the integration of consciousness and free time has not yet wholly succeeded. The real interests of individuals are still strong enough to resist, up to a point, their total appropriation’ (2005, p. 175). In the re-humanised revision of ‘race’ we find at work in African American subjectivity, the conglomerate grouped indiscriminately by the ‘badge of colour,’ is retained. However, despite the internalisation of the ideology of inferiority, theorised insightfully if incomprehensively by Du Bois in his own formulation of a distinct but related understanding of ‘double consciousness’, we

find that the curse/gift of seeing oneself through the eyes of others at the very least reveals an awareness (however hard it is to break free from) of the ideology at work.³⁹ We find that in the act of retaining the marker but playing upon what it signifies, the African American subject challenges the hegemony of externally imposed 'race' and 'blackness'.⁴⁰ The badge is taken on but critically, presenting an unstable, shimmering constellation of relations that attests to a commitment to the communal subject *and* re-enactments of particularity in its desire to be recognised as human. As we will explore in the next chapter, this coup is far from a consolidated, final triumph. It needs to be seen as an empathetic, although by no means combat-free, relationship driven by the desire to keep hold of personal character while being part of the communal self.

The supposed compromise between the individual and collective in jazz, celebrated as a reflection of American exceptionalism, turns out to be, not a reconciliation, but evidence of a pre-existent 'communal self' that arose as a consequence of the denial of human difference during slavery and beyond.⁴¹ Rather than the masking of domination that Adorno detects in jazz's emphasis on improvisation, and its portrayal by commentators as a solution to the contradictory interests of individual freedom and social responsibility, we find an avowal of the

³⁹ Du Bois's formulation of 'double consciousness' and its various extrapolations are explored in chapter three.

⁴⁰ Signifying which was conceptualised by Henry Louis Gates (1988) is a key theme in African American criticism. Signifying sees the derogatory label of 'nigger' rescued from both racists and the pyre erected by political correctness. It is transformed into a term of endearment (between blacks) in an embrace of racialization and particularly the collectivity that arises from that.

⁴¹ There is an argument that the 'communal self' of African American culture is an African retention, derived from the extended family settings and pantheism of many sub-Saharan traditional communities. While I have sympathy for this opinion, an exploration of this within the present study has not been possible. There are some jazz writers who reject this thesis arguing that it is highly improbable that African customs and culture could have survived the middle passage and various levels in enculturation that the proximity between blacks and whites during slavery encouraged (see for instance, Sandke (2010)).

subordination suffered in its refusal to negate the imposed racial collective. As Alain Locke writes, ‘This deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life. It seems to be the outcome of the reaction to proscription and prejudice; an attempt, fairly successful in the whole, to convert a defensive into an offensive position, a handicap into an incentive’ (2014 [1925], p. 4).⁴² In a significant way, our usual understanding of an autonomous, atomised, private individual needs to be considered an abstraction in relation to the African American. What we see in this context is not a yearning towards a now defunct category of individual, but rather a desire to be seen as human, a desire to pull apart, to misshape the categorical smoothness of race, through the evocation of particularity. Sven Bjerstedt (2014) picks up on manifestations of this in jazz when he writes, ‘There are innumerable statements to the effect that coming forward as a human being is crucial to jazz improvisation’ (p. 22). These ‘statements’ are calls for recognition, but those asking for recognition should not be confused with Adorno’s ‘jazz subject’, the pseudo-individual of mainstream society, nor the dehumanised, homogenised race entity of slave control. The expression that issues from an African American subject is one in which the self is always imbued with the collective: the most intensely personal blues speaks for and of the black experience.

⁴² From the National (U.S.) Humanities Research Centre website. Available from <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/migrations/text8/lockenewnegro.pdf> [10 July 2014].

Conclusion

In a key passage towards the end of 'Über Jazz', Adorno attempts through a consideration of the use of verse-refrain compositional structure in jazz, to reiterate a central tenet of his essay: that the '[jazz] subject is not a "free," lyrical subject which is then elevated into the collective, but rather one which is not originally free - a victim of the collective' (1989/90, p. 64). Bypassing what was, by his account, a largely unreliable source of commentary on jazz, Adorno wants to show how the music itself is able to offer clear indication of societal control, and the corresponding lack of personal autonomy. The 'jazz subject' is shown to be at best a defenceless dunce duped by the lure of immediacy on tap, and more damningly as the sadomasochist, who has awareness of the potential harm, but in exchange for moments of gratification is on hand to help perpetuate the myths that surround her manipulation. Adorno shows this as being played out in the verse-refrain form, which he identifies as jazz's structure of choice.⁴³ The verse-refrain is most readily recognised in its use as the commonly used song structure in big production MGM musicals of the 1930s and 1940s. In Adorno's analysis, the verse is representative of the individual, who is subordinate to and eventually subsumed into the productively prior chorus section of the form (despite the verse being played before the chorus in performance) which represents society. The composed verse is often bland, a simple melody providing ample opportunity for expressive variation when it comes to be performed. However, the performance is not genuine freedom. From the outset the

⁴³ Although, even in 1936 swing, the verse of the verse-chorus form is often dropped in performance and recording.

verse, despite the frequent use of rubato, and its loosely determined melody, is secondary.

The verse is ‘warm-up act’ to the musically superior chorus, and the soloist’s attempts to take what is made to seem like previously untrodden paths out of the unadorned melodic line are illusory. Adorno writes that

It falls out of the collective just as syncopation does from the regular beat; it does not want to be engulfed in the prescribed majority, which existed before the subject and is independent of it, whether out of protest or ineptitude or both at once - until it finally is received into, or, better, subordinated to the collective as it was predestined to do; until the music indicates, in a subsequently ironic manner as the measures grow rounder, that it was a part of it from the very beginning; that, itself a part of this society, it can never really break away from it (1989/90, pp. 64-65).

The individual efforts of the verse are a mere token, an apparent concession to ease the denial of true individualism. In reality, there is no immediacy, no true expression, only a puppet posing as eccentricity but, in fact, dedicated to fulfilling the interests of the collective.

The blues ‘form’ cannot be adequately appreciated by recourse to the twelve-bar, binary structure we are presented with when we attempt to write it up into traditional analysis. Indeed, one could argue that the word ‘form’ and its associated analytical baggage are ill-equipped to excavate this prime site of African American heterophonic expression, or what literary critic Stephen Henderson terms ‘a mass

concentration of Black experiential energy' (1972, p. 44). It should not come as a surprise (although approaching it, as we do, from the 'absolute music' perspective of the European tradition, we often are surprised) that a music inextricably tied to community, tends to retreat when faced with attempts to treat it as an autonomous text. We struggle when we fail to 'keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience [of the African American] alive' (Ellison, 1995, p. 78).⁴⁴ However, even as we put to one side these more qualitative features, in an attempt to meet Adorno partway, we can show how the blues form is perhaps a more appropriate structure through which to explore how the individual and collective relate in the African American experience and in jazz.⁴⁵

The bare twelve-bar variant of the blues starts with a call (a statement, question, accusation) which is repeated with difference, and then answered by a second theme. The employment of antiphony is unexceptional, being a common compositional and performance tool of many genres, including that of the European tradition. However, the economy, some may argue, the poverty, of the blues form, to which the scalability of call-and-response contributes, is noteworthy. Its rudimentary nature links it to the verse. Both depend on simplicity of composition. In the verse this tends to be manifest in a throwaway melody; in blues it appears most significantly in its highly formulaic harmonic movement. The lack of musical interest at this compositional level can be shown to allow for greater contribution by musicians in performance. In fact, as will be explored in the following chapter, the

⁴⁴ This is a segment of Ralph Ellison's definition of the 'blues impulse' which will be explored further. It is entirely consistent with the thesis outlined above regarding the importance of retaining (despite its roots in slavery) the category of race in African American expression.

⁴⁵ It is interesting that the 'song-form' which is often contained in the jazz form is neglected in Adorno's analysis. AABA suggests two distinct voices involved in dialogue rather than the absorption of the initiating theme into the second.

blues is constituted to allow for many repetitions, and to aid the memorisation and dissemination of its compositions. This is where it parts company with the verse whose components are rarely up to the task of repetition, neither in terms of its musicality nor its ability to be readily committed to memory. As argued by Susan McClary (2000), the genius of the blues, which is undeniably ‘impoverished’ from the standpoint of European harmony, is its ability to facilitate ‘so many rich and varied repertoires’ (p. 39), its humanity and expression being registered not in its underlying structural harmony, as we encounter typically in European ‘art’ music, but in the liberal interpretation of melody in performance.

Unsurprisingly, the social significance of the blues is lost once we shoehorn it into the mould of Adorno’s method, particularly in light of the compositional focus we find in the verse-chorus analysis. To locate the African American context in the blues, we need to look to the profligacy of repetition in the form, within an individual performance and as it manifests across the numerous interpretations of a piece (both suggesting something of a temporalised heterophony).⁴⁶ John Coltrane once said that the collective is often sounded in the ‘I’ within African American expression (McClary, 2000). Which is to say that, when he plays we should be able to hear the tradition and the wider social context from which the music emerges. This is an idea that resonates with Spillers’s ‘mass-in-the-individual’ we encountered above. When a blues is performed it sets off constellations of communal associations (ranging from other renderings of the same lyrics or melody to a mixed bag of inflection, riff and theme, to those that evoke Ellison’s more esoteric ‘fingering [the] jagged grain ... of a brutal experience’ (1995, p. 78). The blues musician is compelled to return to

⁴⁶ See the following chapter for more on this.

these ‘mass concentrations of Black experiential energy’ but these repetitions are always formed, deformed, and interrupted by the desire to retain distinction. That is to say that the communal element in the blues is tempered by the musicians’ particularities.

Adorno notes how the verse is often omitted from ‘orchestral arrangements’ with ‘only the chorus [being] permitted to take part in the repetition and variations’ (p. 64). This tendency may be explained by way of the blues form. It has been argued that the African American subject is one imbued with the collective. Moreover, the collective or the chorus (and I am thinking here from a performance perspective) is shaped by the productive tension between the commitment to contribute to, and on behalf of, the group, and the imperative to keep personal distinction in view. In this formulation it is not that the expressiveness of the verse becomes superfluous but that the performed chorus is itself formed by the particularity traditionally confined with the verse. The chorus becomes a prime site for this mimetic relationship between ‘individual’ and community. Regarding the verse-chorus form in this light, we find that it is misleading pitting the individual against the collective in jazz. Yet, it is as deceptive to present the music as a rapprochement of the two. In jazz, and we see this particularly clearly in its blues character, the ‘we’ is sounded when triggered by a voice that claims kinship to it. Yet, as we shall turn to in the following chapter, this intersubjectivity, while productive, cannot be described as mellifluous. Perhaps it is the expression of this agitated communal self, that can only be grasped through a focused consideration of how the individual or, perhaps more usefully, human distinction, figures in the black community, that continued to confound Adorno in his engagement with the music. The idea of the collective is already embedded in the re-

humanising African American subject as it works through the trauma of slavery and its aftermath.

Chapter Three

Storytelling, silence and sound

[T]hat slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers... constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.

Walter Benjamin

There is no singing in parts, as we understand it, and yet no two appear to be singing the same thing – the leading singer starts the words of each verse, often improvising, and the others, who ‘base’ him, as it is called, strike in with the refrain, or even join in the solo, when the words are familiar. When the ‘base’ begins, the leader often stops, leaving the rest of his words to be guessed at, or it may be they are taken up by one of the other singers. And the ‘basers’ themselves seem to follow their own whims, beginning when they please and leaving off when they please, striking an octave above or below... or hitting some other note that chords, so as to produce the effect of a marvellous complication and variety, and yet with the most perfect time, and rarely with any discord. And what makes it harder to unravel a thread of melody out of this strange network is that, like birds, they seem not infrequently to strike sounds that cannot be precisely represented by the gamut, and abound in slides from one note to another, and turns and cadences not in articulated notes.

William Francis Allen

In this chapter it will be argued that jazz’s work is to be found not in the single melodic line of the soloist but in ‘collaborative emergence’ which highlights not only the communal nature of the creative pursuit but the fact that jazz work is to be found in the music’s production rather than a text (recorded or transcribed) that has been extracted from this. One of the aims of the chapter is to explore this way of communicating that allows temporally disparate versions to share in each other’s

significance. It will emphasise the communal nature of jazz work, coming to a better understanding of the empathetic creative tension between being part of the chorus and holding on to difference. It will argue that the jazz musician's finding ways to make collaborative work while fulfilling her desire for distinction is a principal site of productive tension.

I will offer an answer to the question as to why Walter Benjamin's storyteller had grown silent while black musical expression was still being passed from mouth to mouth, suggesting that the loosening of word from meaning, and the play between meaning, word and sound (aural gestures and extra-linguistic utterances such as sighs, moans, screams and laughter) has equipped jazz with the means to communicate experience, even in the face of catastrophe and the resultant trauma that befalls individuals and communities. Drawing from the musical form's own tendencies towards collaborative, 'integrative' creation, the chapter will conclude with a consideration of more empathetic approaches to studying jazz.

The experience of happening upon saxophonist Ornette Coleman (1961) playing the opening theme of 'Beauty is a Rare Thing'¹ as Billie Holiday (1958) delivers the bridge of 'I'm a Fool to Want You'² was an unexpected pleasure. This chance occurrence, which came about from having two media applications open simultaneously on my PC, played out for me a fantasy cross-generational collaboration reminiscent of the celebrated rapport between the singer and the

¹ On the album *This Is Our Music* recorded 1961, featuring Don Cherry (trumpet), Charlie Haden (double bass) and Ed Blackwell (drums). This is second in a quartet of albums that were recorded by Coleman between 1959 and 1961 ending with the double quartet experiment, *Free Jazz*.

² This was recorded for Holiday's penultimate studio album, *Lady in Satin*.

saxophonist Lester Young³. On the layered tracks I heard Coleman accompanying Holiday, weaving in and out of the sparsely phrased lyrics, playing along, and then dropping out before returning to help complete phrases⁴. There is an undeniable kinship demonstrated by a mutual concern with tone, tuning and grain, and this use of the minuscule details of musical construction no doubt goes towards accounting for the ‘success’ of the alliance. But there is more. The most interesting ideas the listening experience suggested in relation to the present study are to do with how music allows and encourages temporally distant musicians to ‘collaborate’. Does it not seem that the tendency away from the expectations that produce hermetic, self-contained works makes jazz particularly well-suited to the kind of creative interaction suggested by the propinquity between Holiday and Coleman?⁵ Do we need to accept the virtue that has been made of the inner logic of some jazz solos? Are there not other important criteria for measuring the significance of jazz work/performance?

Holiday’s voice, weathered by the years, was, arguably, at its most full and nostalgic; it had become heavy, displaying little of the nonchalance of early performances. This weightiness, the condensed grain of her voice, provided the material with which she formed her distinctive interpretation. Experimenting with the

³ Although the two recordings were initially released a mere three years apart, stylistically Holiday and Coleman can be seen to inhabit markedly different eras. *Money Jungle*, a trio album recorded in 1962 featuring Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach is an example of a successful, if at times uneasy, alliance between musicians from different eras.

⁴ An attempt to reconstruct the chance experiment by playing the first movement of Beethoven String Quartet Op. 18 No.1 over Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* produced interesting results, but ultimately failed to satisfy the idiomatic values of either modern European music or jazz. That said, I have had enough experience of ‘mash-ups’ and layering in hip hop to realise that the device is not the exclusive property of jazz. Yet, this non-exclusivity does not invalidate the questions raised, and while the chapter does not pursue this line of questioning stringently, it may be that music-making within jazz is, in fact, particularly well-suited to these sorts of inter-generational collaborations.

⁵ See introduction for discussion on the absence of a completed work in jazz and the implications that recording imposed on this.

warp and weft of the voice's texture helped her negotiate the song in the absence of a broader arsenal of expressive devices. In relation to 'You've Changed' from the same album, poet and scholar, Fred Moten (2003) focuses in on the 'crack' of the vocalist's voice which he believes tells of a 'willingness to fail'; the intrepidity shown when faced with the prospect of 'partiality or incompleteness'. He writes, 'The crack is... [the] trace of some impossible initial version or inaugurative incident and effect of the resistance and excess of every intervening narrative and interpretation' (p. 107). The 'incompleteness' Moten is referring to is the impossibility of re-tracing our tracks to the original idea.⁶ Yet, it may be that this 'partialness', the expectation to fall short, the embrace of failure is what makes the inadvertent sounding together of Holiday and Coleman less peculiar than hearing, for the first time, the vocalist against the incongruity of an orchestra⁷. Could it be that jazz takes advantage of the inevitability of failure encoded in artistic pursuit? That it makes an advantage of irresolution and incompleteness? In a similar way to how a vignette, told well, can evoke the whole world of its protagonist but retain an indeterminacy that allows for others to re-tread and re-work that world, does jazz work have future re-workings of its standards and themes (musical and social) encoded in it? Perhaps a creative form that encourages a teller's or a musician's peculiarities, their limitations even, will inevitably allow space in the same story for many others.⁸

⁶ Adorno has interesting things to say about this too. For example, see *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction* (2006, p. 92).

⁷ Holiday is backed by orchestra arrangement written by Ray Ellis. Interestingly, Charlie Parker's and Clifford Brown's experimentation with strings are similarly unsettling.

⁸ Although this is not covered in this study, it would be interesting to consider whether such forms encourage the audience to listen to the work creatively. Are audiences versed in these traditional forms more open to contrasting approaches to formed expression? Although this study gestures to the

A key insight from Walter Benjamin's ([1936] 1992) 'The Storyteller: Nikolai Leskov' is the notion of 'iterative reworking'⁹ which sees new versions of a story repeating what has already been given, but doing so in a way that retains the teller's own perspective and personal quirks. Benjamin refers to each re-telling as a 'transparent layer'. This transparency is crucial as it suggests that past efforts have not been covered over or surpassed by the new, but are retained and are in fact reanimated (re-worked) by the more recent. I imagine the layering of the performances of 'Body and Soul'¹⁰ I am most familiar with and speculate on the result bearing resemblance to Allen's description of the work song chorus in the epigraph above. I hear the various voices (of John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Dexter Gordon, Billie Holiday, and Betty Carter, to name a few) weaving, creating chords of varying degrees of dissonance/consonance, alternately taking the lead as the chorus 'bases', at times providing cushioned accompaniment, other times sounding as isolated voices just inhabiting the same musical space.

There is a discrepancy between the provisional sketch of inter-generational collaboration and what is passed off as storytelling in much of the discipline. As will become clear in the section that follows, the word 'story' is most often used as a metaphor to highlight internal coherence. A story is seen as a discrete cultural product which has a beginning, middle and end. Its various parts relate to the completed story in a way which 'makes sense' within the story's logic. In this

idea of the audience as collaborator, it was envisaged more from the perspective of performing contributors. It would be interesting to put this idea to Adorno's structural listener.

⁹ See Andrew Benjamin's *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism* (1997, p. 55), and 'Benjamin on Art and Reproducibility: The Case of Music' by Rajeev S. Patke (2005, p. 20).

¹⁰ 'Body and Soul,' (written by Johnny Green in 1930 with lyrics by Edward Heyman, Robert Sour and Frank Eyton) is undoubtedly one of the most performed jazz standards. It holds an iconic status, with several important versions recorded by vocalists. But its significance is, perhaps, better explained by Coleman Hawkins' 1939 recording which appears to hold the tradition's past and future in balance.

understanding of the story, there is little consideration for the very particular practices associated with storytelling communities. Rather than an accumulative effort in which we see the amplification of the story with each new telling, in jazz studies ‘the story’ tends to start and be completed within a single solo. The success of a solo is seen as wrapped up in its internal logic and sense of completion; this prized autonomy is modelled on that which we find in the modern European tradition.¹¹ The overriding relationship between individual solos or performances is one based on development – an evolving tradition in which older styles are supplanted by newer, improved ones. The solo and individual musician is the focal point in the jazz narrative.

The important pioneering work that was been carried out by scholars such as Ingrid Monson (1996), Paul Berliner (1994) and Keith Sawyer (2000) to redress this hegemony has been crucial in its highlighting the importance of collaborative work in jazz. This present study needs to be considered a contribution to this focus. Yet, approaches that emphasis interaction between band members tend toward dialogical metaphors and analytical frameworks, at the expense of other forms of creative collaboration. We are taught to pay attention to dialogics and conversation but there is little consideration of the *attitude* of affinity in the tradition that has been speculatively suggested in this opening section. The shared experience is often presented as circumscriptive (the shared area of a Venn diagram) rather than reflective of the amplification we associate with ‘retelling with difference’, to borrow

¹¹ A famous example of this is Gunther Schuller’s (1958) analysis of Sonny Rollin’s ‘Blue 7,’ from *Saxophone Colossus*, recorded 1956. Also see comments on Thelonious Monk by Martin Williams in which he writes, ‘the highest tribute I have ever heard paid to Monk’s music’ [...] [is that] “Monk seems to finish things” (1993, p. 159).

from Henry Louis Gates (1988). One of the areas this chapter focuses on is the generative tension between a musician holding on to his distinctive characteristics and approach, and his commitment to *sharing* the story. It needs to be stressed that what is being suggested here is not a conception of jazz bled of the particularity of the individual musician. What is being speculatively presented is a picture of jazz as an empathetic way of playing together and alongside each other. One in which, together with technical proficiency and learning to respond critically to other musicians and the tradition, goes the creative work involved in fulfilling this desire to work towards something communal, but in one's own voice. What is to be presented is a portrayal of the jazz musician as moving towards the tradition, the musical material, collaborators (contemporary and other) in a manner in which personal distinction is actively maintained.

Benjamin's essay is a retrospective. It is a memorial to 'the storyteller [who] in his living immediacy is by no means a present force' (1992, p. 83). We are no longer adequately equipped to share our experiences. The muteness of the returning soldier is as much evidence of a shortcoming in language (how do you talk about such an acute encroachment on personal liberties?) as a 'physical' manifestation of the trauma inflicted by the horrors lived through. The inadequacy of verbal language to relate the extreme social disorientation created by trauma, needs to be considered alongside the loss of community with the growing prominence of monopolistic business, and the decline in the types of employment conducive to storytelling. That is to say, storytelling suffers from economic disruption (and the alienation that these changes entail), from political and social upheaval such as war, and from the inadequacy of available linguistic resources. This presentation of the inability of oral

forms to communicate trauma in the modern era led me to look at the pre-history of jazz (and jazz itself), and the fact that black expression has been anything but silent. Moreover, it appears that the collaborative processes that Benjamin ascribes to the storytelling tradition, the ‘empathetic comportment,’ and inter-generational interaction sketched above, have withstood the disenfranchisement the African American has experienced. The distinctive trajectory of the African American subject, explored in the preceding chapter is likely to be a contributing factor. Rather than the alienation and compartmentalisation of all areas of life (including language), we have a ‘collective self’ whose limitations, as a result of the systematic dehumanisation of chattel slavery and its aftermath, have more to do with lack of recognition than the loss of the personal sovereignty of the bourgeoisie.

Storytelling and jazz in the studies

In an engaging passage of Vijay Iyer’s (2004) essay, ‘Exploding the Narrative in Jazz Improvisation,’ our attention is drawn to a conversation buried in an outtake from a recording of saxophonist John Coltrane’s improvisational conundrum, ‘Giant Steps.’ In full appreciation of the near insurmountable challenge he had set himself and his fellow band members, Coltrane voices his concern that he may not be able to interpret the composition past ‘making the changes’ (playing harmonically appropriate melody).

John Coltrane can be heard saying to his struggling colleagues, ‘I don’t think I’m gonna improve this, you know... I ain’t going be sayin nothin, (I goin do) tryin just, makin the changes, *I ain’t goin be tellin no story... Like... tellin them black stories.* Amidst the confounded mumbles of assent from his bandmates, one colleague rejoins, ‘Shoot. *Really, you make the changes, that’ll tell ‘em a story.*’ Surprised by this idea, Coltrane responds, ‘*You think the changes’re the story!*’ Overlapping him, a second bandmate riffs, ‘*(Right)... that’ll change all the stories (up)*’. His voice cracking with laughter, Coltrane admits, ‘*I don’t want to tell no lies (on ‘em).*’ After a group laugh, the second colleague trails off in a sort of denouement, ‘(The changes themselves is some kind of story (man I’m tellin you)’ (p. 394, my emphasis).¹²

Iyer notes, ‘[t]hese few seconds of banter could yield a symposium’s worth of exegesis’ (ibid.), but of most interest to the discussion at hand is what Coltrane and his band show us concerning storytelling in jazz. For instance, there seems to be implied in the exchange the idea that Coltrane (the storyteller) is an integral part of a storytelling (African American) community to which he is answerable. For Coltrane the story is not merely ‘making the changes’ or turning out an internally cohesive improvisation. There is a suggestion that the story that they are unable (but feel obliged) to tell is one which would involve extra-musical concerns. There is also the proposal that the most pertinent, or at least the most interesting, story being told

¹² Many thanks to Vijay Iyer for helping me to locate the conversation. In ‘Giant Steps (Alternative Version) – Take 1 [Incomplete],’ *Heavyweight Champion – The Complete Atlantic Recordings* [Disc 7].

during the session, is the fact that Coltrane was able to migrate his way out of the maze he constructed for himself, and, most importantly, that this story should be considered a valid 'black' or communal story. We are also faced with the heteronomy of the form working in both directions - from the expectations of the actual and imagined communities in which the musicians are embedded, and from the musicians toward these communities who present a story (Coltrane's cracking the 'Giant Steps' code) 'that'll change all the stories up'.

'Telling a story' as internal coherence

To 'tell a story', and particularly to 'tell *your* story' is the well-worn advice for building a successful jazz solo. Trumpeter and vocalist Doc Cheatham tells us that 'if a guy plays a beautiful solo and he's playing from the heart or he's talking with his horn, we say, "He's telling a story"' (quoted in Berliner, 1994, p. 255), while the pianist Fred Hersch insists, 'the best jazz... is musical storytelling in real time' (quoted in Solis, 2002, p. 95). Lester Young's famous admonition of young musicians, 'You're technically hip... *But what is your story?*' (O' Meally, 1989, p. 221, emphasis in original) highlights the importance of the individual voice to the art of telling a story. According to Brian Harker (2011) 'telling a story' is a 'folksy expression' which takes in 'less quantifiable elements... such as personality traits [of musicians] and cultural resonances. But [in which] *purely musical coherence may be more fundamental*' (p. 41). The notion that storytelling in jazz is principally concerned with the 'syntactic continuity and cumulative development' (ibid.) of individual solos is a popular one in jazz studies. It is an idea that finds support in the expected areas of the discipline such as those associated with more traditional

methods of musical analysis (Harker, 2011; Kernfield, 1981; Schuller, 1989). The pervasiveness of this sense of storytelling, which is bolstered, albeit in often more ambivalent fashion, by many musicians, has meant that it has gone largely unchallenged even from quarters (such as Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz*) that have been instrumental in upsetting other hegemonic strangleholds in the studies.

The painstaking ethnography of the jazz musician's life, particularly the focus on musicians' own thoughts on the creative and analytical practises involved in playing jazz music, make Paul Berliner's (1994) *Thinking in Jazz* an important contribution. Perhaps the most significant disciplinary development that has occurred as a consequence of the study has been the greater attention being paid to the interaction between members of a band during jazz performance. The study has been foremost in attempts to redress the focus away from the individual solo and the 'great man of jazz' narratives, towards what is undeniably a more faithful portrayal of the music as the creative play of a group of musicians. It suggests a form in which collaborative creation is as important as the genius of the melodist. It shows the negotiations between the individual and his musical community to be pertinent to understanding the principles of structuration in jazz. In relation to storytelling, *Thinking in Jazz* shares musicians' insight into what the term means to them, alongside commentary on jazz solos, showing 'the story' as a useful tool of musical analysis. And yet it is clear, particularly in the insightful analysis of Miles Davis's solo on 'Blues by Five,' that the 'model of storytelling' that Berliner has adopted in his musical analysis is one which can be traced quite neatly onto what Vijay Iyer

calls the 'Schulleresque narrative arc' (2004, p. 394).¹³ A story is confined to an individual solo, and most often refers to its linearity and inner coherence. It is to do with the 'dramatic molding of creations to include movement through successive events "transcending" particular repetitive, formal aspects of the composition' (Berliner, p. 201). As Morris Holbrook (2008) points out, Berliner, among others (he also names Steve Larson and André Hodeir), consider an 'improviser [successful] in telling a story...when the relevant elements combine seamlessly and cohere convincingly to build meaningfully' (p. 112). This teleological understanding of storytelling is common.

Gunther Schuller (1991), writing on the development of Lester Young's style, suggests that the blues is a paradigmatic 'linear concept of playing and singing' (p. 548). We are told that 'It has to be, and it always was. It had to be because it is a narrative form of expression. It is essentially a vocal tradition; it tells a story' (ibid.). Similarly, Scott De Veaux (1997) tell us, that Coleman's Hawkins's 'way of "telling a story"... was uncomplicated and emotionally direct' but continues in a somewhat contradictory vein, describing Hawkins's improvisation as 'a continuous, carefully controlled crescendo of intensity on several fronts at once. [...] The relentless linear logic of harmonic improvisation served as the connecting thread' (pp. 97-8). While it is not my intention to argue that there is no linearity in the blues, or jazz for that matter, the suggestion that forms which are so dependent on repetition and cyclical movement can be considered as principally linear seems, at best, incomplete. The

¹³ Although it must be pointed out that Berliner has much to say about the use of 'quotation' (that is the borrowing of musical phrases, sometimes entire solos, from other musicians) for pedagogical purposes and also for use during a musician's apprenticeship. There is an acknowledgment of wider use within jazz but there is often the sense that it is a poor substitute to the rendering of 'original' melody (pp. 95-105).

error of this misalignment is compounded by the attempt to explain the alleged linear character by pointing to the form's orality, when, in fact, this is an important reason for us to question it. The notion that a story is started and completed by a single solo fails to account for the communal nature of oral traditions, of which storytelling must be considered a prime example. Much of what is written pertaining to the story-like qualities of jazz appears to be describing something closer to the solitary experience of the novel. Paul Wetiico in interview with Berliner suggests something of this when he says, 'The real great cats can write novels' (p. 202). On these accounts one would believe that the story metaphor 'simply mean[s] that a [solo] must have a logical structure, a beginning, middle, and conclusion, melodically and harmonically' (Buck Clayton quoted in Daniels, 1985, p. 318; also see, Pinheiro, 2011, p. 4). Yet, by treating stories in jazz as discrete entities, each solo (invariably, the story is contained in a solo) being considered in confinement, there has been a tendency to ignore other significant dialogic and heterophonic relationships. Despite suggestions of autonomy and the pre-eminence of internal logic, along the lines we take as given for assessing works from the European tradition, storytelling in jazz is also, and arguably primarily, of a communal nature.

Not storytelling, conversation

Paul Berliner and Ingrid Monson are often cited together as the foremost authority on the significance of linguistic metaphors in jazz studies.¹⁴ While Monson's (1996)

¹⁴ For precursory considerations see Samuel Floyd's (1995) *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, which views the issue from an Afrological perspective with special attention to African retentions. See also, 'Preliminary thoughts on analyzing musical interaction among jazz performers' by Paul Rinzler (1988).

work on interlocution and antiphony in jazz is extremely useful as a coherent argument in support of the central importance of interaction and dialogism in the music, we find her book *Saying Something* only sparingly engages with storytelling, which in the form it is cast in a great deal jazz commentary, appears to have much less to offer Monson's thesis concerning the primacy of collective creative practise in jazz. In order to put across the real-time interaction of jazz ensembles, the improvisational open-endedness, as well as 'stylistic and affective aspects' (p. 73), 'conversation' is shown to be a metaphor par excellence. Monson writes, 'In jazz improvisation... all of the musicians are constantly making decisions regarding what to play and when to play it, all within the framework of a musical groove, which may or may not be organized around a chorus structure. The musicians are compositional participants who may "say" unexpected things or elicit responses from other musicians. Musical intensification is open-ended rather than pre-determined and highly interpersonal in character – *structurally far more similar to a conversation than to a text*' (p. 81).¹⁵ The story as internal coherence cannot allow for the banter, the extrapolation, 'signifying' and chorusing that many commentators take to be distinctive of African American music. Storytelling as internal coherence (as text) does not take account of the importance of listening, of the audience and its collaborative effort in the creation of 'works'. In sharp contrast to Brian Harker's focus on apparent teleological tendencies, Keith Sawyer (2000), in line with Monson, believes, 'Jazz is fundamentally an ensemble art form, and everyone involved in the improvisation is constantly offering new ideas—“tentative moves, slight

¹⁵ Interestingly, Monson draws from Mikhail Bakhtin's (2010) *Dialogic Imagination*, which arguably brings her closer to a particular formulation of the novel form.

variations”— and each musician is listening closely to the others. The performance that results is truly a group creation, a collective social process’ (p. 180).

This focus on interaction and collaborative practise within jazz has proved to be an important and well-received redress away from the hegemony of approaches in which the soloist is seen to embody what is essential to the form (See Doffman, 2009; Reinholdsson, 1998; Seddon, 2005). Rather than analyses in which the soloist’s melodic line is transcribed and placed against the context of a rudimentary representation of the ‘accompaniment,’ often just chord symbols, we find musicologists paying greater attention to the role of the rhythm section. As well as scores that detail the accompaniment provided by the rhythm section, there has been greater use and development of other, complementary, graphic devices (see for example, Block, 1997, and Borgo, 2005; Borgo and Goguen, 2005). For instance ‘intuitive schematic diagrams’, that chart the intensity of an improvisation, encourage the consideration of aspects other than harmony and melody (although their use does suggest retention of the traditionalist preoccupation with development and progress). While not usurping the melodic line as the prime site of interest, this complex represented in the transcription of bass, drums and piano has helped to effect a shift from the assumption that the linear narrative of the soloist is the focal point of investigation, towards that which brings to the fore the form’s antiphonic underpinnings.

This focus on conversation as a metaphor and tool for understanding the formal processes of jazz has been at the expense of the discipline’s engagement with other types of interaction. Alongside antiphony are certain polyphonic and heterophonic ways of working together, which are arguably as important, but have

been largely ignored. This oversight and the limitations it poses for thinking through interaction in improvised music has been discussed by David Borgo and Jeff Kaiser (2010). They write that ‘the notions of interaction and interactivity subsume—often in rather vague ways—an enormous variety of embodied, interpersonal, and human-computer dynamics. In the discourse surrounding improvised music, for instance, the term interaction still often brings to mind metaphors of conversation, vocabulary and other aspects of language that, while perhaps well suited to analyzing more conventional forms of jazz improvisation, are often ill-suited to describe more contemporary performance practices’ (p. 1). Without denying the importance of interlocation, I would argue the disproportionate attention that it attracts, even in ‘more conventional forms of jazz improvisation’ has been at the expense of us considering other ways that musicians form expression together.

Jazz as collaborative storytelling

The idea ‘that the story that an improviser tells... unfold[s] merely in the overall form of a “coherent” solo’ or ‘simply in antiphonal structures’ (Iyer, 2004, p. 395) is challenged by Iyer. He urges us to look to ‘the microscopic musical details... [and] the inherent structure of the performance itself’ (ibid.). And perhaps most crucial for this study, he stresses that the ‘story dwells not just in one solo at a time, but also in a single note, and equally in an entire lifetime of improvisations. In short, the story is revealed not as a simple linear narrative, but as a fractured, exploded one’ (ibid.). The proposal to focus down to minute constructive detail, and out to a multitude of layers that make up the ‘lifetime of improvisations’ allows, in fact, calls for expanded senses of both the loci of jazz work and the kinds of interaction that take place

there.¹⁶ Sites of significance in jazz can be found not only within the framework provided by the individual improviser or the real-time interaction of a band but also within ‘stories’ or what Stephen Henderson (1973) terms ‘mascons’ that have been passed through and between generations of musicians. Extending Ann Beeson’s thesis that ‘jazz’ is what ‘the “storytellers” tell a story about”’ (p. 12), Daniel Oakland (1998) provides a portrait of storytelling in jazz which show the ‘improvisations created in the real-time of the present maintain a sense of continuity with the past’ (p. 13).¹⁷ These intergenerational ‘works’ represent a markedly different version of the story to the extracted solo melody of traditional analysis. He argues that the music ‘does indeed recount its history with each performance’ (p. 12). Jazz is shown to be ‘a “collective improvisation” in the broadest sense’ (p. 15).

This intergenerational interaction is not lost on Monson (1996) who devotes a chapter in *Saying Something* to ‘intermusicality’, referring to ‘the particular ways in which music and, more generally, sound itself can refer to the past and offer social commentary’ (p. 97). These ‘musical quotations’ or ‘allusions’ create/highlight the collaborative space amongst musicians in real-time performance. For Monson, the referencing of past musicians is a notable antiphonic activity. Building on observations garnered from an earlier essay which drew from Henry Louis Gates’ discussion of the use of parody in jazz, Monson presents the relationship as a ‘temporal dimension’ of conversation. We see this in an example given by Monson of performances by Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane of ‘Body and Soul’ in 1939

¹⁶ Pianist and scholar Tord Gustavsen writes of the inadequacy of approaches in which ‘linear aspects’ dominate, and calls for analysis that is able to ‘switch... between macro and micro levels’ (quoted in Bjerstedt 2014, p. 66).

¹⁷ The unidentifiable colleague of Coltrane who suggests that ‘making the changes’ of Giant Steps is a story in itself adds credence to this notion of ‘self-referentiality’ in jazz.

and 1960, respectively. She writes, ‘Playing a particular composition can... immediately point to a prior performance, especially when the tune is a jazz standard. [...] John Coltrane’s recording of this... transforms several dimensions of the tune: the groove, the harmony, and the melody. But merely hearing this tune played on the tenor saxophone causes the historically aware listener to compare the present version to prior respected performances’ (p. 98). This ‘non-identical iteration’ (Patke, 2005, p. 196) or ‘repetition with difference’ (Gates, 1988, p. 51) or ‘changing same’ (Baraka, 2010, p. 205), not only highlights the distinction of Coltrane’s performance but also points to a desire to retell the standard.¹⁸ The two versions relate to each other not only by way of transformation and signification but also as empathetic collaterals. While acknowledging the validity of the dialecticism and antiphonic tension of Monson’s focus, the present discussion is more interested in how temporally distant contributions to nodes of communal significance, such as the standard ‘Body and Soul’, converge in alterity/distinction. Saxophonist Dave Liebman, referring to the collaborative storytelling in real-time performance, writes that ‘[t]he solo represents each man's *version* of the story’ (1996, p. 34) and this can be adapted to describe the inter-generational interaction being sketched in this chapter.¹⁹

Returning to the ‘Giant Steps’ outtake, we are forced to confront the fundamental heteronomy of black musical forms. Coltrane presents a direct challenge

¹⁸ It is important to make the distinction between the composition and the standard. Monson overlooks this distinction in her consideration.

¹⁹ It must be noted that Liebman goes on to muddy the storytelling metaphor, somewhat. He continues later in the passage with ‘If you analogize the idea of a concert to a novel, or an album to a short story, then each composition is similar to a chapter. Within the chapter, the solos are like paragraphs. In each solo, the pauses or changes in direction are equal to marks of punctuation and new sentences’ (quoted in Bjerstedt, 2014, p. 46).

to Nick Nesbitt's (1999) attempts to explain his work through Adorno's theory of musical material. Nesbitt argues that 'Coltrane constructed his music on a thorough mastery of historical musical material, and that his musical evolution was predicated upon the working through of the problems this material presented' (p. 93).²⁰ The argument is a compelling one and has much to offer by way of reinforcing the 'classicizing' model of the jazz tradition. But while there is an attempt to engage in social and political context, Nesbitt fails to take seriously the centrality of *extra-musical material* 'worked through'. Staying true to his proposed Adornian method, there is not a denial of the spiritual or communal in Coltrane but rather an insistence that an appreciation of these would 'occur through an immersion within its extreme opposite, technical procedure' (ibid.). Even without recourse to the liner notes of *A Love Supreme* (1965), the listener is struck not only by the spirituality evoked but its specifically evangelical fervour. Moreover, as demonstrated by Lewis Porter (1985), Coltrane made explicit use of text, the 'Psalm' section of the suite containing a wordless recitation of a poem the saxophonist had written. Coltrane, whose maternal grandfather was a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, is clearly contributing to and drawing from this black spiritual tradition. Porter writes that the 'roots of this solo seem to grow out of formulaic procedures used by preachers in black churches' (p. 613). We find that it is not only the content of text that links the 'Psalm' to communal concerns but also the fact that the melody is constructed to take the character of the 'intonational chant' of African American

²⁰ On a slightly different note the insistence of internal coherence *within* individual Coltrane solos needs also to be questioned. Lewis Porter (1985) tells us 'Motives and thematic ideas reappear at several points during a typical Coltrane piece, but not necessarily in a methodical manner' (p. 620).

preachers. Surely, this extra-musical material is at least as important as the internal aspects on which Nesbitt focuses.

A Love Supreme is exceptional, even within Coltrane's own output (although works that followed such as 'Meditations', released in 1965, show a retained interest in using the form towards spiritual ends). 'Giant Steps' does not appear to engage with socio-cultural material. Neither does it show the political commitment we hear on the *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* (featuring Abbey Lincoln) and Mingus's 'Fables of Faubus', both released in 1960, the same year as *Giant Steps*.²¹ In fact, Coltrane's concerns about only being able to 'make the changes' were, arguably, well-founded, the legacy of 'Giant Steps' being as a master study in jazz harmony. And yet, despite the considerable challenge we are faced with when attempting to identify the extra-musical within the piece, the fact that Coltrane highlights what for him is a conspicuous absence of a 'black story', suggests that this social and communal material is significant. Traditionalists' idea of the story as the skilfully executed solo most often fails to address what Coltrane considered lacking in his attempts. On this, Iyer writes,

From his concern that he isn't "telling no story," it is easy to suppose that Coltrane was thinking along these lines, trying to create a "coherent," Schulleresque narrative arc over the scope of a given saxophone solo. However, his hint at larger concerns of culture connection ("telling them black stories") suggests that his intentions transcend the etudelike nature of this clear harmonic

²¹ 'Fables of Faubus' appears on *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* complete with defamatory lyrics in 1960. It was first recorded (without the vocal) for the album *Mingus Ah Um* which was released in 1959.

progression, and even rise above this compositional idea of coherence. *With these four words he seems to reach for musical statements in which no less than his whole community could hear its inexhaustible narrative multiplicity reflected* (p. 394, my emphasis).

The exchange between Coltrane and his band is important in showing that ‘telling them black stories’, by making music that spoke to and of a broader social and communal aesthetic, was an important measure of success for them.

Layering, listening, mimesis

Layering and heterophony

In the epigraph at the start of this chapter, Benjamin speaks of the way a community, that communal listener whose attention sometimes spans centuries, is party to a slowly perfecting story of which new aspects are lit with each further contribution. The story is at once ‘already there’²² and slowly revealed. It is hard to imagine younger contributors free from the influence of their predecessors, and so we should expect a certain degree of dialecticism. Yet the ‘piling one on top of the other of thin, *transparent layers*’ points to a retention of a *multitude of renditions*, and speaks of an

²² I have in mind here both Adorno’s ‘Schubert’ (1928), and James Snead’s (1981) mischievous corroboration of Hegel’s thesis regarding the Sub-Saharan African remaining outside history. He writes, provocatively, that ‘Hegel was almost entirely correct in his reading of black culture. ... The African, first, overturns all European categories of logic. Secondly, he has no idea of history or progress... Finally, he is "immediate" and intimately tied to nature with all its cyclical, non-progressive data. Having no self-consciousness, he is "immediate" i.e., always there in any given moment. Here we can see that, “being there”, the African is also “always already there”, or perhaps “always there before”, whereas the European is headed there or, better, “not yet there”’ (p. 148).

equality between ‘versions’ most often absent from teleological models of development. This retention of past variants is highlighted by Henry Louis Gates in his discussion of Jelly Roll Morton’s performance of the Scott Joplin tune ‘Maple Leaf Rag’. He writes, ‘Morton’s composition does not “surpass” or “destroy” Joplin’s; it complexly *extends* and tropes figures present in the original’ (Gates, p. 63, italics as in original).²³ The story presents a complex of repetitions that can be seen as a sort of concertinaed heterophony. Extended, the lineage of versions resembles the notion of tradition we are most familiar with - a chronology which links the earliest renditions to those of the more recent, often emphasising development and areas of consistency. Pavlić (2002) writes of black literature, ‘previous versions and voices sound in the present while aligning alternative versions of the “past” in an accumulated repertoire’ (p. 24). The very same can be said of jazz.²⁴

When the versions are presented as collapsed, one on top of the other, we hear something like the chorus described by William Francis Allen in the epitaph at the start of the chapter. We hear ‘the “basers” [members of the chorus]... seem[ing] to follow their own whims, beginning when they please and leaving off when they please [helping to complete each other’s ideas], striking an octave above or below... or hitting some other note that chords, so as to produce the effect of a marvellous complication and variety’ (quoted in White and White, 2005, p. 64). This imagined

²³ This quote shows that for Gates signifying is as much to do with collaborative accumulation of material as it is to do with subversion.

²⁴ This is a facet of traditional forms that is retained in modern European music, although with important distinctions. Whereas the work of classical pieces is most often considered to be within the score (various performers being interpreters who bring out new aspects of the piece), the work of the story is thought to be within its performance. The hub of creativity (as in making the work) of jazz is located in performance (conversely, in European music the performer is most often charged with following the written intentions of the composer).

‘totality’ of versions being sounded together, corresponding to one another but remaining distinct, would present us with a cacophonous complexity, not only rich in discrete detail but one in which each re-telling is cast in the refracting light of those with which it lays. This entails a markedly different idea of storytelling in jazz, and of how individual performances (or layers of work) relate. Martin Williams’s (1992) narrative of problem-solving jazz greats whose rhythmic innovations ‘surpass’ and supplant those of their predecessor, and the linear coherence much-prized by Gunther Schuller (1958) are, to an extent, contained in the heterophonic model but their linear approaches fail to reciprocate this.

The story rests on the principles of repetition and incompleteness. A storyteller will come to an end in his tale but the nature of the form is that the story is kept alive by the expectation of future renditions that is encoded in it. Storytelling is a communal enterprise, and no one teller is able to satisfactorily present all. The collected experiential fingerprints of collaborators are held up as the vintage of a story. Stories are open-ended and are told in a manner that will allow them to be repeated by other tellers, who inevitably light up novel vistas of them purely by fact of the particularity of experience and storytelling tools (instrumental and technical limitations and advantages, for example). Moreover, we find that the partialness fosters an environment in which the various contributions can co-exist. The lack of determinacy, the active nurture of distinction is crucial to understanding the communal collaborations that emerge from these forms. The ruggedness of this layering of a multitude of individual grains is a feature rather than something to be resolved. It is not merely a story’s orality, its being passed on from ‘mouth to mouth’ that is important but the fact that it allows for, indeed demands the individual

expressive qualities of those mouths.²⁵ The way the storyteller tells the story is not something added after the story has already been constructed, as we see in musical works of the modern European tradition. His expression, his particular *way* of delivering the story, its urgency or lethargy, whether he meanders in loquacious verbosity or whether the story is shot out in clipped bullet points, is absolutely integral to the words, phrases and sentences used. Moreover, the playful tension between his re-telling a communal work in his own voice and within his communicative capabilities is the prime site of creative activity. Benjamin's storyteller presents us with the model for expressive forms whose formative or 'unity-constitutive' moment is actually mimetic in nature.

The Benjaminian formulation of mimesis bears little resemblance to that which we find in Plato's disparagement of arts - the second order reproduction of the Idea or reality. Benjamin's twentieth century renovation of Aristotle's retrieval of the arts (and mimesis), presents *mimesis as best understood as an 'inclination' or 'attitude'* rather than a resultant reproduction (whether copy or 'original').²⁶ A mimetic approach is an empathetic attitude, and one in which the parties involved approach or adapt to each other in a manner that supports the retention of their

²⁵ See the following chapter for a discussion of the orality of jazz, in light of its dependence on records.

²⁶ Mimesis as used by Benjamin and Adorno is notoriously difficult to understand and its interpretation by subsequent scholars tends to add to the confusion. However Bed Paudyal's (2009) identification of five senses mimesis used by Adorno is useful for orientation. In *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, Max Paddison (1997) appears to lean towards the more anthropological connotations, presenting it as a version of mimicry, an adaptation towards the hostile environment as a form of protection (there is an interesting discussion to be had regarding the use of mimicry in black expression – minstrelsy and certain types of signifying). However, in a more considered recent essay, 'Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression' he comes much closer to the reading presented here (2011, p. 134-5). See also Gary Peters (2009), in what is by far the most engaged recent account of mimesis in improvised music. He perhaps overstates (and confuses) the case when he writes, 'Adorno's aesthetic theory promotes a mimeticism that... has nothing whatever to do with imitating or copying that which is already given' (p. 86), nevertheless the processual dimensions and ethical connotations of the concept are effectively emphasised.

particularities. Here a subject can show affinity with another without being dominated or having to deny difference. There is a yielding by both parties but the retention of difference is always in the foreground of their relations. It can show how understanding can be made without the need to hack off aspects that fail to fit what we already know. Encountering collaborative creation such as we see in storytelling and in jazz, we are shown ‘mimetic comportment’ in action. A ‘sensuously receptive, expressive and communicative mode of behaviour between living beings who intimately adapt to each other’ (Albrecht Wellmer, quoted in Paddison, 2011, p.139).

It could be argued that the challenge of artistic creation in jazz is to find the means to retell (often) established ‘stories’²⁷ and to play along in a manner that retains one’s particular features and idiosyncrasies. The work is in developing technique, a way of communicating (responding and playing along with), that does the least amount of damage to personal distinction. The play between the musician and the collective he belongs, that is the creative tension that occurs through demanding an individual retain their voice as they engage in communal work, is key.²⁸ This is by no means to suggest a static, unreflective position which is established and to which the musician stubbornly clings. As will be discussed below, the listening, or pedagogical, experience of jazz is crucial to the formation of a musician’s signature. Moreover, it is to be expected that this dialogue continues throughout a musician’s career. However, it is being argued here that the productive

²⁷ Here ‘stories’ is meant to refer, broadly, to nodes in which ‘experiential energy’ of shared meaning converge. Also see Stephen Henderson’s (1973) *Understanding Black Poetry*.

²⁸ What is being suggested needs to be distinguished from the liberal democratic ideal of individuals doing what they please as long as they ensure not to impinge on the freedom of others.

tension between the nurture of personal distinction and commitment to communal work, is a creative catalyst and, in itself, an important story to be told.

Empathetic communication – the listener-collaborator

Jazz performance, perhaps to a greater extent than we find in the modern European tradition, sees the distinctive characteristics of a musician play a prominent role in the making of work. A musician's disposition, the limitation and asset of a musician's physicality and experience (both musical and otherwise), guides their approach to the musical material. Their personal quirks often provide unmistakable identification and this, in turn, is a hallmark of jazz 'interpretation'. In the European tradition, interpretation can mean to reproduce (critically), to re-assemble or 'imitate' the work; in jazz to interpret means to make the work afresh.²⁹ Although Coltrane's 'Body and Soul'³⁰ is retelling the standard, the gap bridged in his performance is not from the score, or from an original idea contained in the Johnny Green composition. 'Body and Soul' the standard does not coincide with the composition of the same name. It takes in the original melody and lyrics but most importantly refers to the heterophonia of contribution from Louis Armstrong and his orchestra in 1930 through to Cassandra Wilson's 1991 rendition and beyond. Borrowing from Stephen Henderson (1973), the standard is best viewed as a site of 'massive concentration' of

²⁹ In an intriguing couple of entries in his *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, Adorno contemplates the relationship between acting and music performance. The implication is that the individual is subordinated and in service to the idea of the work (of which the score is considered the most reliable source). The reason why the performer is able to convey ideas that are often beyond their comprehension is to do with their ability to 'imitate the melodic-gestural aspect of language' or of music (p. 159). He writes, 'To the extent that musical notation is not simply a sign system, but rather a model of imitation, analysis must uncover the intended object of imitation, as yet locked within the text; but imitating it still remains the task of reproduction' (p. 81).

³⁰ I am thinking of the 1960 version recorded for the album *Coltrane's Sound* but, of course, this would apply to any other.

significance that is amplified with each re-telling.³¹ In it is contained Chu Berry and Roy Eldridge's exploration of its emotive connotations (Berry's mournful opening shredded by Eldridge's double-time romp); Dexter Gordon's characteristic mining of associative meaning taking in the lyrical themes of lost love and the body as well as melodic fragments from *Giant Steps*³²; Holiday's moulding of the words 'body and soul'; Eddie Jefferson's vocalese tribute to Coleman Hawkins; the 1969 Archie Shepp version that appears to play on the absurd sentimentality of the standard, slipping out of the overblown romance into a sublimity that is also tugged upon; Betty Carter's 'Body and Soul/Heart and Soul' medley that explores similar ideas, and many other contributions.

There is an imperative in jazz to make the standard, that is to tell the story, within one's own particularities, both physical and perspectival. A musician uses the tools at his disposal, often turning apparent limitations to his advantage. Charles Mingus was by most accounts a bass virtuoso, yet the timbre and register of the instrument makes its role as soloist particularly challenging. The double bass mumbles and groans, but it also chuckles and twitters. Mingus, aided by his considerable abilities as a vocalist, tailor-makes an approach that plays to these qualities. Along with developing virtuoso dexterity across the range of the instrument, he utilised vocal-like articulation, juxtaposing his bebop with blues-imbued speech that, perhaps, is closer to his vocal contribution than what an

³¹ This calls to mind Adorno's idea concerning a performance of a modern European work always falling short as it will fail to include all the possible connotations contained in the work. Does Coltrane's interpretation of 'Body and Soul' create, that is, add to the original work? Adorno would argue that his work was already contained in the idea of the piece.

³² This is referring specifically to the 1978 live recording, featuring George Cables (piano), Rufus Reid (bass), and Eddie Gladden (drums). See Folio and Brinkman (2011) for analysis, particularly pages 45-6.

instrument most often has to offer.³³ Both the limitations and the tools that Mingus had nurtured shape his contributions. Alongside the “homemade” technique³⁴ that musicians develop, lived experience, both personal and communal, plays a central role. This may appear a somewhat banal point. We expect works to be reflective of their authors. Yet, this experiential fingerprint is a central concern in creating jazz work. A modern European composer (and indeed performer) will imbue the piece with her character, even if her intentions are to the contrary. However, for the jazz musician the maintenance of this distinction is the focus of the creative process rather than a (tolerated or embraced) by-product. For Iyer (2004), this is perhaps the most interesting of all the stories we find in jazz. He writes, ‘Musicians tell their stories, but not in the traditional linear narrative sense; an exploded narrative is conveyed through a holistic musical personality or attitude. [...] Kinesthetics, performativity, personal sound, temporality – all these traces of embodiment generate, reflect, and refract stories into innumerable splinters and shards. Each one of these fragments is “saying something”’ (p. 402). It could be argued that the most satisfying performances often display competence in ‘making the changes’ and exhibit high levels of technical ability,³⁵ but they will always allow the musician’s own way of doing things to be brought to the fore. As Benjamin (1992) writes of storytelling, ‘traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel’ (p. 91).

³³ Eric Dolphy when on bass clarinet tends to use a similar mixture of his idiosyncratic bebop and vocal articulation. It is interesting to contrast this technique with that he uses on flute.

³⁴ Jessica Williams (1998) referring to Thelonious Monk’s technique. Available from <http://www.jessicawilliams.com/currents/monk.html> [10 July 2014]

³⁵ Technique is a tricky word to use here, as in a sense technique is the key, however it is the ‘homemade’ variety that is of importance. Technical ability should also include the ways of effectively contributing while playing to (and with) one’s strengths and limitations.

The standard is sunk ‘into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again’ (p. 91). This two-way movement is crucial, and in a sense considering experience and the communicating of experience separately is misleading. Benjamin writes ‘the more completely [the story is] integrated into [the listener’s] own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later’ (p. 90). This needs to be understood not metaphorically but corporeally and pedagogically – the way to become a jazz player is to immerse yourself in it.³⁶ The storyteller and jazz musician are listeners. Benjamin writes that ‘he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself’ (p. 91). And this calls to mind the often-quoted anecdote concerning Charlie Parker’s apprenticeship. The saxophonist, apparently, spent months listening and playing along to Lester Young 78s. He is reported to have ‘played them white’ through repeated listens, and would alter the speed at which they were played, transforming Young’s languid tenor into something of the effervescence Parker’s alto is renowned for (Brown, 2010, p. 100). Similarly, pianist and educator Lennie Tristano would insist on his students being able to sing along to improvisations as the primary part of their training. Students tell of being encouraged to spend as much time as was necessary listening to jazz recordings, not only, or primarily, to learn the melody and harmony of a piece, but in order to ‘get inside the head’ of the musician and to ‘live the solo’ (Shim, 2007, p. 135). Through listening, the music becomes the musicians’ own. And this listening experience is an important story to be shared.³⁷

³⁶ Listening to jazz, and this is true particularly for musicians and other contributors, seems to require both the absorption Benjamin prescribes *and* what Adorno (2002) describes as structural listening.

³⁷ There is interesting work to be done exploring Benjamin’s storytelling listener alongside Adorno’s structural and regressive listener. Keeping in mind the retrospective from which Benjamin brings us the portrait of the storyteller, his work provides us with an important alternative to Adorno’s two

The challenge of jazz is to find means to share in storytelling, to play along, and repeat (often) established ‘stories’. The work is in finding ways to participate in the tradition, in a manner that allows fidelity to one’s own particularities. There is significant productive tension between wanting to tell the story and wanting to tell it in one’s own voice. The desire to share in the tradition and the urge to retain one’s own voice in the process is where the work of a jazz musician is centred. This mimetic attitude is a feature of all artistic pursuit but comes into sharp focus when considering the story and jazz. In fact, it may be that in oral traditions this mimetic negotiation is a definitive aspect of its construction (the aspect of making art that is usually associated with rational thought). The mimetic attitude in jazz, storytelling, and other collaborative forms, may be the ‘unity-constitutive’ moment. While it is wise to keep in mind that ‘The Storyteller’ is a retrospective account of a traditional oral practice, its usefulness for understanding the collaborative, inter-generational nature of jazz music creation is clear. We are shown that what is being shared are not mere words, objectively reported happenings but experience. ‘The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale’ (1992, p. 87). Indeed in jazz, contained in the directive ‘tell *your* story’, is the assumption that it is the tradition the musician is making their own.

listening types. Similarly, Alessandro Bertinetto’s (2012) recent critique of George Lewis (1996) and Iyer’s (2004) notion of an improvisational or creative listener throws up questions around where the work in jazz is done, and demands a response, particularly when read alongside Adorno’s notes on musical reproduction.

Social significance, silence and sound

Social significance

The lack of social context in the writing of traditionalist analysts such as Gunther Schuller and Martin Williams is easy to overstate. Alongside what Robert Walser (1995) has described as ‘classicizing’ strategies, such as the propensity to take the single melodic line solo as the locus of analysis, we need to acknowledge that these writers were vocal in arguing a case for jazz as a distinctive form, possessing peculiarities that warrant a dedicated scholarship. Schuller (1986) must be commended for his painstaking efforts to give prominence to African retentions and the specifically African American features that are shown to evolve from the interaction of African and European material and sensibilities. Both he and Williams (1992) emphasise the importance of rhythm, rather than harmony, to understanding both the internal logic of pieces, and the development of the genre (Williams builds his entire history of jazz material around musicians’ solving of rhythmic conundrums left by their predecessors). That said, we are struck by the sense that jazz is made party to an approach most likely not even suited to the rich complexity and difference of the European tradition. While the African American community and its surrounding social context is touched upon by both, there is little acknowledgement of the incongruity of a largely unreflective adaptation of European thought to talk about African and African American musical characteristics.

When one reads of Schuller’s belief that ‘[t]he history of jazz gives every indication of following a parallel course, although in an extraordinarily condensed form... [of a] five-hundred-year-old musical idea: the notion of thematic and

structural unity' (Schuller 1989, pp. 98, 95) it is hard not to question the scholar's appreciation of jazz's differences. The inconvenience that jazz's social context presents his approach is palpable when he writes, 'evolving from humble beginnings that were sometimes hardly more than sociological manifestations of a particular American milieu, [jazz] has developed as an art form that not only possesses a unique capacity for individual and collective expression, but in the process of maturing has gradually acquired certain intellectual properties' (p. 95). Similarly, his analytical method reflects this desire for jazz to achieve emancipation from its social context. He writes in the preface of a recent edition of *The Swing Era*, 'I imagined myself coming to jazz without any prior knowledge or preconceptions and beginning tabula rasa, to listen to the recordings – systematically and comprehensively. ... [T]he basic premise was... to have heard *every recording* of any artist, systematically/chronologically in order to trace accurately their developments and achievements' (emphasis in original, 1991, pp. ix-x).

It is important to clarify that the argument being made here is not concerning a harmonious union between the form and the community from which is thought to have emerged. Moreover, although not irrelevant, the claims of the underlying importance of the community are not to do with a social variant of political 'commitment' in which people actively participate in conscious acts of solidarity. From Ralph Ellison's mourning the changing face of jazz and the loss of 'public jazz dance' which he considered 'a third institution of [African American] life' (1995, p. 243) to Archie Shepp's acknowledgment of the difficulties the black avant garde has in making connections with the community (Porter, 2002, p. 206), there is an awareness that the music had developed in ways not compatible with the black

working class. Ellison detects a thinning of the form with the advent of modern jazz due to its sacrifice of the ‘feeling of communion which was the true meaning of public jazz dance’ (1995, p. 244). While Shepp’s experiences as part of the Black Arts Movement present an example of the difficulties that face a socially-committed avant-garde. And yet, the fact that community holds such importance both in writing and praxis attests to many musicians’ commitment to it, and the role it plays in the making of jazz work. Moreover despite attempts, in which Williams and Schuller participate, to minimise the importance of extra-musical involvement and influences, the heterogeneity of the jazz form is shown by others (Benson, 2006; Grandt, 2004; Jones [Baraka], 2002; Murray, 1976) to be a distinctive characteristic of the music, crucial for any depth of understanding. In contrast to the model borrowed from the European tradition, and in spite of the dwindling opportunities for dancing and other traditional social functions, jazz even at its most esoteric cannot be considered autonomous. As will be explored in more depth in the following chapter, artistic autonomy, despite the discourse that accompanied the move of art music away from its earlier functional roles within the Church and the aristocracy, was never complete. European art moved from dependence upon patronage to reliance on the market. Perhaps the important difference between jazz and European art music is that community is proclaimed an important influence in creative jazz work.³⁸

It is interesting that for Coltrane the dishonest solo would be one that sacrifices its potential for social significance. To merely ‘make the changes’, to

³⁸ The following chapter will explore the attempts to ‘autonomize’ jazz in greater depth. Even in classical music this autonomy is false. While musicians may have become less dependent on the church and aristocracy, they became embroiled in market capitalism in which their social involvement is dictated, to a certain extent, by the needs and preferences of the middle classes.

cobble together a ‘coherent’ musical narrative, or worse still, to invent a ‘story-like’ solo is not something Coltrane felt comfortable in doing. As Iyer (2004) writes, ‘For Coltrane, telling musical lies might have meant playing in an overly self-conscious, premeditated, or constructed fashion that rang false to his ears’ (p. 395).³⁹ We find that ‘making the changes’ only becomes legitimate when re-cast as one of those ‘black stories’. In a letter to *Down Beat* editor, Don De Micheal, we find that Coltrane considered community as one of the central tenets of jazz and black expression. In an astute statement on the social significance of black music, the saxophonist refers variably to the ‘musical community’, the ‘hostile communities’ within which the ‘founding fathers... produced this music’ and the ‘whole face of the globe [being] our community’ (quoted in Brown, 2010, p. 17). What is most striking about his remarks is how important these communities appear to be to Coltrane. Apart from these specific references to communal expression throughout the letter, Coltrane speaks as a communal subject, using the pronouns, ‘we’ and ‘our’ rather than ‘I’ and ‘mine’. Commenting on Aaron Copland’s *Music and Imagination*, he draws a clear distinction between the musician with recourse to a community, and the ‘American classical or semi-classical composer who has the problem, as Copland sees it, of not finding himself an integral part of the musical community’ (ibid.). There is an implication here that making music, or at least, making music within the jazz idiom is inextricably bound up with extra-musical ‘means of association’.

Silence and sound

³⁹ My reading confirms that of Iyer but ‘telling lies’ has an alternative connotation based on the fable of the Signifying Monkey. See Gates, 1988, 56-7.

Benjamin shows that storytelling can be highly contagious, and this reminds us that one need not be African or American to tell ‘them black stories’. Being a receptive listener is enough. The social meaning contained in the music is neither an appendage nor something that can be bled from it before consumption by non-black or non-American audiences⁴⁰. White blues musician Robert Fox (1996) writes that the ‘blues and spirituals could not be torn from the connective tissue of bigotry and mistreatment. I cannot listen to Leadbelly’s “Bourgeois Blues” without remembering his being transplanted to Washington, D. C. by the Lomaxes only to be denied an apartment on account of race’ (p. 634). What Leadbelly experienced is shared in the music, and, as we have explored above, this experience has the ability to become that of its audience. Where there is discomfort in ‘passing it off as their own,’ the audience-contributor can report it as one who has borne witness (Benjamin, 1992, p. 91).⁴¹

The various types of ‘community’ Coltrane presented in his letter to Don De Micheal take in both people who share of the distinct socio-historical heritage of the African American, *and* those who through their appreciation of the associated expression ‘report’ the experience, passing it on to future collaborators.⁴² We should not think it contradictory that Coltrane states his allegiance to a black community

⁴⁰ Although some may argue this is just what happened during the 1930s with the popularity of Paul Whiteman and other Europeanised formulations of jazz.

⁴¹ See Robert Switzer (2001) for an insightful and, at times moving account, of the discomfiture of being a white blues contributor (pp. 59-60). See also Robert Fox’s (1996) essay ‘Coming of Age with the Blues.’ As discussed in the introduction I have made little attempt to engage with work that problematizes the assumed ‘blackness’ (or the American-ness) of jazz. It is an assumption of the study that would need a separate piece of work to adequately address. However, this present argument, in a sense, corroborates studies that seek to dissipate the exclusivity of the notion of ‘Black experiential energy’ (Henderson, 1973, p. 44).

⁴² This is not to suggest that the stories are passed on unaltered. Please see discussion regarding the story being embodied by each new teller.

and, in the same breath, a more inclusive global one.⁴³ Ralph Ellison and Amiri Baraka, who find little else to agree on, also present this contradiction in their work. Both are influenced by W. E. B. Du Bois's ([1903] 1994) notion of 'double consciousness', seeing the African American at once through the eyes of broader society (as 'a problem' or categorised into stereotypes such as the minstrel favourites, 'Sambo' or 'Nat'), as well as set apart from the mainstream, in a 'communal underground' (Pavlić, 2002).⁴⁴ And most pertinent to the discussion at hand, both place the African American at the core of American life. In the introduction of the 1999 edition of *Blues People*, Baraka, in an adjustment of the proto-black nationalist position the book was written from, writes: 'there is one thing that I have learned, since the original writing of *Blues People*, that I feel must be a critical new emphasis not understood completely by me in the earlier text. That is, that *the Africanisms are not limited to Black people, but indeed, American Culture, itself, is shaped by and includes a great many Africanisms*' (p. x-xi, original emphasis).

The implications of positioning African American history at the heart of modern narratives have been discussed in the introduction, and this outlook is repeated in relation to music by musicologist Susan McClary (2000), who argues that the blues and its lineage are of central importance, and should have a prominent place, in 'any account of twentieth-century Western music' (p. 34). Moreover, showing an awareness of the different kinds of community that Coltrane touches on,

⁴³ Paul Austerlitz opens his *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race and Humanity* with other a list of other musicians who simultaneously hold these two positions (2005, p. ix).

⁴⁴ Minstrelsy stereotypes: Sambo was the subservient, infantile house servant whereas Nat was the angry, trouble-maker. On another note, Robert Stepto's (1991) 'ascent' and 'immersion' narratives, touched on in the previous chapter, also intersect with modernist concerns with the fractured identity of the individual.

she writes, 'When LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka] published his powerful book *Blues People* in 1963, his title referred to the African American musicians who fashioned the blues out of their particular historical conditions and experience. Yet a music scholar of a future time might well look back on the musical landscape of the 1900s and label us all "blues people": those who inhabited a period dominated by blues and its countless progeny' (pp. 32-3). The following comment from Alan Lomax is perhaps even more astute: 'Although this has been called the age of anxiety, it might better be termed the century of the blues, after the modern song style that was born sometime around 1900 in the Mississippi Delta. The blues has always been a state of being as well as a way of singing. Leadbelly once told me, "When you lie down at night, turning from side to side, and you can't be satisfied no way you do, Old Man Blues got you." A hundred years ago only blacks in the Deep South were seized by the blues. Now the whole world begins to know them' (quoted in Switzer, 2001, p. 40).

The blues and its associated forms are, in a sense, documents of modern trauma - conflict, alienation, disenfranchisement, and shock are all catalogued in its tradition. While the backgrounds against which Walter Benjamin and Eddie "Son" House present the 'fragile human body' are markedly different (the various calibrations of technological assault on one hand and the apocalyptic wide, barren plains of a miscarried harvest on the other), the degradation of experiential quality, and the schism within and between individuals are common concerns. Benjamin had witnessed '[a] generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny,

fragile human body' (Benjamin, 1992, p. 84). Betraying a similar vulnerability, House tells of the devastation of failed crops in Depression era America.

The dry spell blues have fallen, drove me from door to door.

Dry spell blues have fallen, drove me from door to door.

The dry spell blues have put everybody on the killing floor.

[...]

Hard luck's on everybody, and many people are through.

Hard luck's on everybody, and many people are through.

Now beside the shower, ain't got a help but you.

[...]

It's a dry old spell everywhere I been.

Oh, it's a dry old spell everywhere I been.

I believe to my soul this old world is bound to end.

Well, I stood in my back yard, wrung my hands and screamed.

I stood in my back yard, I wrung my hands and screamed.

And I couldn't see nothing, couldn't see nothing green.

(Eddie Son House, quoted in Henderson, 1973, pp. 113-4)

The human being, whether European urbanite or post-Reconstruction era African American, is exposed and at the mercy of forces that lie outside his control. The anxiety is palpable in both. The spoken word of storytelling retreats into the novel which perfectly isolates author from his reader, side-stepping the problems of

communicability and compounding the silence. Whereas the blues and spiritual propagate, and in their collaborative play with sound and word, deliver a statement of modern discontent from the perspective of the African American.

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno writes of the irresponsibility of artistic practise that attempted to neutralise the trauma of modern living through ‘cheerfulness’. ‘The injustice committed by all cheerful art, especially by entertainment, is probably an injustice to the dead; to accumulated, speechless pain’ (1997, p. 40). Although he was not referring specifically to black forms, his complaint finds a partial answer in Frederick Douglass’s 1845 memoir.⁴⁵ The black statesman writes, ‘I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart... At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness’ (2004, p. 44). This loosening of meaning from its related expression gives us a clue as to a possible reason black communal expression has thrived.⁴⁶ Although this is a crude orientation, Douglass’s assertion that slaves ‘would sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone’ points us in a promising direction. The prying away of word from meaning or sentiment that is implied has been named as a form of ‘signifying’.

⁴⁵ Although the passage from which this quote is extracted is about ‘black art,’ Adorno is not referring to African or African American art but to the tendency toward this mood in the content of the radical art of his day.

⁴⁶ There may be something of this in the importance of humour in Jewish culture.

Signifying is a term that refers to a plethora of communicative and interpretative practises, including goading, parodying and ‘playing the dozens’.⁴⁷ But it also can refer to the exploration in language of hyperbole and understatement, and more broadly, it can refer to the play between word and meaning.⁴⁸ According to Gates (1988), who has been instrumental in formalising an understanding of the associated practices, the ‘signal difference’ that the slaves perform through subverting meaning and text is a type of signifying. Presenting ‘a figurative statement as a literal statement’ the chorus is able to trick or elude those not familiar with the device. This play of ‘repetition and difference, or repetition and reversal’ (p. 63) is of crucial importance in understanding jazz, and is one of the most popular of the plethora of signifying devices – for instance, Ingrid Monson’s *Saying Something* is much indebted to it.

Yet, alongside this disruption between signifier and signified, Douglass’s chorus also performs what can be described as a slide between music, vocal gesture, and word/meaning. Drawing from Douglass, Gates points out that significance can be found as readily in ‘sound as [in] sense’ (p. 67).⁴⁹ That is to say that extra-linguistic vocalisation is as important in conveying meaning as designative language. As Douglass writes, ‘The thought that came up, came out – if not in the word, in the sound’ (2004, p. 43). African American musical forms, including those that are, by

⁴⁷ ‘Playing the dozens’ involves the trading of insults in a (usually) light-hearted display of linguistic prowess.

⁴⁸ See the chapter ‘The Signifying Monkey and Language of Signifyin(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning’ (Gates, 1988, pp. 44-88) and Stephen Henderson’s introduction to *Understanding of the New Black Poetry* (1973, pp. 3-69).

⁴⁹ Paul Gilroy (1993) is even more emphatic. ‘Music, the grudging gift that supposedly compensated slaves not only for their exile from ambiguous legacies of practical reason but for their complete exclusion from modern political society, has been refined and developed so that it provides an enhanced mode of communication beyond the petty power of words - spoken or written’ (p.76).

and large, instrumental, such as jazz, make great use of vocalisations such as moans, screaming, laughter and sighs. These sounds, while certainly a response to something, tend not to *represent* anything.⁵⁰ My sigh is not often a copy of someone else's nor is it an attempt to replicate the sound of wind or an air conditioning unit. And although I may attempt to write out in longhand, in words and phrases, what the sigh is, it is not likely that the resulting lyric will surpass what I am able to convey through the sigh itself. Moreover, the sigh is able to imbue words with indescribable precision. For instance, the word 'heart', sung-sighed (or merely sighed) opens up a whole story in a way the same word sung (or spoken) without any such expression cannot. Drawing from unpublished work of the late Tom Lamont, Robert Switzer (2001) writes, 'Sound is "turn[ed] against speech,"... until very often the words as such become impossible to understand (even for the intended audience)' (p. 54). Lamont goes on to tell of the unintelligibility of master blues musician Charlie Patton, whose verse was difficult to decipher even for fellow musicians. Sam Chatmon says of him, 'he just brings that song out like there's somebody choking [him] to death,' while Son House says 'A lot of Charlie's words... are so twisted that you can be sitting right [next to] him and you can't hardly understand him' (quoted in Switzer, p. 54). And yet, it could be argued that what the words lose in designative certainty, they gain in expressive precision. Words grasp bluntly what expressive sound pinpoints but is unable to name.

We find that these vocalisations at times slide into components more closely associated with formal music practise. Listen to how Holiday bends the word 'thrill' on the opening phrase of the 1949 recording of 'You're My Thrill,' and how

⁵⁰ Interestingly, pain and sexual pleasure tend to share these oral gestures.

Mingus's bass seems to sigh through a cascading pizzicato figure at the opening of 'Orange Was the Colour of her Dress (Then Silk Blue)'. It sounds as though the exhalation has been aurally pixelated. The sigh has been given certain analytic possibilities hitherto not ascribed to it. While Mingus was by no means averse to using his voice to sigh, moan and grunt, and there are arguably better examples of Mingus's ability to vocalise the bass, this example draws attention to how these gestures can make their way, albeit congealed and (in danger of being) stripped of significance, into the realm of traditional analysis. Mingus makes extensive use of a very similar figure in the performance of 'Fleurette Africaine' on the album *Money Jungle*. Drummer Max Roach makes comparable use of 'embodied' gesture in a four note, quietly irregular drum pattern, suggesting something between heartbeat and sigh. What is being sketched here is a major constructive process in black expression. That is to say that this play between expressive sound, music and word constitutes a significant portion of the making of jazz works.⁵¹ There is a play between blunt designation and indescribable precision. Expressive sound slips into word and music, becoming music and word to varying degrees, allowing us to share what we are unable to talk about. It is not only notes that are bent in the music, experience is too, and appears to the listener as though through a kaleidoscope, fractured and obscured but containing sharp repetitive detail. The heterophonic chorus at the start of the chapter is a useful metaphor for these currents between sound, music and sense within individual solo and performance, and it provides a useful description of how the tradition as a whole can be understood. In it we encounter voices in which lyric

⁵¹ The opportunity that this slide presents jazz commentary and analysis will be discussed in the conclusion.

and melody are garbled, alongside the more strident; groans which slip into pure tone and those which on closer inspection reveal words; we hear moans and sighs that are bent this way and that, and represent a sort of rudimentary melody. It is as if the experience, that which is being conveyed, is made speak-able by being broken up and obscured. Experience is communicable but by ‘circumambulation’ rather than the designation verbal discourse usually demands.

The significance of sound, and meaning in sound, in jazz has been explored most eloquently by poet and scholar Fred Moten (2003) in his path-breaking *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. In contrast to the approaches of Williams and Schuller, but clearly committed to engaging with the music itself as much as the ‘extramusical negotiations that [make] it and sustain it’ (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 89), in his work we find an invaluable exploration of the slide between word and sound. In his work we come across a reconsideration of the significance of the voice in the aesthetics of jazz only to problematize the designative advantages it is usually ascribed. Yet, despite the splintering of signification we encounter in the word/meaning slide, and perhaps because of this opening up of meaning, we find that ‘oral gesture’ in music opens up countless sites of shared meaning. The voice is used to convey that which is often considered indescribable in its slide away from the designating lyric. Through its gestures it is able to communicate what Adorno calls the ‘accumulated and speechless pain’ of loss. Sharing a scene from the funeral of his favourite aunt, Moten writes,

Ms. Rosie Lee Seals rose up in church, out from the program, and said, ‘Sister Mary Payne told me that if she died she wanted me to give a *deep moan* at her

funeral.’ And, at that moment, in her Las Vegas-from-Louisiana accent, condition of impossibility of a universal language, condition of possibility of a universal language, burying my auntie with music at morning time, where moaning renders mourning wordless (the augmentation and reduction of or to our to oa releasing more than what is bound up in the presence of the word) and voice is dissonanced and multiplied by metavoice, Sister Rosie Lee Seals mo’ned. New word, new world (p. 211, italics as in original).

In an earlier passage, Moten offers a possible explanation.⁵² He writes, ‘Words don’t go there: this implies a difference between words and sounds; it suggests that words are somehow constrained by their implicit reduction to the meanings they carry – meanings inadequate to or detached from the objects or states of affairs they would envelop. What’s also implied is an absence of inflection; a loss of mobility, slippage, bend; a missing accent or affect; the impossibility of a slur or crack and the *excess* – rather than loss – of meaning they imply’ (p. 42, italics as in original). Clearly, what is being referred to here is discursive language, not the gestured lyrics of Billie Holiday, and we should not take this statement as an indictment of the spoken or written word (*In the Break* is littered with both examples and writing that explicate the opportunities that the spoken and written word presents). Yet, it may be that in their rescue of the aspects rejected by designative language, in the inflection and bend, the vacillation and inability to settle on meaning and sound, blues and jazz have found ways to communicate experience in the face of the ineffability of

⁵² This was in a discussion of Charles Lloyd’s remark that ‘Words don’t go there’ when asked by an interviewer to comment on a musical piece of his. This needs to be taken as one side of a conversation that Moten is having regarding the inadequacy and opportunities presented by the written and spoken word, particularly in its relation with music.

language Benjamin and Adorno highlight. Nathaniel Mackey reminds us, via Moten, of Anthony Heilbut's insistence that 'The essence of the gospel style is a wordless moan. Always these sounds render the indescribable implying, "*Words can't begin to tell you, but maybe moaning will.*"' (quoted in Moten, p. 194, my emphasis). We could say the same with regards to Albert Ayler's shrieks on 'Ghosts,' Abbey Lincoln, Mingus and Coltrane's screaming chorus of the early sixties, and the (near) crack in the voices of Holiday and Miles Davis.⁵³

Conclusion: Empathetic scholarship

A key insight that has been brought to the fore from the preceding discussion is that the boundaries policing music and discourse are routinely trespassed in black expression. We have seen how the slide between oral gesture, music, word and meaning presents us with musical forms that are most comfortable in vacillation. Yet within these forms, creative and social significance can survive (even thrive), and are usefully open-ended. Writing from a broadly modern European perspective, the opportunity that music's equivocality presents the scholar has been deftly presented by philosopher Andrew Bowie (2007).⁵⁴ 'It is when we don't understand and have to leave behind our certainties that we can gain the greatest insights. Given that this

⁵³ On Ayler see Moten, (2003, p. 22). I specifically have in mind the 'Protest' second segment of 'Triptych' on *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* (1960), Mingus's wails on 'Haitian Fight Song' (1957) and Coltrane's solo on 'Sun Ship' (recorded 1965, released 1971). Hear the assured fragility of Davis's (1956) playing on 'It Never Entered My Mind' (the performance on *Workin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*).

⁵⁴ Bowie's work has been on European art music but has declared his interest in jazz. He writes, 'Although the experience of jazz improvisation has revealed itself in the course of writing to be more fundamental to what I have to say than I originally realised, I do not give a specific account of it, preferring to take up those aspects of philosophy concerned with music which relate to the intuitions I have gained from playing jazz' (2007, p. 14).

situation is in one sense almost constitutive for music, which we never understand in a definitive discursive manner, it is worth taking seriously the idea that such non-understanding might be philosophically very significant' (p. 11). This is affirmed by Fred Moten, who in an interview with Charles Rowell argues that, 'even though music is not constrained by meaning, no one would ever say that music doesn't bear content or that music doesn't have something to say' (Rowell and Moten, 2004, p. 962). The absence or lack of semantic necessity may be the reason that some of the most perceptive writing on jazz has come from black literature – Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, Baraka's *Dutchman* and 'War Memoir,' a poem by Bob Kaufmann, are just the very first few that came to mind. The freedom from conclusive judgement that is afforded creative writing allows these ruminations to play on musical themes, 'circumambulating' them, taking any number of attempts to answer, complement, 'base' and complete. Moreover, writers are able to meet jazz partway. Their musicality puts them in an empathetic position from which to approach the music. In being 'music-like', they are able to respond in a manner that eludes most scholarly discourse.

In literature we see attention is given to some of the 'microscopic musical details' (2004, p. 395) that Iyer highlights as well as an appreciation of the movement between expressive sound, connotation and music. For instance, Nathaniel Mackey's (1986) commentary on Al Green's falsetto, while not strictly about jazz, discusses the socio-aesthetic significance of vocal quality, timbre, incidentally providing a more satisfactory reply to Adorno's comments regarding Armstrong's castrati, and is augmented by Scott Saul's (2003) observation regarding the incongruity of a corpulent, cantankerous double bassist and his high pitched

wailing.⁵⁵ This shows an approach where the focus is not on individual solos, or performances or musicians, but has in sight from the start a network of associations which often takes minutiae and what are usually regarded as secondary musical components as points of departure. The challenge for the analyst attracted to the possibilities this approach offers is to develop methods that bring the disparate sources together in a manner that does not force them to identify, and similarly, is able to resist crude opposition, suggesting areas of shared significance without falling into ‘myth and magic.’ And yet how do we resist linearity and resolution ‘without resorting to unshapely mysticism?’ (Weinstein, 1997, p. 9).

The idea that we should look to jazz practice to find more appropriate means to study and write about it finds an early champion in a short essay by Norman Weinstein published in 1997. Reminiscent of Benjamin’s ease with drawing from the seemingly divergent sources of secularized theology, mysticism, Romantic aesthetics, and Marxist theory and praxis, Weinstein mines West African polytheism, African American aesthetics and cultural criticism in his appreciation and critical adaptation of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Rather than attempting to prise it open using often inappropriate analytical tools, an integrative approach is one which circles around its object, approaching it from various angles, working to understand and contribute to it on its own terms. What is most striking about Weinstein’s work is that in its appreciation of the Chicagoans, it performs a demonstration of this approach. At the start of the essay, Weinstein writes of his intended method: ‘to tell it in the spirit of their music: in fits and starts, discontinuously, shards of themes as the

⁵⁵ See Perennial Fashion (2000, pp. 276-278) for Adorno on this. For critique see ‘Signifyin(g) the Phallus: *Mo’ Better Blues* and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet’ (Gabbard, 1995, p. 104).

tapes keep rolling' (p. 5). True to this directive, we follow Weinstein's exploration from a discussion concerning the authenticity of wearing African kente cloth on stage to a depiction of the band's critical reappraisal of the minstrels favourite 'Oh! Suzanna', on through a segment on the responsibilities of the audience-collaborator/audience-consumer and the appropriateness of committed political acts within aesthetic and/or entertainment settings, recurring themes around Yoruba pantheon and a consideration of the opportunities and limitations of the metaphor as a principal tool of artistic creation and analysis.

There is a certain amount of creative intrepidity required to engage in such an approach to studying jazz. The contributor-scholar must propose, excavate and reconstruct connections, leaving them exposed. She would also need to resist the attempt to create too tight a weave while showing adequate justification of the assemblages or choruses reconstructed. Judgement must be shown and justification given in relation to which associations are deemed worthy of sustained and repeated attention (but perhaps this is no more than we should expect from all attempts to organise the elusive medium for discursive purposes). Weinstein also issues a caution regarding the contingency of his preferred metaphors, the kente weave, and the palimpsest (my own heterophonic chorus must be included here). It is imperative to keep in mind that however well integrated the layers, voices or strands of the weave seem, however convincing the choices, construction, and connections made, the 'story' drawn from these is an analytical construct. Yet, as Weinstein states, the 'model of using logic in a linear, well-argued fashion, to prove a "case"' (1997, p. 7) produces joints no more reliable than those of the approach being proposed here.

The job of the critic is to understand the music, Baraka tells us, and this is a much less hackneyed idea when one considers the history of jazz commentary thus far. Robert Walser (1995) writes that ‘overall, academics... seem increasingly drawn to “classicizing” strategies for legitimating jazz. Now, it seems natural enough that people who are trying to win more respect for the music they love should do so by making comparisons with the most prestigious music around, classical music. But the price of classicism is always loss of specificity, just as it has been the price of the canonic coherence of European concert music (the disparate sounds of many centuries, many peoples, many functions, many meanings all homogenized and made interchangeably “great”)’ (p. 169). As Walser points out, this is not a situation confined to jazz. Does traditional analysis usefully engage with the diversity and depth of the modern European tradition?⁵⁶ In response to John Tynan’s infamous indictment of a 1961 performance as ‘anti-jazz,’ Coltrane (in the company of fellow band member, Eric Dolphy) gives a response to the disparaging review: ‘The best thing a critic can do is to thoroughly understand what he is writing about and then jump in. That’s all he can do. I have even seen favorable criticism which revealed a lack of profound analysis, causing it to be little more than superficial. Understanding is what is needed. That is all you can do. Get all the understanding for what you’re speaking of that you can get. That way you have done your best’ (‘John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics’, 1962).

⁵⁶ Similarly Carolyn Abbate (2004) following Vladimir Jankelevitch, points out the limitations of the work-as-composition of the tradition, suggesting that ‘Musical sounds are made by labor. And it is in the irreversible experience of playing, singing, or listening that any meanings summoned by music come into being. Retreating to the work displaces that experience, and dissecting the work’s technical features or saying what it represents reflects the wish not to be transported by the state that the performance has engendered in us’ (2004, pp. 505-6).

Fred Moten (2003), who has provided what may well be the most empathetic academic reading of jazz works and themes to date, talks about his approach as one of preparation. His engagement with the musical form has produced a text that misshapes scholarly discourse, upsetting our expectations but ultimately leading us to consider not only the music and the heterogeneous complexity of (African) American life, but also hitherto unexplored possibilities (and limitations) of jazz studies. His is a performative approach to jazz studies which works almost as a contribution, another layer added to the narrative being reconstructed. In a manner that betrays his extra-scholarly interest in elasticity of word and meaning, Moten incorporates “‘musicked” speech and illegible words’ (p. 44) in the production of the multi-stranded, fractured, open-ended study.⁵⁷ Moten referred to this approach as one of preparation, of sharing: ‘In *In the Break* I refer to Eric Dolphy talking about preparing himself to play with Cecil Taylor: I’m trying to write in preparation, as well; maybe not to play with Cecil but to abide with his work better or more fully, to listen more carefully and creatively and critically. For me, this sense of writing as preparation or even anticipation constitutes something on the order of a mode of inquiry’ (Rowell and Moten, 2004, p. 956). As we have discussed earlier, this listening, this preparing to speak (think too, of the *Invisible Man* preparing for action by immersing himself in Louis Armstrong’s ‘Black and Blue’), is essential to being able to share stories and experience. Clearly, this is an approach that can only be attempted by scholars who have embarked on the mandatory listening experience that all jazz contributors are required to apprentice in. As Bowie reminds us, an approach that wishes to avoid ‘merely confirming the philosophical and

⁵⁷ See Moten’s (2009) collection of poetry, *B Jenkins*.

methodological presuppositions that one adheres to before engaging with music' needs to pay heed 'to the importance of learning to really to listen and play' (Bowie, 2007, pp. 11-12). The experience of that listening preparation will, perhaps, equip us with the ability to speak with Billie Holiday concerning the opportunities that the encoded 'partiality and incompleteness' of performance presents. Through listening to her, it may be that we are able to make the crack of her voice our own, allowing for academic work that is collaborative and willing to fail.

Chapter Four

Double Consciousness and the critical potential of jazz work

According to Adorno, autonomous works of art, by virtue of their peculiar ‘attuned outsider’ perspective, are ideally placed to provide a kind of social critique. Although implicated both socio-historically and aesthetically, in the advance of technological rationality (in fact, *because* they are so implicated), musical works are able to, merely through following the logic of their form, expose the unsatisfactory state of human relations within late capitalist society. Through their fidelity to tradition, and the internal logic with which musical material is re-formed, autonomous works have potential for providing insight into the problems that plague modern living. They are also able to present, through their form, an adumbration of a future non-coercive collectivity.

Jazz, too, is thought to embody ‘sedimented’ socio-history, although in *its* case, Adorno asks us to focus on its distribution and reception rather than its musical material, formal qualities and processes, the poverty of which, we are told, is testament to the music’s dedication to its affirmative role in consumer society. According to Adorno, the principles governing the making of jazz works have little to do with artistic expression but rather are to facilitate works being (re)produced, marketed and consumed with ease. He writes, ‘[j]azz is a commodity in the strict sense: its suitability for use permeates its production in terms none other than its marketability’ (Adorno, 1989/90, p. 48).

It could be argued, and Adorno more or less declares this, that the version of ‘jazz’ on which he is focused is one *appropriated* from the African American experience, in which heterophonia, collaboration and open-ended play are minimised, to draw to the fore values more in keeping with mainstream projects of profit-making and social control. If we, contra Adorno, focus on ‘real’ jazz, that is, jazz’s work, we find a form that bears little resemblance to the heteronomous slave to the culture industry Adorno characterises it as.¹ In fact, it may be that jazz work, which involves real-life human relations, as well as those we are able to decipher from the autonomised work-thing of the jazz record, can also present us with a model of alternative forms of social organisation. The possibility of a new source of critical activity demands our consideration. The present chapter will present an argument for how these distinctive modes of human relations have been able to evade ‘the “systematic” destruction of sensuous particulars’ (Witkin, 1998, p. 12), due to the ‘double consciousness’ of African American subjectivity. The ‘attuned outsiders’ view facilitates jazz’s potential for critique. Building on the socio-historical consideration of African American subjectivity in chapter one, I will show how it is essential to consider jazz within the specific historical and material conditions from which it emerged, that position it at an obtuse angle to radical music of the European tradition. The two can be shown to spotlight the same societal deficiency from markedly different perspectives.

¹ My meaning here is similar that of James Martin Harding (1995) and Fredric Jameson (2007), who are pointing to Adorno’s, alleged, lack of exposure to jazz of the African American variety. But rather than the issue being about race, I want to focus on the fact that the jazz as it appears above-ground, minimises its processual nature, and its socio-musical principles of structuration.

I will begin with an account of W. E. B. Du Bois's set of ideas concerning the unsettling, and yet potentially revelatory, sensation of 'looking at one's self through the eyes of others' (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2). 'Double consciousness' is undoubtedly the most influential framework for African American thought, encapsulating the African American condition in a manner that has inspired much further exploration in both creative and theoretical work. And yet, within jazz studies the term is often taken to narrowly denote the 'transculturation' and 'creolization' that has helped shape the music. Here, I will present a more comprehensive overview of double consciousness, highlighting the importance of the narrative of racial dehumanisation to Du Bois's formulation, in order to reveal the vital critical facet that jazz scholarship tends to miss. This will be followed by an exposition of the thesis concerning the critical potential of jazz. It will discuss the importance of functional autonomy to Adorno's formulation, echoing the argument presented in chapter one concerning restrictions imposed on the jazz critique by his 'deafness' to African American history. Invisibility (what Du Bois calls the 'Veil') and 'second sight' afforded by double consciousness are shown to facilitate the critical distance for jazz that movement away from functionality did for music of the modern European tradition.

Jazz and the 'feeling' of double consciousness

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a

peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2).

Gathered under the term 'double consciousness' is a group of historically determined ideas that assist our understanding of a distinct social and psychological predicament of the African American, as it works its way through the trauma of chattel slavery and wholesale disenfranchisement that was left in its wake. 'Double consciousness' suggests a range of states, possessions and situations involving various configurations of the conscious and subliminal (Hegelian 'unhappy consciousness' springs to mind, as does Adorno's own echoing use of the term), as well as suggesting a way to think through the inextricable ties minority groups have to the societal core. Yet Du Bois was dealing with a clearly delineated set of historical and material conditions in which the visible marker of race demanded from the bearer an awareness of externally imposed attributes attached to her 'blackness,' and the reaction they were likely to provoke. The socio-historical specificity is often glossed when the term is used within jazz studies which tend to focus on the idea of co-habitation (and at times, syncretisation) of two worlds, that of the African American and that of the mainstream American society from which it is estranged. Without diminishing the importance of cultural hybridity which readings of scholars such as Ingrid Monson (1996) and David Borgo (2004) highlight, I would like to explore a

more comprehensive understanding of ‘double consciousness,’ particularly in relation to African American expression and the potential it holds for critique.

The creolization of jazz, referring to interplay or synthesis of disparate cultural heritages, and specifically, to the heterogeneity of its musical sources, is accepted by all but the most Afrocentric of commentators. Amiri Baraka (2009), who writes that, ‘Afro-American art is an ideological reflection of Afro-American life and culture’ (p. 106), is also able to recognise that in jazz, ‘Afro-American use of African rhythm is...“integrated” with European musical conventions’ (p. 36). There is a broad acceptance by scholars, including those who advocate Afrological approaches, that the tradition has throughout its history drawn from a myriad of influences. The contest over jazz’s heritage is pervasive within the discipline, appearing in some form in almost every contribution. In a characteristically even-handed exploration of the centrality of miscegenation in the establishment and development of the tradition, Monson cautions against unreflective accounts of synthesis which inadvertently obscure and minimise African American experience. She writes, ‘The denial of difference in a cultural field such as jazz, in which African Americans have always been dominant, has often resulted in a failure to acknowledge the influence of African American cultural sensibilities on American society more broadly’ (p. 132). And yet, portrayal of early twentieth century New Orleans as a city teeming with ‘brass bands, singing street vendors, black string quartets playing classical European dances (schottisches, mazurkas, quadrilles) and ragtime, and a whole variety of others... [and] blues from the rag man’ (Hersch, 2008, p. 16), is more than romantic fantasy. John Gennari (2006) points out that African American culture is itself ‘multiracial, polyethnic and class-stratified’ (p. 10) – hybridity is an important facet

of black Western culture. The extemporaneous process of adoption, de-construction and re-assemblage of found articles is a defining feature of (African) American expression.

It is perhaps the significance of the ‘melting pot’ or ‘gumbo’ that constitutes the jazz tradition, which has led to interpretations of double consciousness that attach it to a nebulous multiculturalism, detracting from the significance of the modern narrative that Du Bois was reconstructing. Consider the following interpretation from David Borgo (2004), who uses double consciousness to denote a synthesis between disparate cultural sources. He writes, ‘Jazz music has exhibited, to loosely borrow W. E. B. Du Bois’ well-known phrase, something of a double consciousness. Much of the impetus for past and present scholarship in jazz studies has been to gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which African and European values, resources and imperatives have combined and continue to recombine in this music. From the earliest meetings of downtown Creoles of Colour and uptown Negroes in turn-of-the-century New Orleans, jazz has been a multi-cultural music’ (p. 8). Borgo is not alone in using the term to refer to marriage of European and African (American) musical sources. For instance, Ingrid Monson (1996), in gentle criticism of Afrologic perspectives, argues that the ‘vernacular gloss, which sets “the black way” against “the white way” simplifies a long historical process of cultural confrontation that has resulted in a cultural landscape in which African American and non-African American worlds remain distinct but partially overlapping (p. 100).² Emphasis is placed on dual heritage, and the interplay between the two worlds,

² Monson uses the term ‘doubleness’ but it is clear from the context of her discussion that it is ‘double consciousness’ that is being referred to. See discussion below.

which at times come together in synthesis. And yet, in the attempt to redress the balance away from what Ronald Radano (2003) sees as a tendency of Afrocentric thought to ‘reduce the complexity of lived experience to a static and oversimplified phenomenology of blackness’ (p. 10), she misses what is a crucial critical feature of Du Bois’s work.³

The justifiable wariness towards notions of inheritance at times leads to inattention to the history we see portrayed in Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1994). In Monson’s (1996) understanding of double consciousness, historical specificity is lost, particularly when she argues, following Nahum Chandler, ‘that the self-consciousness of non-African Americans is also affected by the doubleness or multiplicity of co-existing cultural voices’ (p. 100). As was touched upon above, the idea of spilt consciousness is not confined to African American experience, and indeed it may be that Du Bois’s sketch is ill-served by the term.⁴ Nahum Chandler’s (2000) essay ‘Originary Displacement’ invites us to consider African American double consciousness as a ‘good tool’ for working through a more general malaise (and opportunity) but does so in full disclosure of the specificity of Du Bois’s original formulation. The significance (and radicalism) of Chandler’s idea, that is, that theory modelled on a ‘minority’ experience, in this case, that of the African American, can be generalised and applied to modern subjectivities as such, is not

³ Although it should be noted, that the notion that music is able to provide social criticism through its form or, in the case of a performative music such as jazz, in its creative activity, is widely panned. See Monson (2007) and Gridley (2007). This will be returned to in the chapter to follow.

⁴ The term ‘double consciousness’ calls to mind, Ernest Hilgard’s ‘divided consciousness,’ and, of course, Hegel’s ‘unhappy consciousness.’ But as Mitchell Aboulaflia (2008) has pointed out Du Bois while undoubtedly influenced by Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, was, ‘drawing in a more general way on the alienation and doubleness... especially in the master and slave dialectic, as well as on Hegel’s notion of recognition’ (p. 179). This reading is supported by Robert Gooding-Williams (2009) but see Shamoan Zamir (1995) for contrasting opinion. Adorno’s own use of the term is close to Du Bois’s. For an uncharacteristically ‘optimistic’ discussion of television audiences’ ability to retain critical facility see Adorno’s essay ‘Free Time’ (2005, p. 174).

adequately highlighted by Monson. Here, rather than the default bourgeois subject, we are presented with the idea of the African American as placeholder. As Hortense Spillers (2006) reads from Chandler's essay, as part of a parallel discussion concerning the necessity (or otherwise) of cultural difference, 'we should think that "black culture," which might be established as an "example," might take us back or ahead to the problematic of culture in general and "as such"' (p. 25).⁵ The opportunities and restrictions that shape such extrapolations, the difficulties involved in making the particular universal, are what make Chandler's work so interesting (see also, Weheliye, 2005).

Consider two quotations from Du Bois: the first, at the start of this chapter, is from what is perhaps the most quoted passage in African American critical thought (most often encountered in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 1994) but first published in 1897 in the journal *Atlantic Monthly*); and the second is from a posthumously published sketch of his visit to Prince Edward County, Virginia, written sometime between late 1897 and 1898.

You who live in single towns will hardly comprehend the double life of this Virginia hamlet. The doctrine of class does not explain it – the caste misses the kernel of truth. It is two worlds separate yet bound together like those double stars that, bound for all time, whirl around each other separate yet one (Du Bois, 1988, p. 49).

⁵ We see something of this in *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race and Humanity*, Paul Austerlitz's (2005) study on the music's global 'inclusiveness.' Austerlitz uses double consciousness as an analytical framework to think through transnational affiliations and contextual distinction.

It is the second quotation which appears to be the basis of Monson's understanding of 'double consciousness,' and through it our attention is drawn to an isolated strand, that of 'twoness.'⁶ In fact, despite the two texts probably being written around the same time, Monson implies that the ideas listed in the first quotation are a later development of the intriguing account of segregated life in a small community.⁷ Of greater difficulty is that when returned to context, the quotation is revealed to be concerned with extreme segregation within the hamlet rather than Monson's understanding of it portraying 'the "twoness" of experiencing oneself as an American and an African American' (1996, pp. 99-100).⁸ The first, and more influential, passage shows double consciousness to also include other ideas such as the 'Veil,' (which, in fact, has a greater claim of relevance to Du Bois's observations from his visit to Prince Edward County), a 'communal underground' (Pavlič, 2002), and perhaps most significantly, the disconcertion of 'looking at one's self through the eyes' of a world that refused to grant recognition. By positioning double consciousness as double-voiced, dual heritage, double identity, in effect, re-casting it as an African American-specific Bakhtinian dialogism, Monson (and Borgo) obscure a group of ideas which are at least as much about a historically determined

⁶ Monson (1996) also quotes from 'The Souls of White Folk', in which Du Bois discussed the effects of race on the 'non-race' but again fails to unpack this intriguing line of argument (p. 100). Paul Austerlitz's (2005) thoughts on 'white double consciousness' or as he interprets it, 'half consciousness' are interesting (pp. 15-6).

⁷ 'On Our Spiritual Strivings' was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1897. This was around the time (perhaps a little earlier) that Du Bois visited Prince Edward County. See the introductory notes of 'Beyond the Veil in a Virginia Town' (Aptheker, 1988, 49).

⁸ This is stated in no uncertain terms. Du Bois (1988) writes, 'The great Veil – now dark, sinister and wall-like, not light, filmy and silky, but every[where] a dividing veil and running throughout the town and dividing it: 1200 whites this side and 1200 Black beyond the Veil' (p. 49).

perspectival dis/advantage, as it is about an ahistorical theory of intersection and ‘competition among multiple social voices’ (Monson, 1996, p. 99).⁹

It is the possibilities that double consciousness holds for critique that most interest me. Firstly, the ‘Veil’ allows for the idea that the category of race and denial of African American experience within the mainstream of society has provided cover under which distinct ways of forming expression have thrived, in relative anonymity. The idea is important, and has implications wider than the study of African American expression. As has been discussed in the introduction, calls have been made, most convincingly, for new scholarship that presents the experiences of the colonised and enslaved as central to the modern narrative. Susan Buck-Morss’s (2000; 2009) work on the influence of the Saint-Domingue revolution on Hegel’s formulation of the master-slave dialectic is exemplary in this respect.¹⁰ And yet, the need for revision notwithstanding, silence or invisibility of black experience from these texts and their accounts of the material and social trajectories of the modern human being is, in itself, of historical significance. That is to say, the fact that Adorno and his colleagues failed to acknowledge the central relevance of prejudice towards African Americans in a study concerning prejudice in the United States, and the fact that Hegel fails to declare Haiti as model of his master/slave dialectic despite its probable influence are more than pieces of evidence towards a case of structural racism. They are more than scholarly oversights that we, with the benefit of time, are able to

⁹ There are interesting similarities between Du Bois and Bakhtin, particularly if you are focused on the fact of double-ness rather than the wider context and its social consequences.

¹⁰ Also of interest is a study by Clay Steinman (2004) who takes Adorno *et al.* to task for their near-silence on prejudice against African Americans in their landmark study on racism/fascism, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). For other work on re-vocalising of the voices of the enslaved and colonised, see Barreto (2013) and Fischer (2004). See introduction for discussion of this scholarship and in particular how the study draws from Paul Gilroy’s (1993) seminal work, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

approach and revise with improved judgement. They are instances from a Veil, a network of Western thought which has spanned the modern era, and has rendered black experience, thought and expression largely invisible. Most significantly, and what should be kept hold of in the current climate of revisionism, is that neglect of black histories has allowed expression to develop with relative independence (also see Gilroy, 1993; Pavlic, 2002; Stepto, 1991). Crucially, it could be argued that their neglect has, to a certain extent, facilitated an evasion of instrumental reason and the effects of intense rationalisation that had seeped into every corner of modern life.

Coupled with invisibility is the locus of critical potential in African American thought, that is, the *feeling* of double consciousness and the possibly that this brings, of 'second sight'. The sensation of double consciousness, often described as anxiety, has been much discussed. It is a feeling that incessantly asks and answers, 'How does it feel to be a problem?' (Du Bois, 1994, p. 1),¹¹ and which monitors African American incursions into the mainstream against pre-determined expectations. Du Bois, as do Frantz Fanon, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and countless others, makes clear the burden of hyper-awareness. For our purposes it is enough to take second sight as being the potential for critical engagement that emerges as a by-product of the compulsion for African Americans to see themselves as they are imaged through

¹¹ While a full discussion of Du Bois's Of 'Our Spiritual Strivings', will take us away from the line of argument being pursued here, the famous, 'double conscious' passage is understood in its depth when placed back in the context of this essay from which it is extracted. From its start we see that for Du Bois, the issue was principally of the difficulty of being black in the white world, rather than the dual heritage which is acknowledge later on in the essay. It starts, 'Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought in Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word' (1994, p. 1).

another's point of view. It is argued here that the attuned but outsider's view grants the distance necessary for critique. The self-reflexivity, the hopping between over-ground and 'immersion' persona helps to develop a critical acumen perhaps able to expose the shortcomings of modern living which may have escaped those whose experience is arguably more implicated in the myth of enlightenment. Borrowing from Spillers (2006) it can be said that, 'by virtue of the very act of discrimination... [African American expression] was forced to turn its resources of spirit toward negation and critique' (p. 26).

Critical potential of autonomous and communal works

It is very difficult after reading Adorno to engage in a scholarly manner with music without exploring where it sits in society and what it has to say about it. Music matters and is not taken lightly. It is never pure *divertissement*, even when it appears so, but either a corroborator of monopolistic capitalism or a voice of dissent which, immanently, rallies against the socio-economic order and ever-advancing rationalisation of modern living. Music does not merely reflect the social and political climate, but, through its formal experiments, can bring to light societal failures, and present alternatives. To argue a case for jazz as a critical form, within the broad framework set out for such works by Adorno, may seem perverse considering his jazz critique (see Chapter One). For Adorno, jazz was the archetypal music of the culture industry, an emblem of the commodification ruining the cultural landscape. The freedom promised by its syncopation and spontaneity, lauded by its early commentators as evidence of its progressiveness, was 'less archaic-primitive

self-expression than the music of slaves' (Adorno, 1989/90, p. 53). It is not only that jazz was unable to set itself apart and reflect on society, but that it was complicit in its own captivity and in deepening societal ruptures which continue to alienate individuals. Jazz, as Adorno understood it, was antithetic to progressive music.

As has been pointed out by a number of commentators (Daniel, 1989; Witkin, 2003), a common problem of detractors of Adorno's cultural critique, particularly his work on jazz, is their failure to engage with an important broader socio-musicological background.¹² Jazz is presented as an affirmative music, that is, one fully compliant with its commodification, and adversative to radical, autonomous works, which, while implicated in 'administered society,' refuse to present the damage as anything other than what it is. In contrast to the role 'light music', a past manifestation of popular music, had as a foil and/or source of rejuvenation for art music, jazz is party to an unbridgeable separation in its complete service to the culture industry. Adorno writes in 'On the Social Situation of Music' ([1932] 2002):

In earlier epochs, art music was able to regenerate its material from time to time and enlarge its sphere by recourse to vulgar music. This is seen in medieval polyphony, which drew upon folk songs for its *cantus firmi*, and also in Mozart, when he combined peep-show cosmology with opera seria and *Singspiel*. [...] Today the possibility of balance has vanished and attempts at amalgamation, such as those undertaken by diligent art composers at the time when jazz was the rage, remain unproductive. There is no longer any "folk" whose songs and games

¹² See Chapter One for discussion on the debate on Adorno's (mis)understanding of jazz. It is hard to convincingly defend Adorno against charges of elitism, and it is harder still to deny that he looked at the world unabashedly through the eyes of the European bourgeois. Nevertheless, there is a need to look past the provocation of the jazz essays to his sociology of music. While the discussions in Chapter One revolved around Adorno's criticism of jazz, or the discourse surrounding jazz, this present discussion moves on from that debate to consider the wider context of his objections.

could be taken up and sublimated by art; *the opening up of markets and the bourgeois process of rationalization have subordinated all society to bourgeois categories*. This subordination extends to ideology as well. *The categories of contemporary vulgar music are in their entirety those of bourgeois rational society*, which – only in order that they remain subject to consumption – are kept within the limits of consciousness imposed by bourgeois society not only upon the suppressed classes, but upon itself as well (pp. 427-8).

The above is a remarkable passage on several counts. In it we hear of the acute separation of art music from its popular forms, to which it had traditionally been related. The musical expression (and so also the experiences) of the subordinate classes used to find its way into the mainstream through its incorporation into the art music being written by the bourgeoisie. Adorno denies the possibility of localised pockets of genuine community, within which this revitalising expression can be nurtured. The passage serves not only as a condensed socio-history of the severed interaction between art and traditional (or popular) forms, but it also acts as a defence for the absence in his work of any serious *musical* consideration of popular forms. We will return to the issue of Adorno's evasion of alternatives to European art music later on.

Adorno begins 'On the Social Situation of Music' by pointing out that no music remains untouched by 'the contradictions and flaws which cut through present-day society' (p. 391). Music is fully implicated in these problems, which include the acute alienation that has permeated all corners of life. Music exists apart, but its autonomy is sanctioned by and is, indeed, a consequence of hothoused rationalisation and the fragmentation of society into a number of separate spheres of

activity.¹³ Where art does appear ‘directly,’ it is as ‘a commodity,’ and its worth is dictated by the market. All music is affected by alienation, although this is manifest in different ways depending on the extent to which a musical form accommodates the workings of the culture industry. But Adorno also impresses on us that all roles in society are, to a certain extent, ‘determined by the [monopolistic] market’ (2002, p. 391). Tracking the historical development of European art music away from its social function within the Church and the aristocracy, towards bourgeois art, helps to root Adorno’s speculative sociology.¹⁴ It also provides a way to understand the contradiction of music being both *of* society and set *apart* from it. This seemingly irreconcilable position is what Adorno (1997) calls the ‘double character’ of art (p. 5). Alongside autonomous music being implicated in, or at least reflective of society, it also is relatively free of extra-musical function. As such, the tradition and its works can be seen to be about the tradition and its works.

The work done by a musician such as Johann Sebastian Bach, who represents for Adorno the closing stages of heteronomous art music, ‘still retains some vestiges of a direct social function’ (Paddison, 1997, pp. 220-1). This is demonstrated, not only in the continued dependence on patron support. It was also revealed through the

¹³ The functional freedom of music needs to be seen in conjunction with the ideology of art for art’s sake, which imbues the separation with an aesthetic value. The intensity of rationalisation that accompanied the industrial, economic and intellectual revolutions of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a factor in this separation, and perhaps more importantly employs art, or art’s autonomy, as an outlet in which the types of communication that are not readily fitted into designative language are able to exist (and so not disrupting the order of the rest of society). Art has a crucial role to play as a sanctioned designated site where people are able to fulfil those impulses that have been all but expelled from other areas of life. Art’s irrationality, its unchallenged, self-referential irrationality, is in fact not separate but inextricably tied to rationalisation. This situation is shown to have intensified in the period leading up to the First World War. Since then there have been significant developments in relation to the relative autonomy of art that need not concern us here.

¹⁴ In this period art is ‘bourgeois’ due to its audience; the ability of the artist to function within market capitalism; and perhaps, most importantly, due to it being a ‘portrayal of bourgeois self-understanding’ (Burger, 1994, p. 48).

music which included approaches that encouraged musical collaboration through use of shared forms and the open-endedness of some composition, allowing for improvisation, which was still highly valued. In this period the bourgeoisie begins to dominate both economically and intellectually, but is still lacking in political power. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the artist gains freedom from the Church and nobility and begins to produce work that is more in keeping with his own outlooks and ideals. As Andy Hamilton (2009) explains, 'Since it no longer fulfils a direct social function, Adorno holds, the autonomous artwork can create its own inner logic, which does not refer to anything external. In its consistency and total integration, form and content become identical; the work is its idea' (p. 257). Form predominates in this new musical era, and in its masked disinterestedness is able to, inadvertently, report on that which it after all remains a part of. The historical movement away from functionality is key to understanding art music's suitability for critique.

Critical musical works uncover both the 'barbarism of totalitarian administration' (Witkin, 1998, p. 12) of society, and what Lambert Zuidervaart (1990) calls a 'utopian memory,' that looks forward to a time when the current form of socio-economic organisation is transcended by those which are more sympathetic towards individuals. This insight both of the present problems and the future solutions is not gained from attempts to directly address the issues. It is made possible precisely through its separation from such discourse. In autonomous music the unfavourable condition of the modern subject and its relations is found 'sedimented' in musical material of the tradition. As Adorno (2002) tells us, 'Through its material, music must give clear form to the problems assigned it by this

material [that of the musical tradition] which is itself never purely natural material, but rather a social and historical product; solutions offered by music in this process stand equal to theories' (Adorno, 2002, p. 393).¹⁵ As discussed above, art, although isolated from everyday life, is presented as part of society, and as such, can do no better than present the inadequacies of society, but simply following the internal logic of its form.¹⁶ That is to say that, musicians, by working through the musical material left them by past generations of composers, will make work that, to a significant extent, reflects 'the social antinomies which are also responsible for [their] own isolation' (ibid.).

The main points to be taken from the socio-history sketched above in relation to the following discussions concerning jazz's critical potential are as follows: a) European music's autonomization is very much tied to the historical movement of art music towards market capitalism, in line with what was occurring in the areas of life more readily associated with socio-economics and rationality such as business and technological advance; b) Adorno does not explore the possibility that the expressive forms of communities other than the bourgeoisie are capable of highlighting deficiencies of society; the experience of members of other classes thought to be explained by that of the bourgeoisie; c) the significance of the autonomy of art music is that it allows works and traditions a critical distance from which to, immanently, interrogate society. To these we can add conclusions reached from discussions

¹⁵ For Adorno, the functional distance required for such insight bars music's direct involvement in extra-musical institutions and forms of communication. The passivity of such an enterprise is not lost on Adorno. Neither is its obstruction, not only to the revolutionary commitment of more politically inclined Marxist aestheticians such as Hanns Eisler, but also to a certain extent, Adorno's own utopian hope for a 'true collective,' that would embody a more empathetic way of being with others (Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 42).

¹⁶ This does not occur through content, which tends to obscure the situation in its refraction through its author intentions.

contained in the previous two chapters: d) a distinctive ‘communal self’ of African American subjectivity rests on a specific history of enslavement and the associated processes of dehumanisation and racialization; e) the expression that issues from this experience needs to be considered as distinct. Where bourgeois art expresses the discontent concerning a crisis of the individual and personal sovereignty, the African American expresses the desire to be seen as human and for recognition of its distinct subjectivity.

Within a footnoted comment in his *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Adorno (2003) accounts for the progressive nature of Bela Bartok’s folk-influenced work, by suggesting that the forms adapted by the composer emerged from Eastern European communities that had ‘largely fallen outside the dominant process of rationalization... which had transformed Western Europe and North America’ (Paddison, 1997, p. 38). The idea that Eastern European forms had managed to survive due to their distance from the hub of rationalisation appears to be similar to that implied by the veteran/doctor-patient of the Golden Day tavern/asylum in Ralph Ellison’s ([1952] 1965) *Invisible Man*. On a bus journey North, the narrator, happens upon a patient he had met the previous day, who was in the process of being transferred to another institution. Explaining the cryptic sermon he had delivered the day before, he informs the narrator of the opportunity that double consciousness holds for him.¹⁷

He tells the narrator, ‘down here they’ve forgotten to take care of the books and

¹⁷ The narrator had just been expelled from college due to a series of events in which he allowed a white trustee of the college, of whom he had been entrusted, to trespass on the ‘communal underground’. There they encountered tales of inadvertent incest and a riot at the asylum/tavern but most damningly, according the narrator, a violation by the doctor-patient of the accepted conventions of inter-racial engagement. As touched upon in the first chapter, journeying up North is symbolic of above-ground interaction.

that's your opportunity. You're hidden right out in the open – that is, you would be if you only realized it' (Ellison, 1965, p. 128). The idea of a 'communal underground,' a space where forms are capable, 'protected' by an unawareness fuelled by prejudice against African Americans is seen as an 'opportunity.' It is a place where expressive thought is still able to mingle with the designative. It facilitates an evasion within which alternative forms of expression and thought are able to develop with fidelity to the cultural material presented by the African American experience. It is also important in gaining an understanding of jazz's resistance to commodification,¹⁸ and how it possessed the distance required for critique. As Pavlič (2002) puts it, the space, 'quarantined by segregation... [was] not yet "disenchanted" by modern forces of rationalisation' (p. 82), and so was able to facilitate progressive forms of thought and expression.¹⁹

As Adorno allowed for those Eastern European communities that had evaded the machinery of capitalism, we can argue that, to a certain extent, the lived experience of blacks occurred beyond the radar of ever-increasing control of rationalisation, 'down [where] they've forgotten to take care of the books' (Ellison, 1965, p. 128). It is necessary to qualify the argument, pointing out that, first as commodity (enslavement), and then within its economic relations, the African American has been very much a part of broader society. This is perhaps especially true of its artistic expression, which has long been part of the entertainment industry, for a time seemingly synonymous with the record industry. Relatedly, jazz has

¹⁸ Of course, I am referring here to the processual socio-musical work of jazz rather than the reified abstractions that appear in various guises in the mainstream.

¹⁹ The distinction of these forms is discussed in chapter two. According to Pavlič (2002), a key feature of this is that 'syndetic cultural patterns resist the stable and ordering influences of modern rationalisations' (p. 22). Also see Snead's (1981) provocative reading of Hegel's dismissal of the possibility of African subjecthood (p. 148-9).

concurrently been presented as music of artistic merit, 'America's Classical music,' running behind, but on a parallel course to that of the modern European tradition. And yet, as will be discussed, the suggested kinship between jazz and the European tradition can in part be explained as an appropriation of jazz work in which elements that tend not to agree with mainstream values (for instance, its open-endedness, collaboration and indeterminacy) are minimised.²⁰

In its appearance in both the culture industry and as a serious form (although there arguably is not much between the two) we find 'jazz' (or 'jazz-es') of a different order than we find in the in-progress work of jazz.²¹ The second qualification to make in relation to black 'invisibility' is that while the idea is drawn, descriptively, from a distinct African American narrative, the idea of other pockets of resistance or, at the very least, other areas of circumscriptive respite, in which alternative modes of social relations can be nurtured, must be considered a strong possibility. It is an area of exploration which could critically enhance Adorno's writings on the total administration of all corners of modern living. While we should pay attention to the historical specificity of 'double consciousness,' it does point to the possibility (the likelihood) that other socio-historical groups have developed similar critical 'underground' spaces.²²

²⁰ Craig Werner (1997) sees this point from a related standpoint. He writes, 'The jazz impulse asks what about those parts that don't fit' (p. 132).

²¹ As touched upon in the introduction locating jazz work is tricky. This is compounded when discussing the music's appropriation from its musical practice which sees it packaged as the consumable 'jazz.' This label has long been seen as part of such strategies or appropriation. See for instance Duke Ellington's thoughts on the matter in Porter (2002, pp. 36-39).

²² Dick Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* and Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* are two instances of similar attempts to formulate thinking around these alternative sites of expression.

The idea of a ‘communal underground,’ a space where forms are capable of developing with fidelity to a specific experience and the cultural material that goes with that, is important to gaining an understanding of jazz’s distinctive relation to, and its place within, the ‘torn halves’ of modern culture.²³ There is often a failure to pay heed to the *socio-historical* nature of Adorno’s account of autonomous and affirmative music. In the secondary literature we are often not shown the historically determined positions, but are presented with an idea that autonomy is a choice.²⁴ And so, Robert Witkin (2002) writes in answer to the question, ‘Why did Adorno hate jazz?’ that, ‘[f]or Adorno, music has to reproduce, in its inner relations, the principles of structuration that constitute true sociality and historicity. [...] The short answer to the question of why Adorno hated jazz was simply that jazz appeared to him to betray this ideal more completely than other modern musics’ (p. 148). While adequately highlighting the importance of historicity *within* the work, Witkin presents the ‘ideal’ *ahistorically*, and fails to question as to whether Adorno’s formulation, based on a history exclusionary of the black experience of modernity is appropriate to a consideration of jazz.²⁵

The oversight is perhaps understandable, as while Adorno makes clear the historical nature of his thesis, he is, at the same time, presenting the bourgeois narrative as capable of explaining all other experiences he encounters. Andrew

²³ Fredrick Jameson argues something similar in his 1979 essay ‘Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture.’ See Deborah Cook’s (1996) discussion on whether Adorno was referring to the divide between high art and the culture industry or high art and light art (pp. 105-6).

²⁴ But both see Hamilton (2009) and Zuidervaart (1990). Although Zuidervaart agrees, he does point to a certain ambiguity in Adorno’s text. I concur that Adorno makes prescriptive something that was formulated by recourse to a specific set of socio-historical circumstances.

²⁵ Witkin’s (2002) view on Adorno’s understanding of what constituted ‘genuine’ jazz shows that Witkin was not confining his analysis to the works that are readily attached to the culture industry such as Paul Whiteman’s (1922) ‘Hot Lips’.

Hamilton (2009) clarifies: ‘Adorno does not say that works of art “ought” to become autonomous; for him the autonomization of the work of art is an inevitable historical process’ (p. 255). And yet, as we have seen, for Adorno, as the ‘most advanced consciousness’ of the age, it is assumed that the bourgeois subject can speak for that of the proletariat and the ‘jazz’ or ‘hot subject.’²⁶ This study has suggested that this is not the case. While the hermetic highly rationalised composition of Schoenberg and Berg are effective tools of social critique due (in part) to their autonomy, jazz, although communal, also possesses critical distance and displays fidelity to its heterogeneous musical material (which come from other forms of expression and everyday vernacular). However, as we have explored in Chapter One, this is through a markedly different set of socio-historical circumstances. The ‘quarantine of black life’ (Pavlić, 2002, p. 84) that occurred as a consequence of slavery and its aftermath allowed for expressive techniques to develop away from the apparently all-encompassing dichotomy of autonomous art music and the cultural marketplace of industrialised society.

The invisibility and critical acumen of double consciousness has been a valuable instrument in creating and disseminating political creative works during the civil rights era and beyond. Beat poet Bob Kaufman who, along with other writers, both black and white, saw in jazz ‘a significant social critique of an oppressive social structure’ (Thomas, 2008, p. 105), characterised musicians as agents of a covert

²⁶ But see the passage from ‘On the Social Situation of Music’ above in which Adorno explains why he believes the bourgeois is an adequate placeholder. Susan Buck-Morss (1977) takes the ‘jazz subject’ to refer to the jazz musician while others such as Daniel (1989/90) seem to interpret it as the (bourgeois or mass) consumer.

operation ('One thousand saxophones infiltrate the city/ Each with a man inside') who drew in unsuspecting 'greedy ears' assaulting them, with 'Noisy artfully contrived screams' ('Battle Report,' 1965, p. 8). Undercover action is also occurring within 'O-Jazz-O War Memoir: Jazz, *Don't Listen To It At Your Own Risk*' (1996, p.96) but perhaps the offence here is as much about mutual understanding, not only for the sake of the African American community but for a re-humanisation of all affected Americans.²⁷

Similarly, Baraka (1999b) interpreted Charlie Parker's artistry as an alternative to actual bodily harm. In anticipation of the provocation of the often inflammatory rhetoric of his prose and poetry from his black nationalist period,²⁸ he tells us through Clay, the protagonist of his play, *Dutchman*, that 'Bird would've played not a note of music if he just walked up to East Sixty-seventh Street and killed the first ten white people he saw' (p. 97).²⁹ Clay also tells us that blues vocalist Bessie Smith is telling her white audience '[b]efore love, suffering, desire, anything you can explain... saying, and very plainly, "Kiss my black ass"' (ibid.). And he adds, for those lacking the necessary 'second-sight' that 'if you don't know that, it's you that's doing the kissing' (ibid.).³⁰ Although often (and to a certain extent, justifiably) characterised as betraying a crude primitivism, Norman Mailer

²⁷ For more on Kaufman and jazz see Thomas (2008) and Kohli (2002).

²⁸ See Matlin (2006) for a dispassionate reconsideration of Baraka's gender politics from his black nationalist period, showing how gender crosses race in his radicalism in a way which required him to propagate the 'disempowerment' of black women.

²⁹ Interestingly, although approaching from a different direction, Ellison (1995), describing the transformation that the narrator of *Invisible Man* goes through as that from 'a would-be politician and rabble-rouser and orator to that of writer' (p.76), appears to be in agreement with Baraka that art becomes a conduit for protest. Although it should be kept in mind Ellison rejected suggestions that the novel was a protest.

³⁰ Despite the violence of the imagery, this play appeared before his black nationalist period and was critically acclaimed, earning Baraka, then LeRoi Jones, an Obie award for best off-Broadway play.

(1957) was among the first from beyond the African American community to realise the critical opportunity that prejudice and discrimination presented (p. 291). On this, Paul Austerlitz (2004) writes that Mailer ‘contended that blacks are hyperaware of American realities, and particularly attuned to the falseness of an ostensibly civilized culture that is based on racial subjugation’ (p. 14).

On these accounts, one could show Louis Armstrong’s pilloried ‘Sambo’ act in a new light. Was the affable, white handkerchief-waving musician really a smiling assassin, drawing in the credulous before delivering signifying blows disguised as docility? Tom Dent appears to be wondering the same in his poem ‘For Lil Louis’:

Louis i’m trying to understand what you were
really like
in the dark moments away from the stage.
rumors have it you were not pleasant
to be around
the shit-eating grin nowhere to be found
(quoted in Thomas, 2008, p. 120)

In fact, what is being tentatively suggested here is not original. Despite the derision Armstrong’s entertainer persona was met with by *some* younger musicians, such as Dizzy Gillespie, some considered his staged ‘Uncle Tom’ to be a disguise.³¹ In camouflage, he contributed to the covert operations Kaufman and Baraka are

³¹ Dizzy Gillespie although critical, still acknowledged his influence. Quoted in Nat Hentoff (2000) he tells, ‘If it hadn’t been for him, there would have been none of us. I want to thank Mr. Louis Armstrong for my livelihood.’ Available from <http://www.gadflyonline.com/archive/marchapril00/archive-louisarmstrong.html> [20 July 2014].

referring to. Lester Bowie speaks of Armstrong as a revolutionary, who cloaked in invisibility (the denial of humanity, the lack of recognition for his blackness) has been able to infiltrate the mainstream without detection. He tells us, ‘The true revolutionary is one that’s not apparent. I mean the revolutionary that’s waving a gun out in the streets is never effective; the police just arrest him. But the police don’t ever know about the guy that smiles and drops a little poison in their coffee. Well, Louis, in that sense, was that sort of revolutionary, a true revolutionary’ (quoted in Hersch, 2002, p. 380).

And yet, here there is a need to ask the question, as to what is being achieved by these cloak-and-dagger operations, past the satisfaction that they bring the musicians and those able to interpret the attack as an attack. Are these acts of retaliatory signifying even directed at the true adversary? And do they even count as a challenge in the absence of reciprocal recognition? Invisibility may have allowed black expression to develop away from the hub of instrumental reason and rationalisation; it is quite possible that double consciousness has enabled Armstrong to strike at the heart of above-ground society without detection. But invisibility is also the very reason that such protest has been, in the main, impotent.³² Borrowing from Frantz Fanon (who is borrowing from Hegel), experience, expression and critique will fall on deaf (above-ground) ears as long as the African American subject is not recognised in its humanity.³³ Fanon ([1952] 2008) writes, ‘it is on that other

³² This is not to be taken as an indictment of the black consciousness movements that were occurring at the time, but does raise important questions as to whether desegregation, positive discrimination and other policies of racial equality (all, broadly speaking, considered positive developments) have been granted (to a certain extent) as a consolation for the inability to value and embrace black difference.

³³ Franz Fanon ([1952] 2008) writes of the ‘impressive number of statues erected all over France and the colonies to show white France stroking the kinky hair of this nice Negro whose chains had just

being, on recognition by that other being, that his [a man or woman's] own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of his life is condensed' (p. 169). It may be that without an acknowledgement of their humanity neither Armstrong's congeniality (genuine or otherwise), nor Parker's or Smith's mordant signifying is even considered possible from the point of view of dominant society. Moreover, without the requisite recognition, the resistance that does appear is obscured and often presented as minstrelsy.

'The Clown' (1957), a piece recorded by Mingus on an album of the same name, includes a recitation over the circus-waltz motif, telling a story of desired recognition. It has been explored as a 'satirical self-portrait' (Griffith, 2010, p. 361; see also, Dunkel, 2012), but it can also be seen as an allegory for a type of disarticulation of interaction between the African American and mainstream American, that comes about as consequence of non-recognition. The clown, who, appears to represent the African American, has, according to Mingus, 'all these wonderful things going on inside...all these greens and yellows, all these oranges' (my transcription). Ellison (1995) tells of how mainstream literature presents the African American, 'a most complex example of Western man... [as an] oversimplified clown... Seldom is he drawn as that sensitively focused process of opposites, of good and evil, of instinct and intellect, of passion and spirituality, which great literary art has projected as the image of man' (p. 26). The clown's audience has no interest in the possible range of experience, represented by the

been broken. [...] "Say thank you to the nice man," the mother tells her little boy... but we know that often the little boy is dying to scream some other more resounding expression' (p. 171). The choice of the word 'scream' is significant and Fanon is answered by countless instances within black expression.

clown's carefully planned routines that show breadth and depth of his creativity. They are, however, completely enthralled by an accidental slapstick moment.³⁴ The denial of his full repertoire (the greens, yellows and oranges) in favour of their melding down to murky grey, brings the clown widespread success and popularity. At the end of the piece, in desperation, the clown takes his own life which is, of course, met with raucous laughter, the audience being unable to recognise his humanity even in this extreme act.³⁵

An inability to recognise humanity in 'protest,' and in the African American experience, more generally, perhaps limits the potential for the social criticism that is facilitated by invisibility and second sight. In the prologue of Ralph Ellison's ([1952] 1965) *Invisible Man*, the narrator, himself retreating underground after a period of activity (including efforts towards integration and black militancy), picks up on the ultimate impotence of committed work. He shares his desire 'to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing "What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue?" – all at the same time' (p. 11), telling us, 'I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he *is* invisible' (1965, p. 11, emphasis in original).³⁶ One of the things that Ellison appears to be suggesting is that Armstrong is addressing an (above-ground) audience that is

³⁴ Robert Maclean (2011) points out the significance of the clown in both Adorno's analysis of jazz and as a theme in his more general critique of the culture industry.

³⁵ This willingness to lay down one's life to be recognised as human is an idea embedded in Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Paul Austerlitz identifies the challenge of shifting perspective to that of African American history and suggests that it often results in 'half consciousness', but perhaps this places too much on the agency of individuals. Perhaps it is more appropriate to focus on the root of the ideology peddled on behalf of the faceless authority of monopolistic capitalism.

³⁶ Alexander Weheliye (2003) picks up on the significance of the narrator wanting to hear five recordings played simultaneously. While Weheliye reads this as the narrator wanting to hear the same record played on five different phonographs, it would be in keeping with the arguments concerning incremental layers and partiality in jazz, if the various phonographs played different versions of 'Black and Blue' simultaneously. After all, there are many more than five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing this tune (see Willems (2006) for discography).

unable to recognise the validity of what he has experienced and how it makes him feel, as it does not fit the categories designated to the African American in its appearance in the mainstream arena.

Both 'black' and 'blue' are heavily coded words. The very use of the word 'black' when 'Negro' was still in currency is subversive.³⁷ But more than this, it speaks over the heads (or perhaps in the Ellisonian world, under the feet) of the white majority. The word 'black' talks of alienation ('Even the mouse ran from my house') and minstrelsy ('They laugh at you and scorn you too') of race. But it also talks of an 'alterity of blackness' which Zora Neale Hurston (1935) makes available to us in her anthropological work. In 'Black and Blue' Armstrong appeals directly to society, requesting an appeasement from crippling inequality *and* also for it to recognise his blackness. But the audience is ill-equipped to hear him, black experience having been appropriated and transposed into frames of reference not able to facilitate 'a most complex example of Western man' (Ellison, 1995, p.26). And so, while it may well be that Bessie Smith intended the insult Baraka ascribes to her, without an above-underground appreciation of her signifying prowess, she really is only singing about love, suffering and desire.

³⁷ These lyrics were not written by Armstrong but by Andy Razaf (and music was written by Fats Waller). Of course, 'black' rather than Negro may have also been used for poetic reasons, but the point still stands.

Chapter Five

Jazz protest, aesthetic praxis, and African American universalism

The portrayal of jazz work as a constellation of non-coercive but challenging, empathetic interactions between particularity and collectivity can be seen as a model for future, more progressive forms of social organisation and communication. This chapter shows how this model compares to that proposed by Adorno on behalf of modern European musical works which he presents as one of the limited ways effective ‘protest’ can be made. The aesthetic praxis reveals a ‘collective Subject’ or a ‘collective We’ in the way European works are formed – the coming together of disparate musical components which are still able to retain their particularities as they alchemise into the work. Owing to jazz’s heterogeneous nature, and its reliance on real-life social interaction, its model, rather than presented abstractly in form (indeed, formal necessity in jazz has been shown to be weak), is seen in the way musicians create collaborative work and develop homemade technique in order to fulfil their commitments to the nurture and cultivation of their distinction.

This chapter is interested in the extent to which the communal nature of African American subjectivity contributed to direct action, and helped shape the motivation behind some jazz protest of the 1960s. It challenges the tendency of some jazz commentary to limit the ‘black consciousness’ movement to a narrow notion of

what constitutes African American concerns, and merely to being an expression of discontent. This chapter will point to the existence of a strand of protest which, in line with the communality of African American subjectivity, shows that it was possible for musician-activists to be both committed to the black community and to reach out to a broader American, and often global community. Moreover it will argue that the African American demand for an acknowledgement of the ‘alterity of blackness’, that is to say, recognition of a valid and potentially insightful, African American perspective, is not necessarily exclusionary but can be seen as presenting the mainstream with alternative codes that encourage more productive and creative sociality. Focusing on John Coltrane, who is often presented as an example of an apolitical universalist, it will be suggested that jazz work, and its socio-musical interaction is able to model how human distinction can be nurtured within a collective.

Charles Mingus’s bandstand tirades detailing the impediments that the nightclub environment placed on musicians as they worked towards the collaborative ideals of the music are well documented (Dunkel, 2012; Porter, 2002; Saul, 2003). Faced with audiences that were often inattentive to subtleties of the music, whose ‘clanking glasses’ and incessant chatter the ‘loud’ and ‘ugly’ passages were able to compete with, but against which the ‘beautiful’, ‘soft’ and ‘silent’ parts had no chance, Mingus took to smashing his bass, bullwhipping audience members, and orchestrating lengthy drum solos in protest (Dorr-Dorynek, 1963, p. 17; Saul, 2003, p. 167). In his autobiography he suggests that, money aside, the jazz musician would find greater satisfaction ‘playing in parks and simple places’ (Mingus, 2011, p. 334).

After a short run of what was supposed to be a 'life-time contract' (Dorr-Dorynek, p. 15) at a club in New York's lower west side, Mingus conceded defeat saying, 'it's time to end the job. I'm so sick I want people to listen' (Saul, p. 168).

Showing the mirror image of W. E. B. Du Bois's dictum concerning the invisibility of African American life and expression from the standpoint of mainstream society, Mingus characterises his audience as blind (and deaf). Reminiscent of Odysseus's crew, their 'clogged-up' ears keep them from the 'truths' that the music could tell, not only about the black experience but also about the contradictions of their own lives. To Mingus it seemed that these patrons could not see past the 'beauteous colors' of their 'lovely selves,' to their 'ugly selves' and 'untruths' (Dorr-Doryneck, p. 16). Within his improvised monologues, Mingus presents insightful portrayals, reminiscent of Adorno's 'regressive listener' (2002), and of the 'cockroach capitalism' (Kofsky, 1970) governing African American expression's foray into broader society. His harangue can be seen as an intrusion into the somnambulance of consumer culture nightlife as he shares the challenges that face the artist attempting to work in environments ill-equipped to nurture the interlocution between musicians, and between musician and audience, that the music demands.

On what is described as 'one of those hellish, noise-filled nights' by, Diane Dorr-Doryneck (1963) a recording was made of one of Mingus's addresses. Mingus tells those who will listen:

You haven't been told before that you're phonies. You're here because jazz has publicity, jazz is popular, the word jazz, and you like to associate yourself with this sort of thing. But it doesn't make you a connoisseur of the art because you

follow it around. You're dilettantes of style. A blind man can go to an exhibition of Picasso and Kline and not even see their works. And comment behind dark glasses, Wow! They're the swingiest painters ever, crazy! Well, so can you. You've got your dark glasses and clogged-up ears.

[...]

All of you sit there, digging yourselves and each other, looking around hoping to be seen and observed as hip. *You* become the object you came to see, and you think you're important and digging jazz when all the time all you're doing is digging a blind, deaf scene that has nothing to do with any kind of music at all...

And the pitiful thing is that there are a few that do want to listen. And some of the musicians... we want to hear each other, what we have to say tonight, because we've learned the language. Some of us know it too well. Some of us know it only mechanically. But by listening to others who play it spiritually, soulfully, we can learn *to speak* a little less technically. But imagine an artist of rhetoric, with thinking faculties, performing for an audience devoid of concern for communication... imagine his attempting a sensible communicating association even in plain verbal language. ... [Jazz] is another language, so much more wide in range and vivid, and warm and full and expressive of thoughts you are seldom able to convey. (pp. 16-18, emphasis in original)

In Mingus's portrayal, jazz is shown to be a cog in the nightclub machinery, a marketing tool and 'coloristic effect' to draw consumers to a 'blind, deaf scene that has nothing to do with any kind of music at all' (ibid.). Adorno (1989/90) echoes the

idea that the music's value in the mainstream is as an 'effect' added to enhance an elusive, more profitable cultural product, when he writes, 'the skin of the black man functions as much as a coloristic effect as does the silver of the saxophone' (p. 53). 'Attributes' of the music or of the 'black man' are extracted and appropriated for use in the industry. Jazz is not merely in the background but is aggressively mined for all the ways in which it can contribute to maximising profit. It has been highlighted that even Mingus's diatribes were appropriated for such use. Scott Saul reports that a club owner complained that the bassist had caused 'no trouble,' and that it was 'bad for business' (p. 170, my emphasis). Mingus's censorious verbosity, which began as an unauthorized incursion into mainstream culture, became, for some club owners, an integral part of the experience they promised their patrons. All that is distinctive, subversive and challenging, 'everything unruly... [is] integrated into a strict scheme' (Adorno, 2000, p. 269).

The composition-privileged formulation of the 'structural listener' in Adorno's typography of listener types makes it inadequate for use in jazz appreciation; however, Mingus's ideal listener shares with it the characteristics of being 'highly informed and self-reflective' (Paddison, 1997, p. 210). Of more use is a note on the 'Difficulty of the "composer's" intention' in *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction* (2006). In this fragment directed at the 'interpreter' or performer, Adorno talks of the necessity of understanding not just the 'languages' of a work (in the case of the modern European tradition, the 'written symbols' and the 'inner language' behind those symbols) but of becoming '*fully acquainted with the background and the tradition of a work – with all the customs surrounding the score at the time of its creation*' (p. 9). The need for the interpreter or listener to understand

the work, its form and its tradition resonates with Mingus's admonishment of the audience of 'clogged-up' ears. He challenges them to listen to, and to speak of, the music in ways appropriate to it. He demands that the club's patrons see the ridiculousness of their situation, comparing it to 'an artist of rhetoric, with thinking faculties, performing for an audience devoid of concern for communication' (quoted in Dorr-Dorynek, p.18).¹

Mingus informs his audience of a community of musicians, and he invites them to participate in the conversations that are being had, or perhaps to learn to re-tell the stories they are being told. African American 'protest,' which is often characterised as exclusionary, betrays an evangelic impulse. The politics of black nationalism tends to be reduced to the most essentialist and most aggressive of voices within a thoroughly heterogeneous movement. It is invariably positioned in opposition to the non-violence of the concurrent civil rights movement but as Ingrid Monson (2007) points out, such readings ignore an important 'universalistic aspiration' (p. 306). Notwithstanding the few separatists within the 'new black music,' the call for a 'new social order,' was seen as one of inclusion.² Redemption was for 'white souls' too. The radicalism of this thought is to be found in its belief that an African American (or black) outlook was necessary to facilitate such change. The 'outsiders' perspective was a requisite as an alternative to the ethically bankrupt incomplete project of Western Enlightenment. For instance, Cecil Taylor tells us that 'America needs what the Negro has for survival' (quoted in Porter, 2002, p. 200).

¹ This echoes the plea made by John Coltrane to critics: 'Get all the understanding for what you're speaking of that you can get' (quoted in Brown, 2010, p. 14).

² For example, Kelan Phil Cohran, who tells George Lewis (2008), 'I personally didn't want to deal with white people in jazz... It's my thinking that music is the language of a people, and I was interested in what the language could do for black people. I wasn't interested in what it could do for whites' (p. 492).

Similarly, Shepp (1965) also believes that ‘the Negro people... are the only hope of saving America, the political or the cultural America’ (p. 42). While writer James Baldwin reveals in the aftermath of the movement that ‘We [African Americans] hoped to bring about some kind of revolution in the American conscience’ (quoted in McMichael, 1988, p. 404).

Although often presented as respite from the politically charged jazz scene of the 1960s, John Coltrane, can be seen as a central voice in the chorus suggesting African American moral responsibility.³ He was fervent in his belief that the change in consciousness could be reached most effectively in musicians and audiences coming together through music (Brown, 2010). Coltrane’s hopes for a global fraternity can be read as an extrapolation of a more localised concern for the African American. And perhaps most significantly for the arguments being put forward in this study, in his holding of these seemingly contradictory positions, a desire for global brotherhood on one hand, and on the other, a depth of concern for the African American, he exemplifies the ‘communal self’ of African American subjectivity. This collectivity needs to be understood as a coming together in difference, or as a community in which human distinction is celebrated and encouraged. The mimetic attitude displayed has been shown to be the fundamental principle of jazz creation and perhaps, can be considered before its specific manifestation in the blue note, swing, quotation, musical trading, call and response, and the like, as the key to ‘the blackness of sound’ (Kohli, 2002, p. 180) in jazz. It could be argued that Coltrane’s

³ Monson recognises this too, although I am not sure she would see Coltrane as central to the movement.

universalism is an exhortation for ‘white recognition [and embrace] of the blackness of the sound’ of jazz (ibid.).

The chapter will continue with a consideration of the recent renewal of interest in jazz’s role in the civil rights and black nationalist movements. It will then summarise Adorno’s thoughts on the futility of direct protest and of a more fruitful alternative form in the ‘theoretical’ praxis of the modern European work. Showing both the continuities between this tradition and jazz, and where the latter diverges, due in large part to the real-life sociality involved in its creation, the chapter will show free jazz to be an ideal point of entry to consideration of jazz work within the framework of the ‘communal self’ that has been set out in this study. It will end with a challenge to attempts to quarantine Coltrane within universalism, showing that the holding of seemingly incompatible positions - an embrace of global fraternity, on the one hand, and deep-rooted concern for his immediate community on the other, or his desire for personal exploration but not at the expense of hearing what his fellow contributors are saying - are manifestations of the communality of African American subjectivity.

Misconceptions and misrecognition – literature on jazz protest

The preoccupation with ‘angry “protest music”’ in Mark Gridley’s (2007) recent ‘Misconceptions in Linking Free Jazz with the Civil Rights Movement’ adds an intriguing sub-text to what would have otherwise read as a straightforward argument in support of formalist approaches to jazz.⁴ With the growing interest in the social

⁴ Gridley, a jazz musician and professor of psychology, is author of one of the most commonly used jazz textbooks in undergraduate studies in the United States, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, which

and political contexts of the form that has stepped up a gear since the cultural turn within the discipline of the 1990s, there has been a corresponding depreciation of approaches that view the tradition as principally determined by its music. In a review of the new direction in the discipline, Mark Tucker (1998) expresses disappointment that so few of the academics ‘leading the march’ of jazz into the ‘mainstreams of the American academy’ were ‘musicologists or musically trained scholars’ (p. 132). It could be argued that the neglect of musicology in new jazz studies has been necessary. That ‘address[ing] canons and canon formation, gender coding and sexuality, the intersection of music and politics, visual representation (especially through film) of musical subjects, critical reception, and historiography’ (ibid.) has been a welcome redress away from the ‘classicizing’ tendencies that have long dominated jazz studies. Jazz’s heterogeneity and extra-musical rudiments have been brought to the fore in scholarship that shows common discursive ground between the music and visual art (Gabbard, 1996; Veneciano, 2004), literature (Harris, 2004; O’Meally, 2004),⁵ and politics (Lewis, 2008, Thomas, 2008; Washington, 2004). While scholars such as Robert Walser (1995), Scott De Veaux (1991), Vijay Iyer (2004) and Jed Rasula (1995) have forced the discipline to question the hegemony of ‘traditionalist’ approaches.

Tucker’s concerns with the lack of musical expertise within the new jazz studies has been answered by important contributions from musician-scholars such

presents a survey of the music, focusing on musical components rather than historical or social context. The significance of introductions to jazz such as *Jazz Styles* and Frank Tirro’s (1979) *A Jazz History* to debates concerning canonisation is discussed by Kenneth Prouty (2010) in ‘Toward Jazz’s “Official” History: The Debates and Discourses of Jazz History Textbooks.’

⁵ There is a long history of engagement between jazz and African American literature, perhaps representing the earliest ‘critical’ work on jazz. As discussed in introduction the blues and jazz aesthetics are central themes within literary criticism.

as Iyer (2004; 2008), David Borgo (2005; 2007) and Paul Austerlitz (2005), pointing the way towards alternative paths through music analysis and critical engagement. Notwithstanding these significant developments, the lack of music-centred research is still a concern.⁶ As William Maxwell (2011) has pointed out, ‘many of the most creative jazz apologists currently promote the music’s interdisciplinary significance from tenured seats in English departments’ (p. 874). There is a clear need for innovative study that takes the music as its central focus, and Gridley’s essay can be read as a call for such. In fact, it could be argued that there is a need for *music-centred* work that also satisfies the desire to ground what is after all a thoroughly heterogeneous form in its social context. It could be that *within* sociological perspectives we are able to take the music as our starting point.

In ‘Misconceptions’ the force of the argument for a greater focus on music in the discipline is dissipated by the imprudent conflation of the multifarious perspectives of the civil rights and black nationalist movements with ‘angry protest’ and ‘black anger.’⁷ The anger that Gridley (2007) perceives in some of the work of Charles Mingus and Archie Shepp, who are portrayed as ‘angry by their temperaments,’ as well as ‘outspoken and active in the civil rights movement’ (p. 141), is fenced off from other avant-garde music of the day, such as the explorations into freer forms undertaken by John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman.⁸ And yet, both Mingus and Shepp, alongside the animation of pieces such as ‘Haitian Fight Song’

⁶ It is with reluctance that I position analysis that looks at musical components in opposition to that which, arguably, deals with as important constitutive material such as black oral culture, community, and politics. In fact, my concern is less with the material than with the ways these are re-formed in jazz. This is, arguably, where jazz work is located.

⁷ Emotional perception, with a strong emphasis towards anger, is Gridley’s main research focus. See ‘Are Music Perceptions Biased by Priming Effects of Journalism?’ (Gridley and Hoff, 2010).

⁸ Shepp is associated with black nationalism rather than civil rights and Mingus although outspoken was not affiliated with any specific movement.

and ‘The Magic of Ju-Ju’, have made quiet introspective protest works that would be hard to describe as angry.⁹ Also, considering that the civil rights movement was predicated on peaceful protest, the careless marriage of the words ‘angry’ and ‘protest,’ and ‘black’ and ‘anger,’ caricatures not only those two movements but the broader desire for recognition that spurred them.¹⁰

Gridley (2007) writes that there is a common ‘misunderstanding... that angry sounding music was a direct result of avant-garde musicians in the 1960s using jazz as a tool of personal protest toward social injustice’ (p. 139).¹¹ He tell us, ‘writing suggests, implies, or directly asserts that a cause-and-effect relationship existed between politics and the development of new jazz styles when, almost without exception, certain political movements did not lead to the music’s origination. In most cases, the politics merely happened at the same time as the jazz movements’ (ibid.). Within the charge are the two tangled but strident lines of argument of his essay. The first is that free jazz (any jazz for that matter) is not socially sedimented or, as Gridley puts it, ‘[m]usic just expresses itself’ (p. 149).¹² This is a familiar argument and finds support from within the discipline from scholars such as Lee

⁹ For instance, Mingus’s ‘What Love’ or ‘Meditations As To How To Get Some Wire-cutters Before Someone Else Gets Some Guns To Us,’ and ‘Malcom Malcolm – Semper Malcom’ on *Fire Music* in which Shepp recites in a pensive mood his lament following the recent assassination of Malcom X.

¹⁰ The examples presented by Gridley of musicians who were not involved in these movements tend not to bear out in the literature. For example, Ingrid Monson’s painstaking catalogue of fund-raising involvement includes John Coltrane and Marion Brown (2007, p. 213-214), both of whom were more closely associated with black nationalism (and internationalism) than the civil rights movement.

¹¹ Interestingly, Kofsky (1998) shows that mainstream critics were as much to blame for this as musician-activists and black nationalist critics such as Kofsky and Baraka. He writes, ‘the conventional wisdom holds that radical black nationalism means nothing more than “Hate whitey!” and that new jazz is therefore merely a form of “hate music” – an accusation white critics began rehearsing at least as early as Bill Cross’s contention in 1958 that “hate is one of the major emotions” in “funky music” (*Metronome*, March 1958, p.13)’ (p. 88).

¹² Despite being conflated within ‘Misconceptions,’ there are important differences between the musicians or other activists creating and using free jazz in protest, and the suggestion that the styles developing during the late 1950s and early 1960s were, formally, imbued with the social and political turbulence of the period.

Brown (1999), as well as being implied in much musicological analysis.¹³ It is an adoption of the still dominant view within musicology which hails from the material and ideological move away from heteronomy and functionality within the European tradition in the nineteenth century.¹⁴

Alongside the scepticism concerning the socio-historical content of music is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with free jazz being used, either by musicians or others, as a means of protest.¹⁵ Interestingly, George Lewis (2008) points out that in the 1960s there was a clear differing of opinion between jazz musicians and those from the contemporary European tradition with regard to the appropriateness of political involvement. He writes, '[t]here was a surprising unanimity among this diverse group of artists [white musical avant-garde] in answering the question "Have you, or anyone ever used your music for political or social ends?"' (p. 34). The 'diverse group' which included John Cage, Morton Feldman, Charlotte Moorman and Steve Reich, all submitted to the traditionally held position that art should be 'politically disinterested' (ibid.). It is from this set of values that Gridley appears to be drawing. In contrast, musicians from the African American avant-garde, including Archie Shepp, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, and members of the AACM, tended to embrace communality and political action (Lewis, 2008). Even if we put to one side the debate over Coltrane's political consciousness, one finds the need to augment

¹³ Notwithstanding his acknowledgement of African American distinction in the music, Gunther Schuller's (1991) analytical approach betrays this. He writes, 'I imagined myself coming to jazz without any prior knowledge or preconceptions and beginning tabula rasa, to listen to the recordings – systematically and comprehensively' (ix). See also, Larson's (1998; 2002) Schenkerian method.

¹⁴ See discussion on the development of autonomous art in Chapter Three

¹⁵ Such as we hear in *We Insist! - Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* (1960) and Mingus's (1959/60) 'Fables of Faubus,' and read in 'Did John's Music Kill Him?' (Spellman, 1969) and 'Don't Cry, Scream' (Madhubuti, 1969). There is a sub-genre of poetry devoted to John Coltrane. See Kimberley Benston (1977; 2013) for more on the 'Coltrane poem.'

Gridley's comment that, 'The most turbulent of... Coltrane's music, whether chord-based, mode-based, or free-form, was motivated by an intense quest for new forms, exploring new variations' (p. 141). The importance of formal experiment to Coltrane is not in contest. In a 1960 interview, he reveals, 'The reason I play some many sounds... maybe, it sounds angry... because I'm trying too many things at one time, you see. Like, I haven't sorted them out. I have a whole bag of things I'm trying to work through and get to the one essential' (in interview with Carl Lindgren, 1960, my transcription). But the existence of a purely musical realm, able to cordon off the experience musicians live from the work they produce, is harder to accept than Baraka's assertion that Coltrane's work 'reflect[ed] through exact emotional analogy the turbulent period in which he lived' (quoted in Gridley, 2007, p. 148).¹⁶

Presenting the core of a new generation of work from scholars exploring the political activism of jazz and jazz musicians, extended studies from Scott Saul (2003), George Lewis (2008), Ingrid Monson (2007), Eric Porter (2002) and Iain Anderson (2007), among others, have provided a timely reassessment of radicalism in the music.¹⁷

Porter's *What is this Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics and Activists* spans a period from the 1920s (taking in Louis

¹⁶ Aram Sinnreich, who is in agreement with Gridley in relation to Coltrane's apolitical stance, suggests this supposed eschewal of aesthetic activism may have fuelled his ascension as a figurehead for black empowerment throughout the diaspora. He writes, 'Ironically, Coltrane's self-oriented meditations succeeded where Mingus's [an outspoken critic] exhortative bluster had failed. Coltrane's music, despite or because of its complete absence of explicit political messaging, became a touchstone for the new black consciousness, in America and around the world' (2005, p. 568-569).

¹⁷ See also Lorenzo Thomas's (2008) *Don't Deny My Name: Words and Music and the Black Intellectual Tradition*; *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* by Fred Moten (2003); Ajay Heble's (2000) *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance and Critical Practice*; 'Freedom Music: Jazz and Human Rights' by Jesse Stewart (2003); Salim Washington's (2004) 'All The Things You Could Be By Now: Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus and the Limits of Avant-garde Jazz'; Paul Steinbeck's (2011) 'Intermusicality, Humor, and Cultural Critique in the Art Ensemble of Chicago's A Jackson in Your House.'

Armstrong and Duke Ellington's thoughts on social inequality) up to the start of the new millennium (a dispassionate appraisal of Wynton Marsalis's neo-traditionalism). The heart of his study are two chapters on the intellectual and critical engagement of avant-garde and free jazz musicians such as Cecil Taylor, Marion Brown, Charles Mingus and Archie Shepp. Rather than a monolithic motif of 'angry protest', we find a range of perspectives in co-existence. For instance, pianist, Cecil Taylor, who has in his sights the constraints capitalism places on human relations, says he is 'searching for new truth – a truth beyond the money principle – a truth that will make people treat each other like human beings' (quoted in Porter, 2002, p. 200). While Shepp rejects the bourgeois ideal of autonomy, stating, 'I am an antifascist artist. My music is functional. I play about the death of me by you. I exult in the life of me in spite of you. I give some of that life to you whenever you listen to me, which right now is never. [...] If you are a bourgeois, then you must listen to it on my terms. I will not let you misconstrue me' (quoted in Porter, p. 203). Countering 'misconstrual' or misrecognition may be considered a central motivation of civil rights era music. Ironically, it is often obscured and presented as 'black anger.' While there was undoubtedly anger (and aggression, from certain quarters), this reading of jazz protest ignores other manifestations (lament, hope, fraternity, fear). This range of emotions is reflective in the music. Think of the range of the emotions evoked in the Triptych in Max Roach's *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*. In the drum and vocal duet performed by Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach we hear Lincoln screaming but the screams are not rage alone. As Fred Moten writes, 'Lincoln hums and then screams over Roach's increasingly and insistently intense percussion, moving inexorably in a trajectory and towards a location that is remote from...

words. You cannot help but hear the echo of Aunt Hester's scream as it bears, at the moment of articulation, a sexual overtone' (2003, p. 22).

Published the same year as 'Misconceptions', Iain Anderson's *This Is Our Music: Free Jazz, the Sixties and American Culture* questions the confinement of jazz radicalism to the movements of the 1960s, suggesting that preceding eras, too, had tendencies towards subversion. Interestingly, particularly in light of Gridley's concerns, Anderson writes of the contest over the ownership of the new music. He asks, 'Whose music was it? At various times during the 1960s, musicians, critics, fans, politicians, and entrepreneurs claimed jazz as a national art form, an Afrocentric race music, an extension of modernist experimentation in other genres, a music of mass consciousness, and the preserve of a cultural elite' (p. 2). The contest over the uses and meaning of jazz in the 1960s is brought into sharp focus in Scott Saul's (2003) fascinating exploration of commercialisation, institutionalisation, and protest during the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival (pp. 99-143).¹⁸ In *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties*, Saul presents a sensitive critical reading of the activism and protest of several of the musicians that Gridley discusses. Notably, he provides an insightful comparison between John Coltrane and Malcolm X, two black working class 'icons', who, he argues, managed to transcend the self-consciousness of their blackness. While Gridley may indeed object to the approach, clearly intent on further entanglement with 'cultural tensions', its relevance to the themes he is exploring cannot be in doubt.

¹⁸ As was Anderson's book, Monson's *Freedom Sounds* was published in 2007, the same year as Gridley's 'Misconceptions'. Brian Harker (2013) in a letter to the editor of *Journal of the College Music Society*, responding to Gridley's reply to an initial rejoinder (2008), mentions Monson's (2007) study which does seem to have escaped Gridley's attention.

These works not only give us fresh perspectives on the music's ties to political and social movements of the Sixties, they also serve as an appraisal of some of the less reflective accounts that preceded them. The militancy of critics such as Frank Kofsky and Amiri Baraka is a key target of Gridley's reproach. Kofsky's (1998b) incisive condemnation of what he terms the 'cockroach capitalism,'¹⁹ and his exposure of the surreptitious control that he felt was being exercised by white critics under the cover of integrationist rhetoric (1998a; Gennari, 2010, pp. 258-9) are overshadowed by his 'dogmatic and rigid ideological purity' (p. 263), and the heavy-handed attempts to enlist musicians such as John Coltrane and Albert Ayler as figureheads for the black nationalist cause.²⁰ Frank Kofsky's sustained attack on economic appropriation of African American expression is shown to be a necessary counterweight to attempts to present the music as synonymous with the 'American dream.' Gennari is able to listen past the shrill delivery to the usefulness of the content of much of Kofsky's work. Likewise, attention is paid to the development of Baraka's politicised contributions, which took a number of turns from the time of his incubation as the Greenwich Village bohemian to his years of activism following the

¹⁹ The term appeared in the original 1970 publication (the title then, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*) of *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution in the 1960s*. But the chapter in which it appeared, 'The "Jazz Club": an Adventure in Cockroach Capitalism' is deleted from subsequent editions. Kofsky (1998) refers the reader to his more recent study, *Black Music, White Business* (1998b) which is dedicated to exploring 'recording companies and booking agencies', who, in his opinion, exercise greater economic power (p. 17).

²⁰ Coltrane flatly refuses to be goaded into discussing his ideas about society and political consciousness within the crude framework presented by Kofsky. He tells the critic, 'you can't ram philosophies down anybody's throat, and the music is enough! That's philosophy' (quoted in Kofsky, 1998, p.458). Gridley is not alone in presenting Coltrane and other musicians as apolitical and universalist. For example see, Porter (2002, pp. 196-7) and Sinnreich (2005, p. 268). However, Monson (2007) shows that this obscures the truth somewhat, and presents evidence to suggest that Coltrane perhaps had closer links to black nationalism and pan-Africanism than to civil rights organisations (pp. 302-3). See also, Lorenzo Thomas (2008) who writes 'it was widely known on the East Side that the black musicians were much more race-conscious and militant than artists in other disciplines' (p. 119).

assassination of Malcolm X. Baraka's insight is given as much attention as his inconsistencies and unpalatable black essentialism. John Gennari tackles the challenges the radicalism of the two writers present securing their legacy within the history of jazz criticism.

The hyperbole and the unapologetic Afrocentricism which pervades much of Baraka's work (although to varying degrees throughout his corpus) did little to ingratiate his ideas to the pluralist, inclusive narratives of the new jazz studies (I am thinking of work from the 1990s, such as Scott De Veaux's 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition' and Krin Gabbard's edited collection, *Representing Jazz*), which were largely unwilling to engage with Baraka despite his often insightful analysis of the musical medium. As Maxwell (2011) notes, Baraka is mentioned only twice in *Representing Jazz*. This is surprising considering that 'new' directions in the discipline cover very similar critical ground to Baraka, albeit in less polemic tones and, at times, coming to different conclusions. In Baraka and much of the new studies is a call to challenge traditional analytical approaches, and to rework the autonomous art or 'American classical music' narrative put forward by 'formalists' such as Gunther Schuller.²¹ Despite Baraka (1963) opening up these debates around canon and its ownership, and the need to situation the music socially and politically some twenty-five years earlier, arguing that jazz demanded to be 'subjected to a socio-anthropological as well as musical scrutiny' (p. x), he does not feature as an influence.²² Gridley's misgiving about the linking of jazz to the civil rights

²¹ Interestingly, Baraka (2009), a recent volume of work, uses the term in its title - *Digging: the Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music*, reconciling his earlier disparagement of Wynton Marsalis's tenure at Jazz at Lincoln Centre.

²² De Veaux's (1991) claim that Baraka 'treated jazz as something intrinsically separate from the white "mainstream"' (p. 502) gives only half the story. Baraka presents jazz (and a very particular

movement must be seen in the light of the recent reappraisals of these movements touched on above.

Adorno, Coltrane and models of future sociality

This section brings Adorno back into conversation with jazz. Through a consideration of his objections concerning politicised art, we will arrive at what Adorno proposes as a more effective means of praxis. As touched on in the last chapter, Adorno considered the autonomous, self-governing works of the modern European tradition to provide a sort of social theory. In the manner in which these works bring together disparate particulars from a pool of available musical material, allowing those individual components to retain their distinction as they come together to assist in the completion of the work, we are able to glimpse a more satisfactory mode of sociality than that to which we have grown accustomed.

The anticipative model is also manifest in the way the solitary composer interacts with the socially sedimented musical material. Modern European forms are dependent on a musician's interaction with the collective of composer-collaborators from whom he extracts material on which he comments through his contribution to an ever-evolving tradition.²³ Collectively the works from this lineage present, in musical form, the socio-history of the bourgeoisie. Adorno's assertion that 'All music, even that which is the most individualistic stylistically, has an inalienable

black-facing version of jazz) as distinct from the mainstream but profoundly informed by its relation to it. The charge of essentialism is more valid but is not given the space to do justice to the patchwork of critique and polemic that makes up *Blues People*. What Baraka presents is the black experience as an alternative spirit of the day. That is to say, a world seen through the eyes of African Americans.

²³ It may be that in modern European music there is greater synthesis than we see in jazz. The latter's tradition is more profitably seen as slowly accumulating 'transparent layers' as in Walter Benjamin's 'story.'

collective content: each single sound already says “We” (quoted in Paddison, 1993, p. 115), brings him into conversation with Coltrane who once said that ‘the audience heard “we” even if the singer said “I”’ (quoted in McClary, 2000, 47). Of course, the important difference between the two is that while in autonomous forms the collective subject needs to be reconstructed in musicological analysis, with which it collaborates in providing the model of an improved mode of human relations, in jazz we find that sociality is very much part of how its creative work is done. Although limited in scope, the jazz band and tradition is founded upon real-life forms of sociality that challenge that which is encountered in everyday life. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how Coltrane’s universalism can be seen as a propagation of this alternative ‘model’ of how human beings can interact without control and manipulation.

Towards the end of his life, Adorno was forced to face the consequence of his rejection of direct action as effective inducement of revolutionary change. His radical apoliticism, which stringently rejected direct action as an effective means to upset the deeply entrenched ‘administered society’, or as a means to bring about a change in consciousness, was met head-on by the student and workers’ protests that were erupting throughout Germany in 1968. It is surprising that the leaders of the students’ movement, whose theoretical orientations were indebted to Adorno, were disappointed with what they regarded a lack of radicalism on Adorno’s part, considering the fact that his work is consistent in its rejection of political activism. The absence of a revolutionary class, the focus on consumption and the culture industry in which class interest is all but redundant, his criticism of Bertolt Brecht’s

and Jean-Paul Sartre's attempts at political-aesthetic intervention, and, of course, his ambivalence towards Walter Benjamin's positioning of mass media technology as a progressive direction in artistic production and consumption, all point to this scepticism.

The problems which Adorno believes face politicised art are covered in 'Commitment', his critique of attempts made by Sartre and Brecht to produce work that is both of artistic value and politically engaged. In *What is Literature?*, Sartre ([1947] 1988) encourages artists to use their work as a means to critique society. He writes, 'The "committed" writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change and that one can reveal only by planning to change. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of Society and the human condition' (p. 37). And yet, Adorno (1978) argues, it is not the content, promoting Sartre's ideas concerning individual choice, that is impressed on his audience. Rather, it is how his work inadvertently reproduces, in form, the reality of the individual's subordination and its lack of free will, the true and unshakable state of the 'human condition'. As Adorno writes, 'his plays are... bad models of his own existentialism, because they display in their respect for truth the whole administered universe of unfreedom' (p. 7). Brecht displayed greater understanding of the limitations placed on the individual by the 'essence of society... the law of exchange' (p. 9), and worked his protest against this into the formal structure of his work, 'translat[ing] the true hideousness of society into theatrical appearance, by dragging it straight out from its camouflage' (ibid.). Even so, Adorno considered his work a disappointment on both political and artistic fronts. Even when the intention is quite the opposite, engaging in programmatic work can make too light of the

‘political reality... which then reduces the political effect’ (p. 11).²⁴ Works lose their effectiveness both as art and political agency – stripped of aura they are reduced to mere fillers of free time and support a complacency that undercuts any intention of dissent. Adorno writes: ‘A work of art that is committed, strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political’ (p. 4). In this way, activism may avert our attention from the true source of disgruntlement, and in so doing, collude with that which it wishes to counter.

Clearly, Adorno’s misgivings concerning political art are of a markedly different nature to those we encounter in Gridley’s essay. Although Adorno accepted the historical fact of art music’s alienation from other spheres of modern life, and recognised that the discourse advancing the notion of ‘art for art’s sake’ was an integral part of the process of autonomisation, he did not subscribe to the idea prescriptively.²⁵ He could, in fact, appreciate the usefulness of Kurt Weill’s programmatic work in shaking people out of their sleep-state. Adorno was ambivalent with regard to Weill’s composition, and yet despite the composer’s borrowings from jazz and popular song, his work is commended as ‘the only music of genuine *social-polemic* impact’ (2002, p. 409, my emphasis). These concessions notwithstanding, Adorno, who had little faith in the developing consciousness of the proletariat, regarded the formation of a politicised collective, towards which such efforts were directed, as an unrealistic hope.²⁶ Approaching these issues from the

²⁴ Adorno gives the example of Charlie Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator*, which ‘loses all satirical force, and becomes obscene, when a Jewish girl can bash a line of storm troopers on the head with a pan without being torn to pieces’ (pp. 10-11).

²⁵ Although see Lambert Zuidervaart (1990).

²⁶ See Chapter One for more on this.

direction of artistic integrity, Adorno argues that, even if limited political successes may be garnered from protest music, such work forfeits its status as art and the related critical advantages. He believed that the only way artistic work can provide social critique is at a distance, through its form - 'It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world (1978, p. 7).²⁷ Protest, even when instigated within an understanding of historical materialism (such as Brecht attempted), is vulnerable to individual whim, often corrupting original clarity of intention. Even though it may seem a politically impotent pursuit, the best musicians can do is to stay faithful to the processual laws of their works' form. On this Adorno offers that, 'one who.... solitarily works on his material serves a true collective better than one who submits to the demands of what presently exists and thereby, despite collective appearances, forgets the social demands which come out of his own aesthetic sphere, namely his work and its problems' (quoted in Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 41).²⁸ Here is music's chance to uncover societal deficiencies and point to alternatives, unapproachable by way of social or political approaches.²⁹

²⁷ At first glance these remarks, from Adorno, appear to be echoed by those of Ralph Ellison, who in defending *Invisible Man* (widely read at the time of its original publication as a protest novel) against the charge of activism, pointed out the transformation of his protagonist's status from a 'would-be politician and rabble rouser and orator to that of writer' (1995, p.76), implying the two were mutually exclusive, and that the transmutation was a progressive one. Ellison, who wrote incisively on jazz, was unsympathetic to the music's role in civil rights, believing works should be lead 'by the logic of the art itself' (p. 94).

²⁸ While Ellison objected to black music's function as a political tool, he saw no conflict in this 'art form' being inextricably tied to a group of a *community* of musicians and audience-participants. While insisting on political autonomy he did not consider jazz work to be solitary.

²⁹ Martin Williams (1993), notwithstanding the admission that his 'book [*The Jazz Tradition*] has... little to say about [the music's] deeper meaning' (p. 260), concludes, in a passage to redress the lack of context in his work, with some speculative remarks that resonate closely with Adorno's understanding of the social significance of art. 'Its significance is greater than providing a more palatable or extravagant rendering of a lived reality. He believes that [i]t compensates for conscious attitudes; it reveals to us that there are other, perhaps opposite, but still tenable ways of looking at things, of feeling about things. Art tells us what we do not know or do not realize' (p. 263).

Adorno does not reject praxis outright. As Espen Hammer (2005) points out, Adorno believed that the ‘theory/praxis constellation needs to be speculatively reconfigured. Since praxis in the sense of immediate collective action seems to have become unavailable, or at least fraught with difficulties, the claim to social reconfiguration implicit in the concept of praxis must be transposed to the level of theory’ (p. 15). The hope for progressive ‘reconfigurations’ of society rested on a change in consciousness, in which the deception that keeps people from the truth of their relations is exposed. And, pertinent to the discussion at hand, art work (and Adorno shows a particular prejudice towards music) enacts a parallel form of criticism to that of social theory, playing out, in its processes of structuration, a more progressive form of social organisation. We find that, ‘the process enacted internally by each and every artwork works back on society as the model of a possible praxis in which something on the order of a collective subject is constituted’ (Adorno, 1997, p. 242).³⁰ In the autonomous forms of the solitary composer can be found a ‘collective We’.³¹

Adorno is characteristically elusive when it comes to sharing what these ideal forms of social organisation might look like. Compared to the detail and depth of social analysis he gives of ‘administered society’, and that he gives in his critique of the culture industry, little attempt is made to flesh out a speculative vision of the

³⁰ The ‘collective We’ that we encounter in *Aesthetic Theory* needs to be distinguished from the mass entity of late capitalist society. The latter is characterised as a homogeneous, subservient crowd of atomised human beings. Their tendency is towards conformity at the expense of the nurture of their human distinction. Individual quirk is suppressed but they are able to purchase ‘lifestyles’ to compensate.

³¹ This phrase is from Espen Hammer (2005, p. 196). Adorno talks of a ‘collective subject’ repeatedly in *Aesthetic Theory* (1997).

utopian ideal that music's critical theory suggests.³² Musicological analysis can decode from completed works the specific contradictions that society is held under at the time of their production, but it is in the way works are put together that we catch a glimpse of the progressive alternative.³³ The interplay between mimesis (the empathetic interaction between dissimilar particulars) and construction (that which saves the work from the potential impotence that its mimetic attitude threatens, moving it forwards towards completion, and giving the temporal unfolding of the work a teleological impulse) allows us to glimpse the social ideal. In *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno (1984) writes, 'In art, the criterion of success is twofold: first, works of art must be able to integrate materials and details into their immanent law of form; and, second, they must not try to erase the fractures left by the process of integration, preserving instead in the aesthetic whole the traces of those elements which resisted integration' (pp. 9-10). The manner in which works allow details to stand exposed in their alerity, even as they come together in synthesis towards the completion of the work, provides the framework for Adorno's speculative model of a future social reality. This is a model and not reflective of anything society has to offer at present. But Adorno does allow a social element. The musical material being formed by the composer is imbued with a socio-history. That is, the scales and progressions, its macro-structure and stylistic convention, all carry, within them, the tradition, and traces of broader society. The composer, in his use of a pool of collective content, is

³² Whereas a common complaint from detractors of Adorno's jazz critique is that he fails to engage with its formal qualities.

³³ Adorno carries out this ambitious work in his analysis of the work of individual composers of the European tradition such as Beethoven, Mahler, Stravinsky and Schoenberg.

in his work re-forming the tradition, and so representing, in that work, a community of temporally disparate composers.

The African American ‘communal self’ does not coincide with Adorno’s anticipative ‘collective We’, although the resemblance is striking. The former is the result of the objectification of human beings for use within the proto-industries supported by chattel slavery in the early history of the United States.³⁴ The racialization that formed part of strategies of control facilitated something of the utopian ideal of communal subjectivity that Adorno identifies in art work. In Chapter Two, we explored how the principles of structuration in jazz tend towards empathetic collaboration, in which the individual musician works to retain his distinction, while playing toward the chorus of musicians that make up the tradition. The free and avant-garde strands that emerged towards the end of the 1950s are often considered to be on the periphery of the jazz tradition. In the eschewal of what writers at the forefront of the form’s canonisation considered the mark of good jazz, the ‘new’ music very often rejected the ideals of linearity and coherence.³⁵ In light of the alternative analytical vantage presented in this study, which sees the fundamental principle of jazz being the retention of particularities within collaborative settings, there is an argument in support of us approaching the tradition from the point of view of these free and avant-garde permutations of the music. It could be argued that with free jazz, the principles of empathetic collaboration, of heterophony, irresolution, and

³⁴ See Chapter One of this study for discussion.

³⁵ Although it is worth considering that similar accusations of ‘anti-jazz’ were directed at swing music by the ‘mouldy figs’ who considered real jazz to be Dixieland.

contingency (lack of necessity), that have been shown to govern the tradition, are stated empathically and put to conscious work.

The freedom from harmonic-melodic convention, most often pointed to as the key feature of the music, tells only part of the story. What is, perhaps, most remarkable about Ornette Coleman's (1959) *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, the album that is often thought to mark the threshold of the new music, is not that melody, harmony, rhythm, musicians' roles and heads are dispensed with. Indeed, in the main we hear the various musical components are where we expect to find them: although melody is not tied to harmony, solos follow one after the other and contain motivic variations, soloist calls and drums respond, rhythm section play, moving between antiphony and heterophony. The significance is that the material, although where we expect it, has been prised apart; the elements are shown to be able to exist independently. In free jazz, the contingency of convention (where we find material within an individual performance and within the tradition) is made very clear. If there was any doubt about the fragility of logic within the tradition, free jazz dispels it. New relationships are formed but these and the components stand exposed, disparate, unstable, and unresolved. What sets Coleman's music apart from both the hard bop and cooled bebop of the late Fifties is its making explicit the freedom from expectation and necessity.

The wide variety of approaches and sounds of free jazz are testament to the pool of disengaged fragments of available musical material. And yet the dialectic between distinction and collectivity remains and is strengthened; the primacy of the individual is as frequently questioned as it is affirmed. Referring to the experimental double quartet recording, led by Coleman a few years after the release of *The Shape*

of *Jazz to Come*, Ekkehard Jost (1974) writes that in the 'collective improvisation of *Free Jazz* [1961], the contributions of each and every improviser have a certain melodic life of their own; motivic connections and dove-tailing of the various parts create a polyphonic web of interactions' (p. 89). Here the contributors create a loosely woven sonic texture in which, to varying degrees amongst the musicians, the soloist's voice retains pride of place. In Coltrane's *Ascension* (1966), another large ensemble piece, the sections of communal improvisation show a much closer weave. On this Jost writes, 'the parts contribute above all to the formation of changing sound-structures, in which the individual usually has only a secondary importance. Quite plainly, the central idea is not to produce a network of interwoven independent melodic lines, but dense sound complexes' (p. 89). In this integrative sonic blanket, the play between ensemble and individual creates less discrete statements, and as Jost points out Coltrane *et al* move even further away from the bebop privileged model of the discrete solo. But in contrast to Jost's interpretation, *Ascension* can be heard as the work of a congregation. The ensemble seems to move through worship, praise and the 'speaking in tongues' of an evangelical service. Rather than the inanimation of a 'sound complex,' Coltrane and his colleagues are involved, through their musical work, in a real-life social situation which has its roots in the work song and the black church. The heteronomous nature of black forms invites us to understand social interaction in jazz as more than a metaphor. The evangelical congregation and the work song chorus are not merely metaphoric devices, but are two contexts of sociality that exist alongside that of the 'jazz band'. Demonstrated in all is the mimetic play between a person and a community characteristic of much African American expression. The *Ascension* ensemble plays out within a real-life social

setting the anticipative, ‘utopian’ forms of association that Adorno argues can only be glimpsed through musicological analysis and other privileged forms of social theory.

In a letter he sent to *Down Beat* editor Don De Micheal in 1962, Coltrane tells the critic that, ‘Any music which could grow and propagate itself as our [African American community] music has, must have a hell of an affirmative belief inherent in it. Any person who claims to doubt this, or claims to believe that the exponents of our music or freedom are not guided by the same entity, is either prejudiced, musically sterile or just plain stupid or scheming. Believe me, Don, we all know that this word which so many seem to fear today, “Freedom” has a hell of a lot to do with this music’ (quoted in Brown, 2010, p. 17). Coltrane is, as we saw, typically presented as apolitical or as universalist (Gridley, 2007; Porter, 2002; Williams, 1992).³⁶ The letter, first published three years ago in Leonard Brown’s edited collection, *John Coltrane and Black America’s Quest for Freedom: Spirituality and the Music*,³⁷ is significant in showing that political engagement was not only manifest as Mingus’s ‘exhortative bluster[s]’ (Sinnreich, 2005, p. 596), or in the programmatic *Freedom* suites recording by Max Roach and Sonny Rollins.³⁸ It suggests that *the African American context, and its ‘awakening’ black consciousness, was an appropriate site from which to aspire to universality.*

³⁶ Monson (2007) confirms this tendency and shows its limitations (pp. 302-3).

³⁷ The letter had been in the possession of Coltrane’s first wife, Naima who passed it on to C. O. Simpkins (1999) who made use of it in his biography, *Coltrane: A Biography*.

³⁸ John Gennari (2010) has shown that the contest between critics on either side of the fence was deeply political, despite the intentions of writers such as Martin Williams and Ira Gitler to present the apolitical face of jazz criticism. The degree to which musicians tended towards integration or black nationalism may not have been stated explicitly but was an undercurrent in much criticism during the 1950s and 1960s.

Eric Porter (2002) is not alone in his regarding Coltrane's 'universalist' approach to music as an affront to 'those who wished to limit the meaning and function of this music to an African American context' (p. 197). Gridley argues similarly in 'Misconceptions', and his research on the perceptions of anger appears to be motivated, to some extent, by a desire to cordon off an area free of social and political context. What I find most interesting in the positioning of Coltrane as apolitical and 'universalist rather than... black nationalist' (Porter, 2002, p. 197), is that we are confronted with a very particular formulation of black praxis and concern, one exclusionary of universalism.³⁹ As Gennari (2010) points out 'the cold war-era canonization of jazz's "universality" was often premised on a very narrow, parochial view of the political universe' (p. 257). It appears that this limited view has persisted to the present day. In light of the discussions that have preoccupied this present study, it is interesting that Coltrane's philosophy of openness, dialogue and exchange, and his unrelenting and extreme 'play' with musical material (I am thinking of both his compulsion to practise, and also of his need to play all the possibilities that a progression or chord presents),⁴⁰ is considered to be opposed to African American concerns.

In the interviews Coltrane gave he shows a clear desire for the 'global community'. For instance, he shares, 'when you begin to see the possibilities of music, you desire to do something good for people, to help humanity free itself from

³⁹ The more essentialist elements of black nationalism have been well documented. Studies by Porter (2002), Radano, (1993) and Lewis (2008) are all excellent. As Porter has shown, musicians such as drummer Milford Graves, linked to The Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School set up by Baraka, did call for organisation, collective action through a programme of 'intellectual, cultural, and economic self-reliance' (Porter, p. 199).

⁴⁰ 'I'm trying so many things at one time... I haven't sorted them out' (Coltrane in interview with Carl Lindgren, 1960, my transcription).

its hangups. I think music can make the world better, and if I'm qualified, I want to do it. I'd like to point out to people the divine in a musical language that transcends worlds. I want to speak to their souls' (Hall, 2001, p. 148). The point here is not to reject the universalist strain within Coltrane's thought and music. It is rather to show, as George Lipsitz (2003) has eloquently put it, that Coltrane can 'teach us to find great value in particularisms that chronicle the specific experiences and unique standpoints of aggrieved groups while at the same time seeking a universalism rich with particulars, a universalism that invited dialogue from all while conceding automatic supremacy to none' (p. 1606). Coltrane's embrace of a global 'brotherhood' (the 'universal') does not put him at odds with the concerns being voiced within the 'African American context' (a particular).

As touched upon in Chapter Two, in his letter to De Micheal, Coltrane refers to three different orders of community: the musical (jazz) community, those hostile communities of the music's founding fathers and the global community.⁴¹ Moreover, in his assertion that the 'whole face of the globe is our community,' this, according to Coltrane, being part of the 'positive and affirmative philosophy' of the African American and jazz music (Brown, 2010, p. 17), he betrays the same sense of 'moral authority' we hear in Martin Luther King's address at the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival: 'Jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man' (Jackson, 2010, p. 176).⁴² In light of the De Micheal letter, perhaps it is more profitable to read

⁴¹ See chapter two for a more complete discussion on this.

⁴² Musicians were often comfortable with holding, seemingly, contradictory positions. As Paul Austerlitz (2005) writes, '[p]ercussionist Milford Graves maintains that the music he plays is "directly linked to African music." But he also proclaims, "I do not deal with music that has any ethnic

Coltrane's repeated invitation to the critic to gain insight into what jazz musicians of the day 'feel in music', not only from the spiritual and solitary artist mould he is often cast in, but also to read it as an iteration of a Du Boisian sense of African American moral authority and revelatory privilege - 'What we know we feel we'd like to convey to the listener. *We hope that this can be shared by all*' (quoted in *Downbeat*, April 12, 1962).⁴³ The pull between the particular and universal in Coltrane symbolises a commitment to a critical reimagined collective based on the enforced amalgamation of human difference under the marker of race, while at the same time holding as sacred personal idiosyncrasy.⁴⁴ The idea concerning empathetic creation in jazz work in which musicians contribute to collaborative work but strive to keep sight of their distinction is a key node of exploration for this study, and its broader significance is revealed here. Coltrane's universalism needs to be seen both as an overt but idiosyncratic political programme, and as a demonstration *par excellence* of black alterity.

classification. I deal with human music." [...] And while Duke Ellington said that he played "Negro" music," he also insisted that his art is "international" (p. xi).

⁴³ From Don De Micheal's article 'John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics' in *Downbeat*, April 12, 1962, <http://downbeat.com/microsites/prestige/dolphy-interview.html> [assessed on 14 April 2015].

⁴⁴ The ideas that are garnered most readily from these fragments do not coincide with an idea of 'strategic universalism' such as we read in some of Paul Gilroy's recent work. While I agree that the embrace of universalism in musicians and thinkers such as Coltrane and King does point to a '[y]earning to be free, that is, to be free of "race" and racism' (Gilroy, 2000, p. 330), it does not lead to a negation of identity markers such as race, ethnicity, sexuality or gender. Universalism is a strategy towards mutual recognition rather than a negation of difference.

Chapter Six

Concluding remarks

Socio-musical interaction that occurs within a jazz band, and inter-generationally through musicians' reworking of the tradition, bears resemblances to the model proposed by Theodor Adorno of the aesthetic praxis of works from the modern European tradition. Jazz work is communal and constructed through the creative tension involved in musicians' commitment to the collective and to tradition, while striving to retain their distinctive voice and approach. Rather than being emblematic of 'the individual' and liberal democracy, in which 'all the uniters are isolated' (Emerson quoted in Kouwenhoven, 1956, p. 28), it has been shown that jazz better represents, and indeed embodies, a form of social organisation that challenges the anti-communality of a group of equal but separate individuals. Jazz work cannot be understood solely as a pantheon of internally coherent solos. And while there is some merit, particularly for pedagogical purposes, in this line of analysis, the solo abstracted from the sociality of a jazz band obscures the creative complex of interaction, and robs jazz work of its role in providing a form of social criticism.

Over the last 15 years, scholars have been developing approaches that are better equipped to understand and discuss the socio-musicality of jazz. The present study contributes to these approaches in a number of ways. Ingrid Monson's (1996) work on

band interaction, which provides a retrospective theoretical framework for Paul Berliner's (1994) encyclopedic account of the jazz musician's life-cycle, from woodshedding greenhorn to mentor of an emerging generation, has been hugely influential. While her work touches on the possible historical basis for the tendency towards collaborative work and process (rather than a focus on a final text) in African American expression, because of the broad scope covered in order to set the for what, was at the time a little explored area, the socio-historical foundations of jazz interaction were not dealt with by it in any depth. This study has shown that we can trace the tendency towards collaboration in jazz back to the roots of African American subjectivity. The stripping of human distinction, and the associated racialization of a group of disparate captives, as strategies of control during the period of chattel slavery in the U. S., can help explain the 'communal self' at the heart of African American expression. We find that the forced collective is not rejected by the black community but the absolute identity of all, in which 'Every Black Man/Woman is the "race"' (Spillers, 2003, p. 395) is challenged. The seemingly contradictory position of holding onto a collective identity and insisting on the retention and nurture of one's particularities is key to understanding how jazz work and its tradition develop.

The socio-history of African Americans sheds light on why attempts to 'classicize' jazz are often met with resistance from the music itself. The study has shown that the (often) bourgeois concerns of critics are not matched by those of the black modern. The preoccupation with individuality which portrays the jazz band as a group of individuals who merely inhabit the same sonic space, may, at first glance, resemble the

empathetic collaboration explicated in this study. But, in fact, it misses the centrality of collectivism in jazz. Community is not added on as a way to manage conflicting ends. Nor does it come about as a by-product of the social proximity of isolated 'equals'. In fact, quoting again from Hortense Spillers (2003), we find 'a collective enterprise in strict antinomy to the individualistic synthesis of the dominant culture' (p. 395).
Communality makes jazz work.

Communality makes jazz work. But so does personal distinction. It has not been an intention of the study to deny the importance of personality (meant in a thoroughly corporeal sense, taking in a musician's physicality, as well as the specifics of their experience). In fact, in contrast to the pre-dominant approach in jazz musical analysis, the study alongside that of scholars such as Vijay Iyer (2004) and Robert Walser (1995) has been interested in drawing our attention away from the solo towards small details, such as non-designative verbal articulations (the sigh, laughter, moans), as well as to the macro-structures of standards and other nodes of social significance in which jazz work is done. The story has been shown to be an excellent framework from which to scale analytical thought up (towards broader plains of exploration) and down (towards the specifics of homemade technique).¹ The locus of jazz musicians' work is this play between particular and collective, and is as corporeal as it is 'formal'.

The study aims to contribute to the suggestion made by Susan McClary (2000) that musicologists of the future will label 'us all "blues people"' (p. 33). It does so in

¹ Although non-designative verbal expressions such as screaming and sighing take the analyst into the minutiae of musical detail, these are often important sites of 'mass concentration of Black experiential energy' (1972, p. 44).

two specific directions. First, through showing that the African American tendency to slide between sound and sense presents an opportunity to evade the prison of strict designation, while retaining the possibility for meaning and social significance. What has been tentatively suggested is that African American expression has developed an ingenious solution to the difficulties of communicating unspeakable trauma in its disruption of word and meaning. This is taken further in musical forms. Sound may not turn against speech exactly, as Robert Switzer (2011) suggests, but it surely challenges its designative hegemony. The study also underscores McClary's universalisation of 'the blues' in its consideration of the 'evangelic impulse' of some civil rights era protest. Could it be that the 'collective self' has enabled forms that are capable of communicating something essential concerning our modern condition amidst the increasing isolation of people and their growing inability to say how they feel about it? Can we learn from jazz a more direct and integrative means of interaction? The study argues that this is a possibility but cautions that appropriation and misrepresentation of jazz work obscures its critical potential. Can the form's progressive model of social interaction transcend its circumscriptive socio-musical sphere? It seems that despite its social character, jazz suffers a similar fate of impotence that we find in critical works of the modern European tradition. On the other hand, and despite the fact that studio recording and the institutionalisation of jazz pedagogy has tended to reduce the importance of the indeterminacy and open-endedness necessary for collaborative work, even today people are making jazz music with similar deference to what this study has

argued are its foundational principles. I hope this is a debate that will spark the interest of others.

An important lesson learnt from writing this thesis is that footnotes are frequently an excellent source from which to uncover a writer's underdeveloped or contradictory insight. At times, they are able to provide the reader with reflexivity missing from the main text. It was coming across Adorno's (2003) caveat in the *Philosophy of Modern Music* concerning the possibility of the existence of non-bourgeois enclaves of resistance that spurred my interest on towards W. E. B. Du Bois's 'double consciousness' and the opportunity it presented of providing a distinctive but no less valid critical distance from which to appraise society. Similarly, what is excluded, either by design or negligence, prompts us to explore. Specifically for the present study, I was forced to ask whether I could explain away Adorno's lack of consideration of the African American experience as simple Eurocentric oversight or as a valid conscious decision based on a historically determined pecking order of experience. Moreover, knowing what I do from experience would it not be irresponsible, in scholarly terms, not to pay attention to whether Adorno's descriptive account of the socio-history of the bourgeoisie and modern European music, notwithstanding Michael de la Fontaine's persuasive argument,² could adequately explain an expressive form deriving from a subject with a markedly different experience of modernity?

² The bourgeois subject is presented by Adorno as 'the most advanced consciousness of its period' (Paddison, 1993, p. 118) which could account for all other subjectivities.

We also find in Adorno's 'deafness' (Moten, 2003) inadvertent insight into the predicament of the African American and how this subject appears in the mainstream. In his characterisation of the 'hot subject' as clown, and as the marketing tool of 'jazz', 'housebroken and scrubbed behind the ears' (Adorno, 2000, p. 275), ready for participation in society, Adorno shows an astute, if impetuous, appraisal of the situation in which African Americans find themselves in the culture industry. Also of particular interest is the implication that the 'hot jazz' subject (whom we can consider as synonymous with the African American) had, in a sense, experienced ubiquitous subordination ahead of the bourgeoisie, and was able to 'demonstrate for the not yet adequately mutilated liberals the mechanism of identification with their own oppression' (1989/90, p. 67). While rejecting the passivity attributed the 'hot subject,' and keeping in mind its distinctive historical trajectory, the idea that African American history might provide answers to those that pertain to other subjectivities, including that of the bourgeoisie, has been important in countering the default ghettoization of work that approaches modernity from the perspective of the subordinate.

Limitations and future work

Managing and balancing the expectations of the various disciplines that are drawn from in the study has been a challenge. Jazz studies itself is a hodgepodge of musicology, sociology, cultural studies, history, literary studies, and journalism. The use made of critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, while consistent with the predisposition toward the humanities, adds to the task of meaningfully co-ordinating

these distinct perspectives. The bringing together of African American literature and its studies, critical theory and the music itself, has been an overwhelming positive experiment. And yet, the timeframe and clearly delineated boundaries, set in order for the study, as an apprenticeship, to provide a coherent line of argument to a deadline, placed some limitation on the depth of enquiry reached in each of the relevant areas. This has left the study open to be built upon in a number of directions.

The music I have drawn from in my study is predominantly from studio recordings. It is significant that a catalyst for the research, the Mingus Sextet recording of a concert given at Cornell University in 1964, was of a live performance. In fact, although not included in the present study, time was spent comparing this album's version of 'Fables of Faubus' with two studio recordings (one on Mingus Ah Um and the other on Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus) of the same composition. The later studio recording was a mock-up of a nightclub gig in which Mingus, in a sense, presents a critique of the 'cockroach capitalism' of nightclubs (Kofsky, 1970), and of the record as the predominant but inadequate representative of jazz work. The analysis was an interesting exercise and one that has no doubt influenced the conclusions reached in the study. What is of most importance in relation to the discussion of the project's limitations is not only a declaration of my absolute dependence on recording, but also the dissatisfaction I feel concerning the absence of a discussion concerning its indispensability/inadequacy.

Some excellent recent studies have paved the way towards a better understanding of the opportunities offered and the hindrances created by jazz records (Rasula, 1995), as

well as interesting discussions which outline a renewal of Adorno and Benjamin's conversation concerning jazz and mechanical reproduction (Coulthard, 2007; Prouty, 2008). The present study asks why, even in light of its implication in the culture industry, its use as a tool of 'classicizing' jazz work, and its tendency to congeal and obscure the creative process, the record still manages to show successive generations how they might go about contributing to (and so sustaining) the tradition. Perhaps being able to learn from and collaborate with musicians from the past directly, without reliance on a whispering game in which the tradition would have been filtered through the personal interpretation of a real-life contemporary teacher, is of central importance. Perhaps the democratisation of jazz education that sound recording facilitates has helped sustain jazz through to the twenty-first century.

The study has a dual concern of, on the one hand, presenting the African American experience and expression as an important facet of the modern narrative, and on the other, showing that the neglect of a distinct African American subjectivity in scholarship on modernity and its 'discontents,' has provided cover under which alternative forms of thought and expression have been able to develop. This hopping between African American underground, in which my engagement is more descriptive than critical and the above-ground societal core, in relation to which I present a more sustained critique, perhaps dissipates the force of the analytical method of each. But I hold that the two responses to the neglect in modern thought concerning what Ralph Ellison considers 'a most complex example of Western man' (1995, p. 26), in their

creative tension, have taken the study through several unexpected revisions and changes of heart, leading to better considered conclusions.

Much inspired by the academic work of musician Vijay Iyer (2004, 2004b), and poet Fred Moten (2004), and being a jazz performer myself, I felt somewhat encumbered in my desire, following the music, to be more open-ended and less reliant on the designation that scholarly pursuit demands. The section on ‘empathetic scholarship’ at the close of the second chapter is particularly important to me as I consider future research. The groundwork set in that section demands further attention. I am particularly interested in the interaction between Iyer’s academic and musical work, and, similarly, I would like to consider Moten’s *In the Break* within the wider context of his poetry. This exploration would aim to find ways to meet the music partway, and to formulate a more satisfactory personal approach to studying and writing about jazz.

Relatedly, as a singer, I am interested in how the voice features in jazz work. I believe that it is absolutely key to understanding jazz music, particularly in light of the more recent approaches inaugurated by Monson (1996), Walser (1995), and others. Monson’s metaphor of choice, ‘conversation’, Walser’s attention to expressive detail, and Iyer’s (2004b) more recent work on embodiment, all point to the centrality of matters pertaining to the human voice. In fact Rudi Blesh recognised this importance early on in the history of the discipline. In 1946 he wrote, ‘African music and the Afro-American music which preceded jazz are both, in the main, vocal. Jazz, as we shall see, refers to these antecedents in the highly vocalized tone quality with which the melody instruments are played. [...] The impression of vocalization is so strong, and the feeling

of polyphonal choral work so pervasive in a New Orleans jazz band, that I shall frequently refer to the cornet, trombone, and clarinet as voice instruments' (p. 43). More work is needed to establish the importance of the voice in jazz.

The study points to a number of avenues of future engagement between Adorno and jazz, some of which have been mentioned above. The role of listener and audience was touched upon in the discussion on storytelling at the heart of chapter two. The audience-collaborator is shown to be integral to the 'passing from mouth to mouth' of an oral tradition, and is essential to the exposition being made concerning collective work. One area of Adorno's sociology of music that I would have liked to explore further is his work concerning regressive and structural listening.³ It is mentioned in chapter four in the discussion of Mingus's nightclub tirade. While structural listening is inappropriate to the processual nature of jazz work, Mingus does appear to be appealing to something similar. It would be interesting to see where this conversation goes. George Lewis (1996) and Iyer (2004) have explored 'improvisational listening' in recent work to which such a study would contribute.⁴

The importance of the Chicago-based *Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians* to conversations concerning political and social engagement, and the related but distinct, aesthetic praxis of radical music, has been the elephant in the room of the present study. The depth and range of work from this true collective which includes musicians Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Wadada Leo Smith, Muhal

³ I am thinking primarily of the relevant passages of 'On the Social Situation of Music' ([1932] 2002), and 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' ([1938] 2002).

⁴ 4 Alessandro Bertinetto's (2012) paper 'Improvisational Listening?' is begging for a rejoinder from a jazz studies perspective.

Richard Abrams, Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, and many others, as well as its continued commitment to economic self-determination and community outreach, makes it an ideal candidate to challenge and augment Adorno's thoughts on musical critical theory. There are a number of reasons for the lack of attention it has received here. There are excellent studies on the AACM: Lewis's (2008) *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, and *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* by Ronald Radano (2009) are perhaps the best. Despite the organisation's intersection with the European contemporary and free improvisation traditions, neither Radano nor Lewis refer to Adorno, past pointing out his negativity concerning mechanical reproduction (Radano) and his 'deafness' to the African American modern's particularity (Lewis). Having said that, the texts are rich in opportunity for fruitful engagement.

Jazz work has been an important part of the challenge mounted by African American expression against systematic dehumanisation. I have made a conscious decision not to consider the contemporary state of jazz or look in any detail at the challenges that currently face the African American and black 'diasporian.' However, while writing this thesis, several pertinent reminders of the persistence of the lack of recognition of African American difference have presented themselves. For instance, the aftermath of Trayvon Martin's death saw a tussle between those wanting to portray him as the 'big black man' of popular imagination, and sympathisers who felt the need to 'humanise' him. Can it be the case, sixty years on from the murder of Emmett Till, fifty years on from 'I have a dream,' that a black male's masculinity is considered unhuman?

Similarly, the widespread disillusion with the Obama administration can be understood as despair that ‘change,’ in our current economic and political climate, is only something that can be promised from the margins.

Although of great personal interest, the framework of the study has not allowed for inclusion of matters pertaining to the broad trends of what is, arguably, ever increasing isolation of human beings, and on the other hand, the increasingly (or perhaps, just persistently) global nature of the problems we are faced with. The twenty-first century has seen perhaps the last sanctuary of real-life sociality invaded by economic and control through social media. ‘Friendships’ are formed and maintained under the watchful eye of corporations and global and state surveillance. Moreover, as we become increasingly schooled in our isolation, we accept the situation as inevitable and adapt ourselves to the new way of ‘being with each other’ without much of a fight. In a similar pattern to what Adorno pointed out with regard to the 1930s consumer being sold back the individuality robbed of them, today the difficulty of maintaining friendships, for which social media is becoming increasingly culpable, is seized upon as an opportunity for economic exploitation and social control. The empathetic social space created by jazz work, and indeed other pockets of socio- aesthetic resistance, becomes even more valuable as the social space of everyday genuine human interaction is further shrunk.

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