ANTICOMMERCIALISM IN THE MUSIC AND TEACHINGS OF LENNIE TRISTANO

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CONTENTS

Abstract

This thesis examines the anticommercial ideology of Leonard Joseph (Lennie) Tristano (1919 – 1978) in an attempt to shed light on underexplored and misunderstood aspects of his musical career. Today, Tristano is known primarily for his contribution to jazz and jazz piano in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He is also recognized for his pedagogical success as one of jazz's first formal teachers. Beyond that, however, Tristano remains a peripheral figure in much of jazz's history. In this thesis, I argue that Tristano's contributions are often overlooked because he approached jazz creation in a way that ignored unspoken commercially-oriented social expectations within the community. I also identify anticommercialism as the underlying theme that influenced the majority of his decisions ultimately contributing to his canonic marginalization. Each chapter looks at a prominent aspect of his career in an attempt to understand how anticommercialism affected his musical output. I begin by looking at Tristano's early 1950s loft sessions and show how changes he made to standard jam session protocol during that time reflect the pursuit of artistic purity—an objective that forms the basis of his ideology. Next, I identify anticommercial themes in his criticism that indicate his reclusivity and general unwillingness to engage in public music making were acts of protest designed to promote jazz artistry. And finally, I identify his pedagogy as one steeped in anticommercially-oriented student expectations and show how that dynamic was thought by Tristano to develop artistically "ethical" improvisers. My intention is to illustrate that much of what is known of Tristano's alleged eccentricity can be understood as the byproduct of a rational ideologically-oriented artistic objective. My goal then is to show that Tristano's contribution may very well be of

canonic importance if we are willing to acknowledge and accept that his limited discography and general unwillingness to perform in public was in fact a musico-ideological act of protest.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'idéologie anticommerciale de Leonard Joseph (Lennie) Tristano (1919-1978) dans le but de mettre en lumière certains aspects méconnus et incompris de sa carrière musicale. De nos jours, Tristano est principalement reconnu pour sa contribution au jazz et au piano jazz de la fin des années 1940 et du début des années 1950. Il est aussi reconnu pour ses succès pédagogiques, ayant été l'un des premiers professeurs de musique jazz. Au-delà de ces aspects, par contre, Tristano demeure une figure secondaire dans l'histoire du jazz. Dans cette thèse, je soutiens que les contributions de Tristano sont souvent négligées parce qu'il approchait la création jazz en ignorant les attentes socio-commerciales tacites de la communauté. J'identifie l'anticommercialisme comme étant le thème sous-jacent ayant non seulement influencé la majorité de ses décisions mais qui a aussi contribué à sa marginalisation. Chacun des chapitres observe un aspect important de sa carrière pour tenter de comprendre comment l'anticommercialisme affecta sa production musicale. Je commence par démontrer que les changements apportés par Tristano au protocole du « jam session » lors de sessions au début des années 1950 reflètent la poursuite d'une pureté artistique —un objectif qui forme la base de son idéologie. Ensuite, j'identifie les thèmes anticommerciaux dans sa critique qui indique que sa réclusion et sa réticence à se produire en public était en fait des actes de protestation conçus pour promouvoir le jazz en tant que forme d'art valide. Et finalement, j'identifie sa pédagogie comme étant imprégnée d'attentes orientées vers l'anticommercialisme envers ses étudiants et démontre

que Tristano utilisait cette dynamique pour former des improvisateurs artistiquement « éthiques ». Mon intention est d'illustrer que la prétendue excentricité de Tristano peut être expliquée par un objectif artistique centré sur une idéologie. Mon but est d'ensuite démontrer que la contribution de Tristano pourrait très bien être d'une grande importance si nous sommes disposés à reconnaitre et accepter que sa discographie limitée et son dédain général à se produire en public était en fait des actes de protestation musico-idéologiques.

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Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, James Aldridge, and is submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts at McGill University in Montreal, QC. All analytical perspectives provided henceforth are the products of research and data collection performed by the author under the supervision of McGill's department of music research.

Introduction

Leonard Joseph (Lennie) Tristano (1919 - 1978) was a second-generation Italian-American jazz pianist known for pioneering jazz modernism in the late 1940s. Championed by prominent critics such as Barry Ulanov and Al Zieger, his improvisational approach was praised for demonstrating artistic integrity in a medium rife with commercial influence. Indeed, throughout his career, Tristano commanded respect from his colleagues, critics, and students alike not only for his commitment to the principles of a modernist aesthetic but for the ways in which he challenged the role of marketplace values. This thesis looks at instances in his career where he challenged those values, and in doing so, examines the ways in which an ideology of anticommercialism shaped his decision making as an artist. Tristano gave serious thought to the types of influences he considered artistically appropriate for jazz musicians and created a way of playing that aligned with the ideological objectives of numerous bebop-oriented magazines. One of those magazines was *Metronome*. Although anticommercialism was by no means unique to *Metronome*, it was a vital aspect of their publication. Critics like Al Zeiger, Jack Maher, and Bill Coss spoke highly of Tristano's contributions, but none to the extent of Barry Ulanov—the magazine's lead critic and editor—who saw Tristano as an artistic saviour of sorts. Because Tristano refused to let commercial expectations dictate his artistic output, many critics—including the ones mentioned above—felt he represented jazz in its purest form. Interestingly, what drew them to him was not only his music but the overwhelming contempt he held for those that he felt undermined jazz's artistic validity. For Tristano, artistic purity was crucial not just in his own work, but the work of anyone who claimed to be a jazz musician. As a result, his moral ideology (and the actions that accompanied it) contributed to a definition of the music that

furthered the agenda of the critics that supported him—critics concerned with the artistic legitimization of the medium.

Tristano was an anticommercial iconoclast and his actions spoke louder than his words. Throughout his career, he used his fame and the fame of his students to leverage club owners into facilitating demands about the terms of performance—most of which had little to do with practicality and more to do with making a statement against commercial influence in the jazz community. His goal was to imply that it was immoral for club owners to put their own financial interests over the artistic interests of the musicians they hosted. In August of 1958, for example, Tristano agreed to perform at the Half Note under the condition its owners—the Canterino brothers—eliminate his contractual obligation (allowing him to bow out of the performance agreement at any time,) allow him to personally select and purchase a new grand piano on behalf of the club, and provide a car to transport him to and from the event.[1] Outlandish requests like these forced club owners to not only cater to the needs of their performers but effectively court them for their business. This type of behaviour was not only unusual in the jazz community; it was unheard of. It is no wonder, then, that Tristano received the type of attention he did from critics interested in jazz's artistic ascendancy. His willingness to abandon performance opportunities and deprive himself of financial remuneration in instances where his artistic expectations were not met created a dynamic where he himself assumed an unusual position of power.

Although Tristano was vocal about his dissatisfaction with the state of jazz in America, he was more concerned with the role the market played in its creation. And although he made

[1] Eunmi Shim, *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 97-98.

this dissatisfaction known during his time as a critic in the late 1940s, the crux of his dissent came from the ways in which he interacted with and chose to avoid interaction with fellow participants who held artistic philosophies with which he disagreed. As a performer, Tristano had a tendency to exclude individuals he considered commercially corrupt—an act that marked him as a pariah in the jazz community while contributing to his historical marginalization. His reclusive personality coupled with his accusatory tone made him not only unpopular but also misunderstood. Even today, historical accusations of cultism, racism, and musical elitism have led many to consider him an unsuitable candidate for canonic inclusion. Accused of an unwillingness to participate in the jazz community toward the end of his career, he has been considered to this day little more than a peripheral figure in the idiom's development. My hope is that this thesis will encourage readers to take a closer look at Tristano's contribution to modern jazz, jazz artistry, and jazz pedagogy as a whole.

Through a self-imposed moral obligation to preserve and advance the creative aspects of the music, Tristano challenged the role of commercialism in jazz by renegotiating what was acceptable for a patron to request of a performer. In doing so, he sought to redefine the music's value and send a message to future generations that their art was no less important than its classical counterpart. In doing so, I argue, he prevented himself from participating in the active performance community—effectively making it difficult for us to acknowledge the gravity of his contribution. As noted previously, his self-imposed martyrdom nevertheless critically shaped a new generation of performers (evident in his student body)—a group that was not only protective of their musical product and aware of its artistic value, but willing to preserve it at the expense of traditional career development.

As a musician, Tristano was criticized by the jazz community for rejecting the status quo. More often than not, this rejection was attributed to what the public perceived as crankiness. His cynicism and reclusively were often seen as byproducts of this assumed crankiness and were thus paid little attention as iconoclastic statements against the idiom's commercial tradition. Within this thesis, I hope to re-evaluate the relevance of these statements and offer a new perspective on the artistic significance of these attitudes.

A defining feature of Tristano's career—one perpetuated by the critics that supported him—was the idea that artistic purity was only attainable through commercial rejection. He manufactured a new way of understanding jazz, one that challenged the idea that it was a style-type defined alone by its musical properties. He rejected the idea that jazz was a descriptive title characterizing all music in adherence with these properties and urged others to be critical of musicians who claimed this to be the case. With that said, the importance of these properties were not lost on Tristano. He recognized, for example, that swing was a defining feature of the genre and devoted his efforts to mastering it as best he could. Interestingly, he has been ruthlessly criticized for allegedly failing in this regard. Many have said and continue to say that Tristano was unable to swing—an accusation that has been defended repeatedly by students of the aesthetic for years.[2] Perhaps this, in and of itself, is an indication that Tristano conceptualized the idiom differently than most. For Tristano, jazz was akin to improvisation. It was a music shaped by a body of conventional sounds but *defined* by one's ability to transcend those sounds and the contributions of those that made them convention. It was an ever-changing idiom that thrived on forward progress and ingenuity. A "true" jazz musician, according to Tristano, was an artist with the confidence to challenge the status quo—to reject musical trends governed by

[2] Ralph Sharon, "The Unconventional Style of Lennie Tristano," *Melody Maker*, December 3, 1949, 8.

marketplace values and distinguish themselves as contributors unwilling to sacrifice personal artistry for financial comfort. A "true" jazz musician needed to be willing to fail, to be criticized for turning away from established musical norms, and to accept that their music would be rejected for its idiomatic dissimilarity in the spirit of artistic uniqueness. This was for Tristano, the essence of jazz. It was not the production of music in adherence with a style-type, but an agreement to engage in improvisatory creation informed alone by one's internal musicality.

Chapter one, "Redefining Jam Session Etiquette" looks at Tristano's take on standard jazz jam session protocol. It examines the jam session's social dynamic and identifies elements that conflict with Tristano's anticommercial ideology. I begin by looking at the collective social habits of early 1930s cutting contest participants and attempt to understand the ways in which they contributed to the creation of a modern jam session etiquette. To this end, I consider stories about jam sessions famously held at Minton's Playhouse in the late 1930s and early 1940s to construct a picture of the jam session that represents jazz modernity and compare these narratives to the ways in which the jam session has been conceptualized by leading figures in musicology and sociology. I conclude with an analysis of the sessions Tristano held at his 317 East 32nd Street loft noting the changes he made to standard jam session protocol and explain the reasoning behind his decisions. By doing so we begin to better understand his thoughts on jam session etiquette, the nature of his relationship with commerciality, and the state of jazz as an aspiring artistic medium.

Throughout his career, Tristano has been accused of coolness, coldness, and artistic cerebrality—styles of music making allegedly lacking in emotional depth and character.[3] Chapter

[3] Shim, *Lennie Tristano,* 56-58.

two, "The 'Cool' and Critical Voice of Lennie Tristano" looks at his response to this accusation. In this chapter, I argue that Tristano and his contemporaries rejected the "Cool jazz" label because they felt its racial implications undermined the validity of their artistic contributions. It will show that substyles (like 'Cool jazz' and 'Hard-bop') undermine artists by empowering others to define their musical outputs. I argue that these substyles create a one-size-fits-all dynamic that forces artists to accept the characteristics of the labels they have been given—many of which are imbued by racial stereotypes that diminish the importance of an artist's idiomatic contribution. In the second half of the chapter, I look at Tristano's criticism in an effort to identify anticommercial attitudes in his writing. I begin with his article "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz" and conclude with his two-part *Metronome* feature "What's Wrong with the Beboppers" and "What's Right with the Beboppers."[4]

In my final chapter, "Anticommercialism in the Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," I argue that Tristano designed his methodology to discourage students from obtaining work in commercial ensembles. The chapter will provide pedagogical evidence in support of the belief that Tristano despised jazz's commercial roots. It will indicate that Tristano felt one's artistry was subject to commercial contamination and will attempt to prove that he addressed this concern by making it difficult for his students to engage in commercial activities.

To conclude, although Tristano's actions were often attributed to eccentricity, my research suggests that they were informed by an anticommercial ideology designed to preserve what Tristano felt the commercial market was stripping from jazz and its practitioners. I examine

[4] Lennie Tristano, "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz," *Jazz Quarterly*, Spring, 1945; Lennie Tristano, "What's Wrong with the Beboppers," *Metronome*, June, 1947; Lennie Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers," *Metronome*, July, 1947, 31.

this ideology to better understand its influence on Tristano's performative and pedagogical output, and, in the process, contribute towards a new appreciation of the artist and his career.

Literature Review

Each of the three chapters included in this work address historical environments, communities, and practices in mid-century jazz that contributed to the idiom's artistic ascendancy. One of those environments, the jam session, represents perhaps the most iconic example of anticommercial rebellion in jazz history. Its modern variant, predominantly associated with bebop and its contributors, has become an archetype for what many consider to be a purified form of jazz creation. The renown of bebop musicians like Parker, Gillespie, Clarke, and Monk, and the extent to which they redefined the jazz language confirm its influence on the idiom and the extent to which it contributed to its artistic validation. Throughout its history, critics have been debating jazz's artistic validity for as long as it has been around. It should come as little surprise then that they have had success in convincing others of its artistic worth based on their own ideological insights and opinions on the music's assumed trajectory. Pedagogues too have been vocal about their opinions on jazz's artistic value. Forced to fight a war on two fronts, (on one side, against a Western-European classical community that has historically accused jazz of being an artistically inferior music, and on the other, against a section of the jazz community who reject the idea that jazz can be taught,) jazz pedagogues have historically adopted ways of thinking about jazz that imbue it with socio-cultural and national significance. Primarily active in the 1940s and '50s, Tristano assembled a career that engaged in each of these fields. This study on Tristano draws extensively on the work of musicologists and sociologists who have addressed notions of commercialism, anticommercialism, and artistic purity in jazz. It makes use of studies on the jam session, racial inequality, race and gender

stereotype, jazz historiography, jazz criticism, jazz pedagogy, and biographical studies on Tristano himself.

With respect to jazz and popular music studies, existing scholarly research in these disciplines often struggle to bridge the gap between broad-based ideological and philosophical trends in musical communities, and the performative and behavioural idiosyncrasies of the individual participants that effect them. This study contributes to both by identifying an artist who not only challenged established social norms in his music and behaviour but did so while verbally attributing it to ideological objectives in adherence with those trends. Verbal recognition by an artist (as is in the case with Tristano) that their actions were intended to effect the community in an ideologically meaningful way, provides us with the opportunity to bridge that gap and close a sharp divide between historical event and scholarly observation.

Traditionally, historians have made claims about a jazz artist's idiomatic significance by looking at their record output. My project offers a revised model for evaluating that canonic significance. Even today, records are the primary social artifacts (or actors, to use Latour's terminology) used to define an artist's role in jazz's development.[1] This is because they collectively enable historians to cross-reference materials and construct coherent timelines (through a process of cultural, social, and musical analysis) that inform us as to which of the idiom's artists innovated and produced lasting effects on the musics they participated in. My study exposes the flaw in this approach by addressing an artist who made a conscientious decision to reject opportunities to record out of self-imposed ideological obligations. My study does not reject this methodology; it merely proposes historians revise it in a way that tones down

[1] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social – An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the extent to which historical documents like the record are relied upon for determining canonic candidacy in jazz.

Given his relative idiomatic prominence in the late 1940s, Tristano has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. Aside from a select few articles and fewer book-length studies (one of which is written by former Tristano student Peter Ind [a work that primarily attempts to dismantle personal and academic misconceptions about Tristano,]) Tristano's personal contribution to jazz and jazz pedagogy has remained largely unexplored.[2] What this suggests is that much of what has been written about Tristano exists in the vein of jazz criticism and broader-scope research. My study suggests that Tristano has been the victim of sub-stylistic inculcation (due to the academic and critical community's tendencies to address him as a musical participant affiliated with the social, musical, and ideological aims of the "cool jazz" aesthetic) and that the lack of scholarship surrounding him on a personal level makes it difficult to challenge this assumption. My study attempts to contribute to this dearth of scholarship on Tristano in an effort to contribute to a more balanced body of scholarship.

Today, the early 1940s jam session is largely understood as a representation of idiomatic and musico-ideological change. Its association with anticommercial trends in the jazz community and its significance as an event that affirmed black-American artistry speaks volumes about its importance for historians and African-American studies scholars alike. Bebop, the music created in these environments effectively became a template for modern-day jazz and remains to this day the earliest style-type granted by critics and academics the status of high-art. As a result, many scholars from various fields have analyzed the social implications of the jam session in an effort

[2] Peter Ind, *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing UK, 2008).

to grasp not only its social dynamic but the reason it had such a dramatic impact on jazz as a genre. In my own work, Cameron and DeVeaux's studies on the jam session are of paramount importance, not just because they outline the jam session's inherent commercial/anticommercial dichotomy, but because they enable us to identify community standards for jam session participation and the extent to which Tristano deviated from those standards in an act of anticommercial rebellion.

For sociologist William Bruce Cameron, the jam session is a ritualistic act of artistic purification. He understands it as "a self-cleansing by the reaffirmation of his [or her] own esthetic values."[3] Cameron identifies the jam session as a recreational event facilitated by working musicians in need of artistic rejuvenation. Although he recognizes jam session participation as an act of artistic reclamation, one he considers necessary in the wake of commercial interference in the jazz community, he considers it a juvenile reprieve from the adult responsibilities of artistic tradesmanship. Cameron identifies the jam session as a private event that occurs in a public place. He argues that its late-night structure discourages casual fans from attending and notes that participants are forced to undergo unofficial trial periods to determine whether their participation will be tolerated on stage. In his 1997 book *The Birth of Bebop*, Scott DeVeaux interprets the jam session through the eyes of the consumer.[4] Unlike Cameron, he stresses the fact that it offered producers and club owners a new strategy for marketing jazz. He notes that "bebop" and by extension the jam session "offered the spectacle of musicians playing for their own enjoyment, capturing some of the dignity and autonomy of the concert stage without losing the informal atmosphere that tied jazz to a vernacular social context."[5] According

[3] William Bruce Cameron, "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session," *Social Forces* 33, no. 2 (1954): 178.
[4] Scott Deveaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[5] Ibid, 202.

to DeVeaux, vendors of the music embraced the growing belief that jazz was at its most authentic during the jam session and thus restructured the performances they hosted to mimic those environments. He notes that bebop's ultimate success derived from its ability to convince the listening public that "the jam session represented jazz in its purest state"—ironic because it implied that jazz was pure only insofar as it rejected commerciality, public performance, and a listening public in and of itself.[6] He notes that the jam session was not an exclusively recreational activity, it was a vocational necessity. And because the jam session served as proving ground for musicians and a recruiting pool for bandleaders, it was vital for musicians to attend if they hoped to increase their chances of obtaining steady gig-work. My study expands on these definitions by bringing them into dialogue with examples of unorthodox jam session participation—the types of which challenge standard participation protocol enabling us to better understand how and why commerciality manifests in seemingly private vernacular social environments.

Race and (to a lesser extent) gender have long been integral topics in jazz and popular music studies. In a music where both have been pivotal in defining the community's social presence and the character of its musical output, it is of little surprise that they serve today as leading analytical motifs in jazz scholarship. With that said, themes of gender and sexuality have often been eclipsed by racial topics in jazz studies due partly to the idiom's homosocial climate. Two authors who engage with these topics on an equal footing and with careful consideration to expose gender inequality in the community are Patrick Burke and Ingrid Monson. In *Come in and Hear the Truth*, Burke looks at the role of race and gender in the jam session.[7] He begins by

[6] Ibid, 204-205.
[7] Patrick Burke, *Come in and Hear the Truth* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

noting that amidst historical attempts by members of the community to "transcend… notions of race," racially-motivated competition continued to excite the listening public.[8] This was problematic for club owners, as it forced them to decide whether they were willing to sacrifice clientele for the sake of ethics. He also notes that gender and gender stereotype played a considerable role in defining jam session etiquette and the collective social behaviour of its participants. Overt masculinity was a central part of bebop. The music's technical nature; the community's competitive edge; the tendency of its participants to engage in musical gamesmanship; the community's overwhelming rejection of commercial values; and their collective unwillingness to tolerate musically-lacking participants all contributed to a masculine musical climate. According to Burke, the jam session had all the characteristics of a homosocial environment reflecting themes of manliness not uncommon in early 20th Century American labor history.[9] In her chapter "Modernism, Race, and Aesthetics," Monson also draws attention to the presence of race and gender stereotyping in the jazz community and does so through an analysis of jazz's post-bop substyles. She questions not only the ethical appropriateness of race and gender-encoded style-types, but their abilities to serve as categorically effective tools for historians to use in their analyses. She begins by challenging jazz's black/colourblind dichotomy, in its place proposing a theory that implies each contributor manufactures their own sound—based on personal interests—from a collection of applicable aesthetic "streams."[10] She lists these "streams" as follows: "(1) the aesthetics of African American vernacular musics as expressed in jazz, blues, gospel, and R&B; (2) the aesthetics of American popular song as descended from Tin Pan Alley and musical theater; (3) the aesthetics of modern classical music; (4) the aesthetics of

[8] Ibid, 151.
[9] Ibid, 19-20.
[10] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71.

Africa and its diaspora; and (5) the aesthetics of other non-Western musics, most notably in this time period, India."[11] My research contributes to this area of jazz scholarship by identifying an artist who took action to publically reject a musical label embedded with the emasculatory qualities of a white, feminine "other."

The jazz community's pursuit of artistic legitimization has been for many scholars jazz's most philosophically engaging topic. Given the idiom's relatively rapid stylistic development, if we intend to legitimize the metaphysical claim that jazz and its stylistic iterations contain a fundamental artistic essence, we are required to address a number of pertinent questions. To quote DeVeaux: "The struggle is over the act of definition that is presumed to lie at the history's core; for it is an article of faith that some central essence named *jazz* [an essence allegedly imbued with an artistic quality] remains constant throughout the dramatic transformations that have resulted in modern-day jazz."[12] How, for example, does one account for the fact that jazz artistry has historically been attributed to bebop (a radically complex and technically demanding dialect) when bebop was so distinct from previous styles that few were initially willing to associate it with the jazz label at all? How does one justify the artistic inclusion of a seemingly primitive arguably undeveloped jazz dialect like Dixieland jazz relative to later styles like swing, bebop, and post-bop? And, how does one legitimize an entertainment music in the eyes of the academy without dismissing its sociocultural identity? These are all questions with answers that rely extensively on historiographical and pedagogical jazz scholarship. Gennari's *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics*, is one of those books.[13] Comprehensive in all regards, it defines

[11] Ibid.
[12] Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 528.
[13] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

the role of criticism in the jazz community by capturing the tension inherent in a practice that thrives on the appraisal of another's art. Thorough accounts of major jazz critics—including but not limited to defining figures like John Hammond, Leonard Feather, Ralph Gleason, and Barry Ulanov—show that the critical community largely agreed that jazz was an idiom with inherent artistic value. Comprised primarily of white college-educated authors, many of these critics felt that jazz could be appreciated on the same level as European classical music. They sensed, however, that this would not be possible unless the music and its community were made more presentable—a process that many felt would require a liberation from its commercial roots. This topic is one discussed by Ken Prouty in his work on jazz's place in the academy. In "The 'Finite' Art of Improvisation: Pedagogy and Power in Jazz Education," Prouty draws attention to the community's tendency to adopt pedagogical habits that mirror Western-European classical conservatory standards.[14] He defines this as an attempt by jazz's pioneering institutional pedagogues to legitimize the idiom in the eyes of an "academic musical tradition that was generally dismissive not only of jazz from a racial or cultural perspective, but also of improvisational musical forms [in] general."[15] This trend goes hand in hand with the idea that jazz was an inferior music incapable of existing at the same artistic level as Western European classical music. The general consensus among jazz pedagogues was that jazz was in need of artistic rebranding—a rebranding that marked it as an intellectually sophisticated and morally wholesome music; at least until the artistic community was willing to acknowledge its value without comparing it to its Western-European classical counterpart.

[14] Ken Prouty, "The 'Finite' Art of Improvisation: Pedagogy and Power in Jazz Education," *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, no. 1 (2008).
[15] Ibid, 1.

Although his stylistic and ideological influence on fellow and future musicians has been substantial, very little scholarly material has been written on Tristano. This academic marginalization is likely due to his limited output as a recorded artist. Of the few scholars who have written on Tristano, McKinney, Shim, and Jago have been the most influential on my own work. Although each of these authors allude to behavioural eccentricities in Tristano's career, none of them plainly attribute them to ideological objectives like Tristano's desire to rebel against commercial influence in the jazz community. My work attempts to do just this. And, in doing so, contributes to an emerging trend in jazz and historical musicology where canonically peripheral figures are given equal treatment in an effort to encourage alternative canonic structures.

McKinney's work on Tristano is invaluable not just because it is the first piece of large-scale research on the artist, but because it acknowledges the significance of his contribution to jazz pedagogy.[16] In his work, he examines Tristano's historical roots, the influences that shaped his pedagogical approach, his pedagogical methodology, his artistic philosophy, and the impact he had on his students before and after his death. In 2007, Shim also contributed to the limited body of research on Tristano with a biography entitled *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music*.[17] In her fourth chapter, "Tristano as a Teacher," we begin to better understand his morally-driven pedagogical philosophy. She indicates that Tristano felt a sense of artistic freedom in his teaching mentioning that it "enable[ed] him to pursue his own musical interest[s] without having to comply with the demands of the music industry." She notes that it "provid[ed] him an alternative and uncompromising way of living as a jazz musician."[18] According to Shim,

[16] John F McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano" (EdD diss., Farleigh Dickinson University, 1978).
[17] Eunmi Shim, *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[18] Ibid, 123.

Tristano saw teaching as an ethical responsibility to "foster [new] generations of [artistically responsible] musicians"—a type of instruction that required a student be willing to engage in ideological discussion about the music and its future.[19] And finally, Jago—the most recent scholar to write about the artist—has published four articles on Tristano and his contemporaries in the last four years. Two of these are concerned with specifics surrounding his teaching process. The first, "Musical Koryu-Lineal Traditions in Jazz: Lennie Tristano/Lee Konitz," looks at the master-apprentice relationship and its capacity to develop educators willing and capable of following in the pedagogical footsteps of their former teachers.[20] And the second, "Jedi Mind Tricks: Lennie Tristano and Techniques for Imaginative Musical Practice," looks at the way instrumental visualization benefits jazz students by making them less reliant on muscle memory.[21] Jago calls upon her experiences as a student with members of this Tristano aesthetic like Lee Konitz to provide a unique and personal perspective on Tristano's teaching style not yet available in existing research on the subject. My research builds upon Jago's work by bringing it into dialogue with ideological themes in Tristano's career as an educator that reflect anticommercial trends in the jazz community as a whole. It looks at his pedagogical expectations and attempts to understand how and why those expectations had the types of effects they did on his students, their careers, and their musical philosophies after leaving his tutelage.

For over 60 years, authors have been identifying an inverse relationship between jazz artistry and commercial influence. Bebop has become for many the reclamation of a music that had been watered down and packaged into a commercially marketable product. In response to

[19] Ibid, 123.
[20] Marian Jago, "Musical Koryu-Lineal Traditions in Jazz: Lennie Tristano/Lee Konitz," *MUSICultures* 38 (2013).
[21] Eunmi Shim, "Jedi Mind Tricks: Lennie Tristano and Techniques for Imaginative Musical Practice," *Jazz Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (2015).

this assumption, authors like DeVeaux have argued that bebop repackaged jazz in a way that convinced audiences they were experiencing commercially unaffected music. Interestingly, both DeVeaux and Burke have alluded to the fact that 1940s and ‘50s jazz musicians (especially those of African-American descent) relied extensively on the jam session to enable them to make their livings. My study on Tristano contributes to this discussion by examining how an artist largely opposed to commercial performance factored into a community where commerciality was not only a vocational necessity but a vocational necessity thought by many to hinder one’s artistry.

CHAPTER 1: Redefining Jam Session Etiquette: A Critical Look at Tristano's 317 East 32nd Street Loft Sessions

In the early 1940s, bebop saw a dramatic spike in popularity as the listening public grew concerned with issues of authenticity and artistic value in jazz. Until the late 1930s, these issues—now staples of modern jazz musicology—were largely dismissed due to the community's tendency to employ show business tactics like performative one-upmanship. The modern jam session, shaped by its historical predecessor the "cutting contest," made use of this technique, but did so in a way that influenced observers to attribute it to the community's competitive spirit.[1] The jam session was a semi-private vocational ritual shaped and regulated by that spirit. It enabled participants to define and effectively manipulate the boundaries of participation in order to compete with fellow participants in an effort to establish "hierarchies of [idiomatic] competence."[2] With that said, what makes the jam session a compelling topic for study is not so much its role in cementing bebop as the idiom's artistic backbone, but what it can tell us about its participants, their participatory habits, and the ways they coped with commercial influences in the jam session environment.

In this chapter, I address Lennie Tristano's attempts to identify and eliminate social behaviours he felt undermined musicians by limiting their artistic freedom in jam session environments and do so by analyzing the social, musical, and ideological structure of his early 1950s downtown Manhattan loft-sessions. I describe how his session's participatory expectations

[1] See Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 208-213.
[2] See Ricardo Pinheiro, "Jam Sessions in Manhattan as Rituals," *Jazz Research Journal* 6, no 2 (2013); DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 207.

differed from the ones held at Minton's Playhouse (a little over a decade prior,) and explain his reasoning for redefining jam session etiquette. In doing so, I show how heavily situated his decisions were within an anticommercial ideology—one that was, for Tristano, tied to notions of authenticity and artistic credibility in jazz. I begin by looking at his attempts to eliminate jam session protocol associated with vocational preparation, draw attention to his hostility toward audience participation, and explain his desire to eradicate exclusionary tactics occurring at the level of the music and its creation. Each of these themes contributes to a more rounded understanding of the artist, his artistic philosophy, and his understanding of jazz as an artistically pure idiom.

Throughout its history, jazz's cultural value has been determined by two factors: artistic worth and ethical integrity. These factors have enabled critics to judge the music's cultural importance by allowing them to make statements and assumptions about its complexity, its authenticity, and the collective social behaviour of its community in the context of a racially oppressive society. One might argue that the jam session ultimately served as a sociological control group. It became, for critics, a window to make value judgements on jazz guided by the assumption that under the right conditions jazz could exist in an environment impervious to commercial influence. Of course, this approach failed to address the jam session's broader social purpose. The modern jam session came to prominence in the early to mid 1940s—a period in the music's history when many of its most influential contributors were in the process of advocating a musical reclamation of sorts. Much of this attitude stemmed from a desire to reclaim an African American music from the clutches of commercial enterprise and white appropriation. Although much has already been written on authenticity, racial identity, and musical ownership during this period, a nuanced understanding of jam session etiquette dispels myths of jam session

exclusivity by demonstrating that black musicians were willing to accept non-black musicians in vernacular social contexts like the jam session if they were able to demonstrate high levels of musical craftsmanship.

Accounts of late 1930s and early 1940s Minton's jam sessions illustrate this semi-inclusive meritorious performance environment.[3] I introduce Minton's at this early stage in the chapter to emphasize its role as a modern jazz jam session archetype. Its social dynamic has effectively become the industry standard for sociologists and musicologists when referring to the jam session as a generic social phenomenon. With that said, referring to the jam session as a "performance environment" disrupts much of what is assumed about its social dynamic. That is, insofar as the jam session is affiliated with an artistically-oriented retreat from public exposure, classifying it as *performance* seems counterintuitive because it challenges the idea that the jam session occurs "without regard for the standards of the buying public or of any acknowledged organization leader or critic."[4] I do, however, believe it is essential to classify it as such if we are to acknowledge that competition is a major part of jam session convention and that jam session participants are influenced by a desire to impress a present body of colleagues in an effort to situate themselves favourably within the ranks of idiomatic competency. Ultimately, this form of vocational self-promotion is performative in that its intention is to demonstrate one's ability to function at high levels of musical craftsmanship in order to attract the attention of paying bandleaders.

I begin this chapter by reviewing a series of broadly based definitions of the jam session. I start with two romanticized interpretations based on mythological understandings of the

[3] See Dizzy Gillespie, "Minton's Playhouse: Johnny Carisi (trumpet)," in *To Be, or Not—to Bop* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 143-144.
[4] William Bruce Cameron, "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session" *Social Forces* 33, no. 2 (1954): 177.

hypothetical jazz rebel. I do so by looking at the works of sociologist William Bruce Cameron and jazz critic Hugues Panassié.[5] Next, I look at Scott DeVeaux's 1997 definition from his seminal history of bebop in an effort to understand the jam session's role in producing authentic jazz and authentic jazz experience.[6] I also look at the works of Dana Gooley, Lawrence D. Nelson, and Ricardo Pinheiro to see how audience construction, interaction, and performance ritual play a part in defining jam session protocol.[7] Next, I identify aspects of this research that indicate the jam session's alleged artistic quality derives from theoretical interpretations of the ways in which jam session participants interact with one another. To prove this, I look at famous examples of jam session participation to identify instances where spoken and unspoken rules of participation hindered (or had the potential to hinder) high levels of creative expression. I address issues like "voluntary" yet vocationally necessary participation, theoretically public yet heavily restrictive performance environments, and the privileging of technical virtuosity over artistic experimentation. And finally, I conclude with an analysis of Tristano's 317 East 32nd Street loft-sessions in an attempt to identify anticommercial behaviour in Tristano's role as a jam session facilitator.

In his 1942 book *The Real Jazz*, Parisian born critic and impresario Hugues Panassié addresses the social and artistic significance of the jam session within the jazz community. According to Panassié:

> [The] "jam session" is a reunion of musicians, outside of their regular work, at which they play the music they enjoy with complete liberty. This is the music they are not permitted to play in the large commercial orchestras which they have been forced to join to earn their living. But the music boils on inside them, and they have an irresistible urge

[5] Ibid; Hugues Panassié, *The Real Jazz* (New York: Smith and Durrell, 1942).
[6] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 204-205.
[7] Dana Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in': Jazz Jam Sessions and the Politics of Participation," *Performance Research* 16, no. 3 (2011): 43; Lawrence D. Nelson, *The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz* (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2011), 68; Pinheiro, "Jam Sessions in Manhattan as Rituals," 133.

> to liberate this creative pressure… The jam session overflows and is carried away with an enthusiasm for which one would search vainly elsewhere. During these hours the musicians play out of a love of music, without attempting to create a "work" but simply because the music makes them feel intensely alive. Here music is returned to its natural state and is delivered free of all preparations and artifice.[8]

In "The Jazzman's True Academy," chapter five of Scott DeVeaux's *The Birth of Bebop*, this passage is referenced in an effort to demonstrate Panassié's hostility toward the newly developing bebop genre. This hostility, however, is carefully veiled behind positive statements of authenticity and artistic passion within the jam session environment. What makes this definition interesting is the way the author acknowledges the jam session's socio-artistic value while utilizing charged rhetoric to manipulate how the reader feels about its importance. In the following phrase, for example, Panassié tarnishes the reader's picture of a positive musically-oriented emotional response by utilizing negatively charged language to change its meaning. On the topic of jam session participants, he says: "the music boils on inside them, and they have an irresistible urge to liberate this creative pressure… The jam session overflows and is carried away with an enthusiasm for which one would search vainly elsewhere." Uses of terms like *boil, irresistible, urge, pressure,* and *overflow* enable Panassié to allude to themes of rage and uncontrollable emotion that imbue the jam session and its participants with negative racial stereotypes like emotional immaturity.

In 1954, sociologist William Bruce Cameron published an article entitled "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session." Primarily concerned with furthering his understanding of the esoteric "jazzman" persona, Cameron sought out a social environment that could tell him more about it and its characteristics. His initial observation led to the acknowledgement of two tenets of modern jam session protocol. The first, that the jam session contained an informal ranking

[8] Panassié, *The Real Jazz*, 69.

system. And the second, that it seemed overwhelmingly anticommercial. Although his observations are commendable, his rationale is problematic. Heavily rooted in a mythologized understanding of the "jazzman," Cameron's observations choose to overlook the logic of racially motivated decision making in favour of a social understanding that identifies "jazzmen" as enigmatic musical rebels. This approach is exemplified in the article's opening sentence: "Most jazzmen agree that no one can understand jazz or jazzmen except jazzmen themselves."[9] In his article, Cameron defines the jam session as follows:

> The jam session is a transitory recreational association of an élite. It is an informal but traditionally structured association of a small number of self-selected musicians who come together for the primary purpose of playing music which they choose purely in accordance with their own esthetic standards and without regard for the standards of the buying public or of any acknowledged organizational leader or critic.[10]

For Cameron, the jam session is a musical environment intended to facilitate a retreat from commerciality. To quote him once more, it "is a ritual of purification for [the jazz musician]—a self-cleansing by the reaffirmation of his [or her] own esthetic values."[11] It is a performance space beholden only to those participating in the music's creation and a social structure that contains an expected level of idiomatic competency hinging on one's willingness to comply with the aesthetic standards of a session's participating body.

In the early 1950s, many jazz aficionados felt that the jam session represented the idiom in its purest form. It was considered an artistically liberated setting where musicians were free to challenge themselves and their colleagues by pushing the music's boundaries without fear of being held back by the constraints of commercial influence. Many felt that this retreat from commercial exposure was the only way to ensure the music's continued growth. As a result,

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[9] Cameron, "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session," 177.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid, 178.

many felt that it was imperative to find a venue with an owner willing to relinquish control of performance procedure and expectations regarding repertoire.[12] In his book *The Birth of Bebop*, DeVeaux addresses this very concern. He says: "The ultimate viability of bebop as a *commercial* genre depended on many jazz enthusiasts' conviction[s] that the jam session represented jazz in its purest state—an uncorrupted, unmediated, and uncommercial form of musical expression."[13] It should be noted, however, that in this passage DeVeaux calls attention to the irony of validating a commercial genre on notions of authenticity built on anticommercial premises. He adds: "It is a short step from here to the jam session as a symbol of alienation. If 'genuine jazz' is incompatible with the marketplace and can be played only in deliberate isolation from it, then the sincere artist's association with such commercial enterprises as the dance band is just a marriage of convenience."[14] What this passage assumes, however, is that the "sincere" artist is, in fact, capable of participating at creatively inferior levels without tarnishing their artistic sensibility—an opinion far from unanimous in the jazz community.

In the past five years, the jam session has seen renewed attention in academic circles. The works of musicologists Nelson, Gooley, and Pinheiro have each contributed to rejuvenating the topic by drawing attention to its value as a tool capable of teaching us about the process of establishing and enforcing participatory customs in informal social settings. Nelson begins by proposing an understanding of the jam session that differentiates between historical event and ideological ideal.[15] He cites Max Weber's work on "ideal types" in order to propose two ways of understanding the jam session's social structure: one, as encounter; and the other, as play.[16] He

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[12] Ibid.
[13] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 204.
[14] Ibid, 205.
[15] Nelson, *The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz*, 28.
[16] Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 81.

cites Erving Goffman's work on "encounters" to describe the jam session as a transitory event with game-like elements that contribute to its participatory customs.[17] He also describes the jam session as play in an effort to delineate between its recreational and vocational purpose. Gooley, on the other hand, examines the internal social structure of the jam session in the context of a larger society in an effort to challenge assumptions about its free, open, and inclusive quality.[18] And finally, Pinheiro compares the jam session to ritual in order to draw attention to the fact it makes use of customs that are incomprehensible to outsiders.[19]

Although each of these authors approaches the jam session from a different perspective, one thing that remains constant is the acknowledgement that traditionally jam session participants eschewed commercial involvement. This consensus is an interesting one for several reasons. First, because each author agrees that an audience is commercial only insofar as its primary purpose is to listen; and second, because it is commercial only insofar as it commands the attention and consideration of the primary performative body. The following two quotes from two of the aforementioned authors address these concerns by investigating questions of commerciality and audience in relation to notions of authenticity and artistic purity. In his 2011 dissertation "The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz," Nelson writes:

> Musicians at jam sessions are typically unconcerned with providing an organized musical presentation for a non-performing audience. For example, the songs to be performed and their order are not determined in advance, and their choice does not reflect an effort to construct a pleasing or meaningful program…Songs are chosen on the basis of their challenge to the performer or some feature that the person calling the tune finds appealing.[20]

Gooley expands upon this idea by defining the difference between a "public" and "private"

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[17] Erving Goffman, *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1961).
[18] Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in'."
[19] Pinheiro, "Jam Sessions in Manhattan as Rituals," 133.
[20] Nelson, *The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz*, 68-69.

audience. He says:

> One thing that makes the jam session different from the jazz show or club set is that it is liberated from an address to, or responsibility towards, the public audience. The jam preserves something like an audience-position, but this position is occupied by the performers themselves, not by the open-ended body of potential listeners and consumers known as the 'public'. The players become their own audience, forming a closed circle that bystanders may peer into and admire but not enter. Members of the public might get involved by applauding and listening attentively, but they are not inscribed formally as auditors in the communicative logic of the event.[21]

And finally, in his 2012 article "Jam Sessions in Manhattan as Rituals," Pinheiro identifies an organically crafted set of unspoken performance customs that aid in the building of community, the celebration of identity, the stimulation of idiomatic growth, and the deterrence of commercial interference in jam session environments. For each of these authors, the jam session is a collective enactment of traditionally informed participatory customs situated within a semi-exclusive performance environment governed alone by its musical participants. This does not necessarily imply that all jam sessions are held in isolation, but rather, that there seems to be the expectation that audience members acknowledge their role as, to borrow Gooley's term, "incidental participants," granted little more than the privilege of observation.

Historically, the jam session has been celebrated for contributing to the establishment of racial equality in jazz. Its role in enabling the public to delineate between high and low-brow jazz ultimately created an environment where a participant's contribution was deserving of assessment within the framework of high art. Credited with empowering African American musicians, the jam session became a symbol of musico-cultural authenticity. It was a performance environment where talent trumped privilege and a collective democratic spirit enabled jazz to occur in its purest form. This depiction, of course, describes little more than a

[21] Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in'," 43.

theoretical ideal—an ideologically-oriented performance model free from the complications of human emotion. (Un)fortunately, however, human emotion is unavoidable, and in the context of the jam session (like any other social structure,) it plays an important role in shaping the way participants choose to engage with one another during the collective act. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that it was the jam session's democratic "communication-economy"[22] that encouraged 1940s and '50s participants to erect what are best described as intra-musical obstacles—technical features within the music designed to deter unwanted participants. In a musical environment where competence was verified during performance, jam sessions had a high probability of falling into musical disarray. Yet, even with the very real potential for performative catastrophe—or at the very least, drastic fluctuations in musical caliber—the modern jam session remains a symbol of unfettered artistry. An understanding of the jam session that celebrates its openness and inclusivity while defending its artistic superiority fails to take into account the ways in which its participants prevented unwanted participation.

This, of course, has not gone unnoticed. While addressing themes of hostility in the jam session environment, Gooley has noted: "The social body of the jam session was … not an 'open society' but a group self-consciously marked off for its professional status. Musicians who did not know their chord changes, or could not invent melodies idiomatically, were either warded off or, at best, coldly tolerated."[23] Because the jam session fostered an environment where it was socially unacceptable to outright deny someone participation, musical techniques were created to ward off unqualified participants. By infusing the music with technical obstacles designed to deter unqualified musicians, jam sessions were able to preserve the appearance of inclusivity while ensuring high levels of artistic standard. Examples of these techniques included utilizing

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 44-45.

unannounced chord progressions during performances, introducing newly written material with which only a select few were familiar, performing at drastic ends of the tempo spectrum, playing standard material in unusual keys, beginning tunes without announcing their names, and transitioning seamlessly from one tune to another without prior discussion.

Admittedly, what I am suggesting comes uncomfortably close to implying that bebop's stylistic innovations stemmed from a desire to exclude others. This is not my intention, nor do I believe it to be correct. However, it is important to recognize that the idiom's early contributors were not only conscious of the fact that jazz lent itself well to exclusivity but understood that it could be used to (and often used it to) alienate unwanted and unwelcome participants. One of the most notable examples of this practice was the community's tendency to deploy the language of normative gender difference, equating, for example, the musical mediocrity of a specific subset of male participants with a debased feminine "other." In this discourse, a feminine approach to jazz—one that implied an artist had made a conscientious decision to reject idiomatic standards and take an alternative often softer and more melodic approach—indicated an artist was incapable of performing at an accepted level in the medium's leading stylistic development. During the 1940s, the hypermasculinity of bebop contributed to a socio-musical standard in jazz that suggested one who was unwilling to compete—either out of a distaste for the new dialect or out of a belief that competition had no place in music—was a coward. Although this categorical trend did not target the jazz community's female population directly, it nonetheless had the effect of discrediting them as contributors. What resulted was a near total loss of female participation in jazz as most of its male participants (in an attempt to preserve the homosocial environment they had cultivated in the jam session experience) only welcomed women if they were willing to adopt those same hypermasculine behaviours that had that become staples of jazz in the 1940s.

In the following passage, iconic jazz bassist "Milt" Hinton confirms yet another example of this exclusionary awareness offering an example of it in action in order to illustrate its purpose:

> So Diz [Dizzy Gillespie] told me on the roof one night at the Cotton Club, 'Now look, when we go down to the jam session, we're gonna say we're gonna play, 'I got Rhythm,' but we're gonna use these changes. Instead of using the B-flat and D-flat, we're gonna use B-flat, D-flat, G-flat or F and we change.' We would do these things up on the roof and then we'd go down to Minton's, and all the kids would be up there. 'What're y'all gonna play?' We'd say 'I got Rhythm,' and we'd start out with this new set of changes, and they would be left right at the post. They would be standing there, and they couldn't get in because they didn't know what changes we were using, and eventually they would put their horns away and we could go on and blow in peace and get our little exercise.[24]

This passage is interesting for two reasons: first, because it challenges social understandings of the jam session that celebrate it for being open and inclusive; and second, because it forces us to acknowledge the jam session's vocational function while admitting that it played a role in contributing to fluctuating levels of artistic output. Both of these reasons are problematic as they force us to reevaluate major tenets of the jam session's predominant ideological narrative. How, for example, does one make light of an allegedly inclusive social structure that is inclusive only insofar as its participants are willing to allow. Does a tactic like the one addressed in the quotation above hinder the jam session's ability to facilitate artistic expression outside of the idiomatic status quo? And when iconic jam session participants like Dizzy Gillespie admit to concocting gauntlets of musical trickery, is it still appropriate to glorify its music as a purified form of jazz expression? The second reason I've selected this passage is because it addresses an aspect of the jam session that is, more often than not, neglected by those who associate it and its music with high levels of artistic output. Toward the end of the passage, Hinton uses the term "exercise" to refer to the jam session as a communal practice space. He says: "eventually they

[24] Gillespie, *To Be, or Not—to Bop*, 143.

would put their horns away and we could go on and blow in peace and get our little exercise."[25] Here, he calls attention to a manner of approach that saw the jam session as preparatory environment—a musical training ground that enabled participants to network, experiment, and take risks traditionally considered unacceptable without adequate preparation. In the following passage DeVeaux expands on this idea by explaining how the jam session contributed to vocational preparedness. He writes:

> The jam session was an integral part of the "art world" that constituted … [a black musician's] professional life. It was both recreational *and* vocational. The element of escape and recreation is obvious: the jam session was a part of nightlife, a window onto the varied entertainments of the city for young and energetic men with some money to burn. But it was also a kind of work. Musicians counted on having this time to practice, to work out new ideas and techniques, to exchange information, to network with their colleagues, to establish a rough-and-ready- hierarchy of competence—all useful and necessary activities that could not practically be carried out on the band stand.[26]

In his 2011 paper "The Outside of 'Sitting In'," Gooley offers a more radical interpretation, arguing that the jam session was, for all intents and purposes, an unavoidable vocational necessity. He writes:

> Jam sessions further offered up an image of 'voluntary' participation that looks less ideal when viewed in the context of the jazz profession. Appearing at sessions was a necessity for any musician who wanted to attract the attention of bandleaders and pick up gigs. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, the only way to break into the New York jazz scene was to show up at the jam sessions at the Rhythm Club, where everybody in the business was to be found.[27]

Both authors, however, avoid identifying the underlying reason for the jam session's vocationality. Born out of a desire to make oneself vocationally attractive, one's behaviour as a jam session participant was either shaped by commercial motivators or impacted by those who

[25] Ibid.
[26] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 207.
[27] Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in'," 45.

adhered to them. This implied a hierarchy of participation, one where no two participants were on equal footing—a theory Nelson addresses when he says "an informal hierarchy of participation existed; players had to earn their acceptance at the next level or prove that they could contend with the top players."[28] What this does not address is the role commerciality played in shaping the participatory expectations of the hierarchy's upper echelon, and how those decisions created a trickle-down effect due to the constant struggle to prove one's ability to contend at higher levels of musicality. This factor forces us to examine how commerciality was able to infiltrate a theoretically non-commercial performance space. By likening the jam session to a vocational proving ground it is easy to see why and how commercial motivators were able to shape the musical outputs of its participants. For the upper echelon of its musical contributors, the promise of steady work demanded an engagement in artistic pursuits that aligned with a commercially-oriented performative status quo. To those less competent, it only made sense to mimic those at higher levels of vocational success. And finally, to those incapable and/or unwilling to adhere to idiomatic trends and standards, the hierarchized social dynamic of the jam session made it nearly impossible to take risks in an atmosphere that actively discouraged radical experimentation.

When we consider that jam session's like the ones held at Minton's were built on "rough-and-ready heirarch[ies] of competence,"[29] and agree to accept that "[bebop's musical] innovations had the pragmatic purpose of confounding less experienced players,"[30] we are forced to acknowledge notions of artistic ownership within the jazz jam session environment. Although theoretically, the jam session was designed to be a democratic self-sustaining "communication-

[28] Nelson, *The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz*, 55.
[29] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 207.
[30] Nelson, *The Social and Musical Construction of the Jam Session in Jazz*, 55.

economy,"[31] a session's artistic trajectory was ultimately governed by a combination of the session's stylistic norm and to what extent deviations from that norm were tolerated by the session's artistic elite—a group of musicians typically consisting of the house band and guests universally recognized for their musical achievements. The result was a group of artists who dominated the musical space by consciously defining the limits of acceptable contribution while unconsciously influencing participants to comply with their own musical standards. Now I admit, nearly 75 years after bebop came to prominence, it is puzzling to fathom a jazz musician sacrificing his or her own creative standards while performing a music that claims to celebrate artistic freedom. However, it makes sense when we recognize that the jam session served the very real function of supplying its artists with employment opportunities.

Throughout jazz's history, commerciality has been both celebrated for contributing to and accused of detracting from the jazz idiom and its overall success. Even today, well over half a century since jazz first appeared in the academy, its commercial roots remain a point of contention for those still troubled by their affiliation with the entertainment industry. Throughout its history, jazz has undergone a series of ideologically-driven stylistic developments, each of which indicates differing levels of commercial acceptance in the community. If we begin by looking at the transformation from Early jazz/New Orleans/ and Chicago Style Dixieland to 1930s Swing, we can identify a strong shift toward heightened levels of commercial acceptance. The shift from Swing to Bebop in the late 1930s and early 1940s, however, saw the opposite effect. During that time, jazz saw the development of a publically inaccessible, technically demanding and intellectually stimulating music—one that made an effort demarcate between mindless entertainment and mindful art. Now, regardless of which side one takes in this

[31] Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in'," 43.

ideological debate, most fans will agree that historically commercial influence has played an important role in shaping how jazz was presented both publically and privately. In fact, I would argue that even today it continues to inform how jazz is presented, when it is presented, to whom it is presented, and who does the presenting. By looking at each of these factors we can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Lennie Tristano as an anticommercialist and begin to better understand his reasons for ultimately redefining the jam session's social structure.

In the next section, I look at the ways in which Tristano's 317 East 32nd Street loft-sessions differed from those held at Minton's Playhouse. I've selected Minton's as opposed to other more periodically relevant examples because of its historical significance as a jam session known for its participants' unwillingness to succumb to commercial influences. With that said, it should be noted that much of what we know of Minton's today is anecdotal. Accounts of its sessions are based almost exclusively on the recollections of individual participants, therefore leaving our understandings of the events factually fragmented and incomplete. As a result, we should be careful how we read into these accounts as they are likely to be informed by what is understood of jazz and jazz artistry in its current context. If we as historians are incapable of setting aside modern understandings of jazz, its artistic merit, and the role of bebop in facilitating that development, it is unlikely our findings will be shaped by anything other than a desire to dismiss social tenets of the jam session that challenge what we know of jazz today—especially when it comes to analyzing a historical environment (Like Minton's) already celebrated for contributing to jazz's artistic ascendancy. I believe we can learn a great deal by looking at Tristano's approach to the jam session because it enables us to see which aspects of jam session protocol he felt failed to align with bebop's assumed artistic objectives. In the upcoming section, I demonstrate that not all of bebop's early contributors felt the jam session's vocational function

was a positive one, and explain why someone like Tristano may have felt that it went so far as to detract from a musician's ability to pursue jazz with honesty and integrity.

In early 1951, Tristano opened his iconic 32nd Street studio-loft in downtown Manhattan. With the financial support of friend and student Phillis Pinkerton, he designed a multipurpose studio that he hoped would address many of the problems he identified in the jazz community. Ultimately, his goal was to use the studio to rid students of habits he felt detrimental to the cultivation of jazz artistry. Primarily affiliated with his business as a private educator, his plan for the space far outweighed what would inevitably become of the location. Initially advertised as a semi-formal jazz institution, Tristano envisioned directing a school staffed by colleagues and pupils he felt shared his mantra on the seriousness of jazz. He envisioned the creation of a record company capable of circumventing the stylistic expectations of commercial producers and understood that the opportunity to record free of commercial influence was a privilege most up-and-comers were not privy to. As a result, he was intent on recording only those he felt had something unique to contribute to the jazz idiom. Finally, he envisioned the space would function as a performance venue. I hesitate to use the term "club" as in the 1950s a "jazz club" tended to imply a form of rebellious alternative living—a social stereotype that Tristano felt undermined the medium's respectability. He started by recommending the establishment of a curfew. He suggested 1:00am as the hour public jazz performances should draw to a close. He also proposed clubs abandon the use of cover charges, instead, encouraging patrons to purchase records in order to support not only the livelihood of artists but also their abilities to contribute meaningful content to the idiom. And finally, he proposed an alcohol-free performance environment. He felt that one that could not fully appreciate the intricacies of modern jazz unless

one's faculties were unimpaired.[32] In her Chapter "New York 1951-1978," Eunmi Shim points out that "few of these objectives actually made it off the ground.[33]

One thing that did materialize, however, was a scheduled semi-weekly jam session event that rejected many of the major tenets of modern jam session etiquette. An added benefit to studying with Tristano was the opportunity to take part in these sessions. Although the vast majority of its participants were Tristano students, I hesitate to call it a pedagogical session as it was in no way designed to facilitate instantaneous student/teacher feedback. Tristano was known to address his student's performances and offer advice on areas where he felt they could improve during their private lessons but avoided doing so during the sessions themselves likely out of a fear that his intrusions would disrupt a session's artistic flow. During these sessions, Tristano was primarily a facilitator, often an observer, occasionally a participant, and when needed, an authoritative voice of admonition. In his book *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy*, former Tristano pupil and bassist Peter Ind had the following to say about these sessions: "They were not such an ego scene, with everyone pushing to play or unwilling to let others play instead." He says: "I can recall this happened only once at Lennie's [and] Lennie calmly insisted that the offender stop, and that was that."[34] In this passage, Ind recalls Tristano functioning as a symbol of order—a moderator/observer whose place of residence and artistic clout enabled him to function as a participant even when he wasn't actively contributing to the music's creation. In the jazz community, this social dynamic is one that is historically unique. Essentially, Tristano was an artistically-empowered guru-observer. Aside from perhaps Granz and his "Jazz at the Philharmonic," there are few other instances where a single individual shaped not only the

[32] Eunmi Shim, *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 77.
[33] Ibid, 78.
[34] Peter Ind, *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and His Legacy*. (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing UK, 2008), 35.

underlying tone of the event but the musical output of a session without actively participating in the music's creation. With that said, it does share certain similarities with some of the participatory themes identified at the iconic Minton's sessions. In both, it is easy to identify strong notions of artistic ownership. Whether it was a set of elite musical participants shaping the session's artistic output or a figurehead like Tristano doing the same, there was always a governing body effectively regulating the standards of participation. Although each governing body earned its regulatory privilege through different means, both required its participants willingly or unwillingly acknowledge that privilege by making it exceedingly unpleasant to consider doing otherwise. One of the defining features that made them different, however, was the way in which they each constructed the boundaries that made it possible for them to control who participated in their sessions and what was expected of each participant.

In the previously mentioned account, Ind recalls an occasion where a participant was semi-publically reprimanded for his or her artistically "offensive" behaviour. Although the details provided are intentionally vague—likely in an effort to protect the offender's reputation—we can only assume the participant's tendency toward musical egotism was enough for Tristano to feel as if they detracted from the session's overall quality. The fact that Ind recalls the participant decisively changing his or her behaviour after being spoken to implies the participant had, at least to a certain extent, preemptively acknowledged Tristano's position of authority on matters of etiquette related to that particular session and sessions like it. But why would a participant voluntarily relinquish their right to compete? Why would they relinquish their right to demonstrate performance at a level of vocational worth higher than that of a fellow participant striving for the same gigs? The answer, I would argue, is because Tristano structured his sessions in such a way that what was typically to be gained from a competitive mindset was no longer

supported by the session's social climate. The way he structured his sessions suggests he felt that utilizing musical techniques affiliated with vocational competitiveness detracted from one's artistic focus, and, in order to deter participants from falling into this trap, he took away the vocational incentive that contributed to its occurrence. In short, he privatized the event so that there was no one worth showing off to.

As an educator, Tristano made an effort to recruit students who shared his artistic philosophy. Understandably, he felt that he could best develop the artistic sensibilities of those who felt as strongly about jazz's artistic worth as he did. These students became fixtures of his loft-sessions. They were its regulars. They were the few bestowed with a long-running open-invitation and the few who contributed most to setting the musico-artistic tone of the events. By making them the event's focus, Tristano effectively constructed an alternative jam session culture—one that flew in the face of standard jam session protocol. He utilized the shared philosophy of his student body to build a jam session that frowned upon competition and commercial influence while utilizing the dedication of his students to create an environment where respect for Tristano was an expectation of participation. To Tristano, a musically-oriented decision that prioritized anything other than artistry was commercial. This, of course, included catering to one's own vocational concerns in a collective performance environment like the jam session where one was expected to contribute musically as an equal. He felt that if one was willing to prioritize their own career in such an environment, they were willing to sacrifice artistry for employment and were, therefore, willing to undermine jazz's artistic integrity in order to serve their own vocational interests.

One of the ways Tristano addressed this concern was by rethinking the jam session's open-door policy. "In contrast to other loft sessions, where people would come by whether

invited or not, Lennie always made it clear that his were invitation-only."[35] This is not to say that his doors were closed to all non-students, but rather, those who were invited only received invitation if Tristano felt they respected the idiom and had something unique to offer. Throughout the session's history, guests included figures like Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Max Roach and others—artists that Tristano felt would be unlikely to revert to the competitive gestures he felt poisoned traditional jam session etiquette. To Tristano, the invitation-only structure of his sessions served as a way of eliminating the need to embed the music with technical features designed to control who was able to participate. I would argue that to Tristano, this practice was an example of musically-oriented decision-making that relied on non-musical matters. It was not only a willful decision to make the music artificially difficult in order to discourage unqualified participation, it was a musical decision based on non-musical factors, and therefore, a decision that undermined the music's artistic integrity. By establishing an invitation-only policy, Tristano was able to guarantee that his sessions maintained the same elevated caliber of participation without being forced to corrupt the music's substance with musical trickery.[36] He acknowledged the need to regulate caliber and opted to utilize invitation (perhaps a practice he considered the lesser of two evils) in an effort to avoid corrupting the music with non-musical concerns. This enabled his sessions' participants to engage in musical creation under the shared knowledge that those who were invited had already been vetted by the sessions' governing authority. It allowed participants to take musical risks and challenge the status quo without fear of judgement and/or artistic subversion by competitively-inclined colleagues.

The second way Tristano addressed this concern was by removing the jam session from the club environment and resituating it within his own private residence. By doing so, he was

[35] Ibid, 34.
[36] Refer to page 30 for the Minton's Playhouse example.

able to guarantee his participants maintained a certain level of artistic purity by discouraging them from pursuing the public recognition, status, and exposure that came with proving one's vocational worth in a regular jam session environment.

The final way Tristano addressed this concern was by convincing his students that his sessions were implicitly more valuable than paid gig-work. He believed that the types of music that were expected in public performances were usually conditioned by what was likely to draw a crowd. He, therefore, felt that these opportunities were artistically inferior to musical events where one's only artistic restriction was his or her own creativity. Jazz was not something that Tristano felt should be artistically overlooked, yet he felt that commerciality did just that by subjecting its practitioners to the musical expectations of a commercial market. As a result, he made every effort to convince his students that his loft sessions were artistically superior to paying gigs where one was not in complete control of their artistic product. In an interview conducted by Marian Jago in her article "Dig-It: The Musical Lie of Ted Brown," Brown, the former Tristano student and tenor saxophonist, recalls the following: "If someone called us to play a gig on Saturday night we turned in down … and they thought we were all weird … but they had no idea what was happening."[37] What was happening, of course, was a musical event where like-minded musicians were "unit[ing] in [the] pursui[t] [of] something special."[38] It was an event celebrating the camaraderie of musicians with shared artistic ideals. And, it was an event that made it difficult to put one's vocational concerns over the concerns of the group enabling its participants to provide one another with a support network that encouraged artistic expression and idiomatic experimentation.

Throughout its history, the jam session has played an important role in shaping the

[37] Marian Jago, "Dig-It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 10, no. 2 (2015): 114.
[38] Ibid, 113.

stylistic trajectory of bebop. Not only is it celebrated for contributing to jazz's artistic ascendancy, it has been held largely responsible for emancipating it from the clutches of a commercial market. Its affiliation with bebop—perhaps the most radical of jazz's idiomatic developments—and its association with the exclusivity of after-hours performance created an environment that encouraged artistically-minded listeners to take notice of and make assumptions about its unique social dynamic. One of those assumptions was that the modern jam session was a musical setting devoid of commercial influence. It implied that its after-hours club setting and lack of paying audience created a commercially sterile environment where one was able to express one's self unaffected by vocational concerns. What is notable is that it was this very assumption that solidified the jam session in the historical narrative as one of if not the primary contributor to jazz's artistic ascendancy. Yet, as we now know, this assumption relies on… as Scott DeVeaux puts it: "many jazz enthusiasts' conviction[s] that the jam session represent[s] jazz in its purest state—an uncorrupted, unmediated, and uncommercial form of musical expression."[39] It is a belief founded on the assumption that the jazz musician acting outside of the public eye is artistically honest and true. And, it is also a belief that the jam session's anticommercial dynamic implies a non-competitive, non-subversive performance environment. Yet, one of the things we now know to be true of the jam session, and one that upsets the narrative celebrating it as a conduit of unfettered artistry, is its role in preparing musicians for and providing musicians with opportunities for employment and artistic recognition. This topic has been addressed at length by scholars like DeVeaux and Gooley, each of whom examine just how the jam session's vocational necessity undermines its alleged democratic "communication economy."[40]

[39] DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 179.
[40] Ibid, 207; Gooley, "The Outside of 'Sitting in'," 43,45.

By looking at the changes Tristano made to standard jam session protocol in the early 1950s, we can see that not all of bebop's contributors agreed that the jam session's social dynamic allowed it to function as the fixture of uncorrupted musical expression for which it has historically been credited. Based on Tristano's actions, we can make the educated assumption that he felt the prototypical jam session was an artistically corrupt social structure. He felt it forced participants to factor in their hierarchical standing in the performance community, frame their musical contributions within the expectations of a stylistic status quo, and acknowledge a session's artistic elite in order to avoid becoming victims of exclusion.

Each of these factors stemmed from an awareness that one's success as a paid musician was a direct result of how one represented one's self at jam session events. Commercial motivators ultimately shaped a participant's approach to jam session interaction while simultaneously cultivating an environment where challenging the status quo made it difficult to remain active as a musician in any form of professional capacity. As an anticommercialist, Tristano made an effort to address these concerns with the hope of transforming the jam session into an artistically pure social structure. Although it is clear that Tristano felt as if he was restoring what was left of a commercially corrupt musical environment, this assumption stems from the belief that jazz contains a central artistically pure essence—one that is inherent in all of its manifestations. Following the purchase of his 32nd Street studio-loft, Tristano organized a jam session that diminished the impact of commerciality. He began by privatizing the event to discourage participants from succumbing to competitive tendencies, he removed the session from the club environment to dissuade participants from seeking out public recognition, and he encouraged participants to acknowledge that his sessions offered greater artistic freedom than that which was available to paid musicians.

Although Tristano never spoke out on the topic of the jam session directly, his actions tell us a great deal about his opinions on the subject. The conclusions I have drawn in this chapter rely heavily on those opinions and a nuanced understanding of Tristano that acknowledges his actions were shaped by a central ideological objective. That objective was to strip jazz of any and all of its commercial affiliations. What Tristano did was effectively manufacture an understanding of jazz that discredited those incapable or unwilling to reject commercial standards based on the assumption that by not participating in jazz's artistic growth, they were actively sabotaging the idiom by undermining its capacity to function as a creative outlet. The central tenet of his ideology was the belief that jazz could be restored to an assumed state of original pureness. Where this line of reasoning fails is with the understanding that Tristano identified jazz's early developments as idiomatically primitive and lacking in artistic sophistication. Although Tristano identified commercial influence as an artistic contaminant in the modern jazz community, his response was to eradicate it in its current context as if doing so would in some way free jazz from its historical affiliation with commercial enterprise. With respect to the jam session, one thing that is immediately apparent is the fact that Tristano's loft-sessions indicate he was far from satisfied with the modern jazz jam session archetype and its accompanying social dynamic—a dynamic that one might argue valued competition and recognition in the pursuit of gainful employment over creativity and idiomatic experimentation in the pursuit of artistic excellence. It is easy now to see why a restructuring of the jam session would appeal to his ideological objectives. It is clear that it was not just because it was one of the primary modern jazz performance environments, but because it was symbolic as a musical environment that had come to represent artistic reclamation and rebellion.

CHAPTER 2: The "Cool" and Critical Voice of Lennie Tristano

One thing that can be said with certainty about Lennie Tristano is that he was never one to shy away from conflict or a difference of opinion. This is, of course, part of what makes him such a fascinating figure within the jazz community today. Heavily criticized for spearheading the development of an allegedly calculated and cerebral form of jazz, Tristano's music has been accused of exuding a "cold" intellectualism that challenges the emotive quality historically responsible for jazz's commercial popularity.[1] Inspired by the habits of jazz's early practitioners, (a community that utilized terminology associated with temperature, taste, and flavour to differentiate between idiomatic style-types,) the first wave of jazz critics began adopting similar practices in their attempts to formulate systems of critical evaluation. Their objective was to utilize established jazz terminology to indicate varying levels of musical authenticity in jazz. The 1930s, for example, saw the rise of jazz traditionalists who celebrated the music of New Orleans because they felt its unpolished quality contributed to its authentic character. Frequently referred to as "hot" jazz, they celebrated it for its passion and emotional intensity. For many, "hot," effectively served as an indication of musical rawness—a zealousness and musical fervor that was biting and to the point. Naturally, these early-jazz revivalists—later designated "moldy figs" by Ulanov and fellow modernist critics—had as much, if not more, to say about their music's competitor. They began by utilizing the performative veneer of the Swing era to poke fun at the commercial gloss of the 17-piece big band adopting the term "sweet" in an effort to elucidate the presence of artificial sentimentality in order to discredit the musical contributions of the swing

[1] See Eunmi Shim, *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 56.

community as a whole.[2] Little did Tristano know that his own stylistic contribution in the 1950s would be one of the next affected by this reoccurring terminological theme in jazz criticism. Although "cool" was not an unfamiliar expression in the jazz community at this time, it was really not until it became its own style—one often associated with Tristano and his colleagues—that it began to acquire the pejorative connotations we associate with it today.

"Cool" initially began as a term used to characterize a certain melodic and rhythmic fluidity in response to the timbral robustness, rhythmic precision, and tonal muscularity of swing players like Coleman Hawkins. Musicians like Lester Young and Paul Gonsalves contributed to new mellifluent ways of approaching melodic construction and timbral inflection that offered forward-thinking alternatives to established swing norms. During the development of bebop in the 1940s, this characteristic "coolness" created a stylistic baseline that enabled bebop's pioneers to build upon a musical structure that already served as an alternative to established swing standards. Naturally, it is easy to understand why modernist critics who saw value in the new style—one that was fresh, fiery, and emotionally charged—would be tempted to utilize terminology associated with a historical example of accepted deviation from an established musical norm. In publications like *Downbeat* and *Metronome*, bebop became the "cool" alternative to swing.[3] With an increased harmonic framework to facilitate melodic and rhythmic experimentation, bebop demanded of its listeners an acute musical awareness and appreciation for the subtler more understated details of the music. Due to its increased intellectual expectations, many participants were forced to disregard the emotive qualities of commercial

[2] Barry Ulanov, "It's Not the Book, It's the Attitude," *Metronome*, March, 1942, 11.
[3] Tristano's 1947 *Metronome* feature "What's Wrong with the Beboppers" defines bebop as "cool, light, and soft." He says: "The former [(swing)] bumped and chugged along like a beat locomotive; this was known in some quarters as drive. The latter [(bebop)] has a more subtle beat which becomes more pronounced by implication."

performance as the style itself required a previously unmatched level of attention to technical detail.

In Andy Hamilton's book *Lee Konitz: Conversations on the Improviser's Art*, Konitz—the former Tristano student and contemporary—addresses the idea of "coolness" as a characteristic of one's musical individuality.[4] He identifies three stylistically unrelated musicians whose approaches, although different, each rejected in their playing the tendency to succumb to artificial emoting. He says: "If you're talking about cool, you're talking about Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Charlie Parker—all the people who could really play unaffected music. When it became affected—trying to be emotional, or funky, trying to be something other than the natural—then it became 'hot'. But the real music was cool and really thoughtfully felt."[5] Here Konitz alludes to one of the major themes in his mentor's ideology—the idea that affect corrupts artistic honesty and diminishes the quality of improvisatory output. To Konitz, "hot" and "cool" were not styles associated with particular periods in the development of the idiom, but rather, performative qualities indicative of a musician's loyalty to the pursuit of naturalness and artistic purity. In his July 1947 article "What's Right with the Beboppers," Tristano addresses this matter when he says: "Bebop is a valiant attempt to raise jazz to a thoughtful level and to replace emotion with meaning."[6] The difference between emotion and meaning (or feeling,) however, is subject to interpretation. One of those interpretations is provided by Peter Ind in his book *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy.* He says:

> Lennie was clear about making the distinction between emotion and feeling. He said he was not interested in expressing raw emotion – if he wanted that he could visit any state hospital. The core of the music for him was playing with feeling. Ira Gitler, interviewing

[4] Andy Hamilton and Lee Konitz, *Lee Konitz: Conversations on the Improviser's Art*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[5] Ibid, 29.
[6] Lennie Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers," *Metronome*, July 1947, 14.

> Lennie in 1964, asked what Lennie thought of John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and Miles Davis. Tristano answered, "All emotion, no feeling." *"How do you distinguish between the two?"* "Well say I believe that there is no real hysteria or hostility in jazz, their stuff is the expression of the ego. I want jazz to flow out of the id. Putting it another way, real jazz is what you can play before you are all screwed up; the other happens after you're screwed up." (Gitler 1966:243)[7]

According to this passage, it appears "feeling" for Tristano is a sensitivity impervious to the baser effects of emotional agitation. In this passage, he implies that hostility is an agitative emotional state and identifies egotism as its artistically detrimental reaction. Whether one is driven by commercial interests, competitive tendencies, political motivations, or egotistical habits, any one of these extra-musical influences, according to Tristano, is capable of contributing to an emotionality that exceeds feeling and undermines artistic honesty. What Tristano was interested in then was a form of musical expression that acknowledged and utilized the emotionality of jazz without allowing it to become an artistic impediment. What he proposed was the natural expression of one's emotional psyche informed by the ebb and flow of the music's content.

The early 1950s saw the next notable manifestation of the "cool" moniker within the jazz community. Its terminological rejuvenation came at a time when jazz was undergoing what would become one of its most notable historiographical events. What was occurring was a multi-pronged stylistic fragmentation that came out of complex concerns surrounding race, politics, and aesthetics—each of which forced scholars to reexamine the supposed linearity of the idiom's historical trajectory. Unlike its predecessors, bebop did not experience the type of stylistic deterioration that marked it noticeably dated. Its continued artistic importance, due in part to the

[7] Peter Ind, *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing UK, 2008), 107-108; Ira Gitler, *Jazz Masters of the '40s* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1966), 243.

institutionalization of jazz in the late 1940s and early 1950s, contributed to a stylistic agelessness that made it possible for a body of substyles to develop under the influence of bebop during and after its development. Today, historians refer to this as the "post-bop" era. Of the three predominant "post-bop" substyles (hard bop, cool jazz, and third stream) and their sister-styles (soul jazz, and West Coast jazz,) "cool jazz" is the one most commonly associated with Tristano and his contemporaries. The defining aesthetic features and racial overtones of each of these substyles have been addressed at length by scholars Mark C. Gridley, and Ingrid Monson.[8]

In her chapter "Modernism, Race, and Aesthetics," Monson draws attention to the critical community's use of racial stereotype to define the aesthetic features of black and white jazz.[9] What she identifies is a distinct polarization where one's attributes are, more often than not, defined by the other's perceived inadequacies. She explains this phenomenon by looking at the prototypical "hard-bop" / "cool jazz" dichotomy in order to see how the aesthetic features of certain substyles have become racially encoded.

> The main musical styles of the 1950s—cool, hard bop, third stream, soul jazz—have long been color coded. Cool, West Coast, and third stream have typically been associated with white players, while hard bop and soul jazz have been linked to black musicians. The so-called West Coast and cool jazz with their preference for thinner timbres, relaxed time feels, and lyrical melodies have generally been taken as a "whiter" sound, while hard bop and soul jazz, with their prioritization of heavier timbres, blues inflection, and hard, driving rhythmic feels have generally been cast as "blacker." Historians have long noted the ill fit of these categories, with West Coast ignoring the hard-driving California sounds of Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, and Hampton Hawes (and the East Coast origins of Stan Getz), and "cool school" failing to account for the aesthetic range of musicians such as Miles Davis and Milt Jackson. . . The debate over hard bop and cool jazz in the 1950s often had a chain of metaphorical oppositions churning just below: hard/soft, black/white, male/female, emotional/cold, and, nonintellectual/intellectual. The musical dispute often focused on saxophone sounds as exemplary of the contrast between styles. The light-toned, smooth-timbred sounds of Stan Getz and Paul Desmond (both white) were often

[8] See Mark C. Gridley, "Clarifying Labels: Cool Jazz, West Coast and Hard Bop," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 2, no. 2 (1990); and Ingrid Monson, "Modernism, Race, and Aesthetics," in *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 66-106.
[9] Ibid, 74-78.

> contrasted with the edgier, blusier saxophone styles of Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, and John Coltrane (all black).[10]

This racially-oriented stylistic codification was assumed by many (often white jazz musicians) to be an obstruction of artistic freedom as one was largely expected to adhere to the aesthetic traits affiliated with their race. This issue was certainly not lost on Tristano or his contemporaries. When asked about his heritage as a white musician active in a predominantly African American art form, Konitz said the following: "Since we [the Tristano players] were all Caucasians, there was a thought about how we fit into this 'black' musical world. As we all appreciate, the great players, the real innovators, have been from the African American heritage—I hate the 'black' and 'white' concepts. So these great musicians are where we white guys get our inspiration, and I can only thank them for their music."[11] He continues by saying: "The leading figures have been black—and to that extent I identify with them…" but challenges their sense of idiomatic ownership when he says: "hopefully this is a music from all people dedicated to it, inspired by the great black players."[12] He concludes by identifying two staples of African American musical culture (the church and the blues) and acknowledges their importance in developing a characteristic African American jazz sound. With that said, Konitz refuses to condemn white artists who choose to utilize a blues aesthetic in their own work. He acknowledges its value as an expressive device and encourages any individual from any race to utilize it if they feel comfortable doing so. He names Bill Evans as an example of a artist who regularly utilized blues mannerisms in his work suggesting he did so in an effort to disassociate with the "cerebral

[10] Ibid, 71-72, 77.
[11] Hamilton and Konitz, *Lee Konitz*, 206.
[12] Ibid.

stigma that [had been] imposed upon him" as a white artist in an African American medium.[13]

As a style, "cool jazz" has been defined and redefined numerous times throughout its history. Perhaps its most famous definition is one by André Hodeir. He says:

> In a very general way, it [(cool jazz)] represents a striving toward a certain conception of musical purity. This effort, which implies a rejection of the hot way of playing and its most typical procedures, finds its justification in the new element it contributed, a kind of modesty in musical expression that was not to be found in jazz before. Even when the performer seems to be letting himself go most completely (and cool musicians, as we shall see, cultivate relaxation), a sort of reserve, by which we do not mean constraint, marks his [or her] creative flight, channeling it within certain limits that constitute its charm… Analytically speaking, their conception shows three principal characteristics: first, a sonority very different from the one adopted by earlier schools; second, a special type of phrase; and finally, an orchestral conception that, without being essential to the style, is not its least interesting element.[14]

What is immediately apparent is that Hodeir reads into the style a certain musical sophistication. He refers to a newfound "modesty" and "reserve" that imply a heightened sense of artistic confidence and composure while alluding to an inherent intellectualism absent in previous styles. He also identifies three of the style's defining features but fails to elaborate beyond noting that their qualities are different from the styles that preceded it. Gridley, on the other hand, defines these differences in detail. In his article "Clarifying Labels: Cool Jazz, West Coast, and Hard Bop," he says:

> Journalists termed "cool jazz" the work of many modern hornmen who employed slow vibrato, light weight, soft, dry tone qualities, and showed marked deliberation and exceptional economy in their improvisations. Much of this music avoided high notes and loud playing and sounded subdued by comparison with bop. In overall tone and feeling, some of it was reminiscent of the late-1930s combo recordings by tenor saxophonist Lester Young and pianist Count Basie that were exceptionally light and relaxed in feeling, thoughtful and uncluttered in conception. A premium was placed on lyricism,

[13] Ibid, 205.
[14] André Hodeir, *Jazz: It's Evolution and Essence* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 118.

> and, though serious and swinging, the style rarely projected the blistering drive associated with many swing era and bop era players.[15]

He makes reference to musical stylings of individuals like Lester Young and Count Basie in an effort to ground the style within the context of a historical foundation. He also considers artists' tendencies to quell their timbral and registral outputs indication of improvisational forethought and a willingness to manage their performative longevities. What we know of both of these definitions is that they make generalized assumptions about the "cool" community and how each member approaches musical creation. Intellect, for example, serves as the primary factor in explaining musical decisions about timbre, register, and volume, and, something as harmless as musical "clutter" becomes artistically unacceptable because it has the capacity to conflict with musical clarity.

What inevitably became of the "cool" moniker after 30 years of terminological inconsistency was an aesthetically-definable substyle synonymous with "white-jazz." The post-bop christening of the "cool jazz" genre created a set of aesthetic expectations informed by racial stereotypes. What resulted was not a new universally accessible style, but a genre that created musical elocutionary expectations based on race, class, and education. One was expected to adhere to the aesthetic features of the genre affiliated with their race in order to avoid accusations of racial appropriation on one side or cultural rejection on the other. There were, of course, exceptions to this rule as Monson notes but the predominant historical narrative did and largely continues to uphold the white/black – "cool" / "hard bop" demarcation.[16]

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[15] Gridley, "Clarifying Labels: Cool Jazz, West Coast, and Hard Bop," 9.
[16] Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, 72.

Lennie Tristano is a peculiar example in that the majority of his work seemingly adheres to the aesthetic expectations of the "cool jazz" genre, however, he and his supporters adamantly deny his association with the style. The underlying logic behind this collective rejection is complex, but we can certainly note that each example tends to find itself structured, in one way or another, within a line of reasoning shaped by the "colour-blind" racial ideology of "Crow-Jim"—a term popularized by Leonard Feather in the early 1960s in an attempt to expose what was perceived as anti-white prejudice in the jazz community.[17] This ideology, of course, is one complicit with white-privilege and is one based largely on the assumption that race is a musically irrelevant element of jazz creation. When asked about his objection to the use of the term "cool" as a stylistic identifier for his and his mentor's music, Konitz said: "The negative connotation is what was really used on us [The Tristano school], as white unpassionate players. I didn't appreciate that." Hamilton follows by asking whether Konitz would go so far as to consider the term a "reverse racist putdown." He responds: "Surely. [Hot and Cool] are loose terms. I'm not trying to play cool, I'm trying to play as hot as I can—and as cool as I can, as full of feeling as I can." Once again, Konitz provides indication of an understanding that views "hot" and "cool" as malleable terminological identifiers that correspond with one's style based on their own improvisational frame of mind. He disapproves of understandings that discredit participants from performing at either end of the temperature spectrum based on preconceived notions of what is acceptable and possible for black and white performers. In a June 1955 feature on Tristano in Metronome magazine, Al Zeiger writes:

> It is specifically reason and well controlled discipline that has made Lennie a profound musician. He is not overwhelmed by his emotions as is the case of the romanticists, yet deep feeling underlies his restraint and objectivity. Therefore the term "cool jazz" as

[17] See: Paul D. Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2002), 253-256; and Terry Teachout, "The Color of Jazz," *Commentary* 100, no. 3 (1995): 50-53.

> applied to his music is often misleading. Lennie swings but not in the same sense that r&b swings. The sensitive music lover looks for refinement and delicacy and this cannot be found in growling and howling. Lennie swings because his music contains a wealth of musical ideas, rhythmic subtleties, interesting harmonies and exciting counterpoint. To explain swinging strictly in terms of rhythm is a mistake, because there is so much more involved in listening to and playing jazz.[18]

In this particular example, Zeiger identifies and responds to two musical allegations historically used to undermine the validity of Tristano's artistic contribution. He begins by noting that discipline does not equate to cerebrality and restraint does not detract from one's ability to imbue their art with an intensity of feeling. In doing so, he challenges the public's perception of Tristano as a practitioner whose musical product is cold, academic, and emotionally barren. He continues by addressing the stereotype that "cool jazz" and by extension "white-jazz" are incapable of swinging. To challenge this assumption, he expands his understanding of "swing" outside of its typical rhythmic framework and incorporates it within a wider base of musical expression including but not limited to melodic and harmonic invention.

In his book *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy*, bassist Peter Ind notes: "This repackaging of Lennie as cold, cool or no longer hip really seems to me to be trying to find a way to continue to rationalize false criticism (as Lange suggested), with everyone competing for commercial success."[19] The section of the Lange article referred to by Ind is included below:

> The largest, most lingering – and highly unfair – criticism of Tristano and that of several of his better-known collaborators like saxophonists Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, is that their music is over-intellectualized. This has become a code word for cold and unemotional. At least a portion of this type of controversy, emerging back in the late 1940s and '50s, may have been due to non-musical reasons, having to do with personality cliques, racism, snobbism, musicians afraid of losing jobs or their audience to something

[18] Al Zeiger, "Lennie Tristano: A Debt of Gratitude," *Metronome* 71, no. 6, June 1955, 23.
[19] Ind, *Jazz Visions*, 162-163.

> different, [and] critics unable to understand something outside of their (limited) area of experience.[20]

Although one might argue Ind's use of the term "false criticism" misrepresents Lange's meaning, we can still acknowledge that his rejection of the "cool" moniker stems from concerns about enabling others to make *a priori* judgements of quality based on preconceived notions of what white artists are capable of contributing to an African American idiom. Lange concludes with a thought that segues nicely into the second half of the chapter where I examine the critical voice of Lennie Tristano on issues relating to commercial influence in the jazz community. He proposes an understanding of Tristano's alleged "coolness" that accounts for commercial considerations like the struggle to stay idiomatically relevant and retain gainful employment. He asks us to acknowledge the presence of competitive labelling where one's style is ultimately defined by a competitor and their supporters in ways that consciously and deliberately detract from its artistic validity in an effort to further their own careers and shape the development of jazz in their own image as opposed to that of their competitors.

Tristano was a highly tenacious and persuasive individual with deep convictions about jazz, its artistic significance, and the role of commerciality in its development. For someone who felt that it was his responsibility to educate the public on the idiom's artistic validity, the use of written word as an explanatory device must have seemed crucial to Tristano in a modernist aesthetic that had seemingly begun to exceed the comprehension of its listeners. His charismatic personality and overwhelming forthrightness were paramount in generating a blunt and often accusatory style of criticism effective if one was willing to look past its contemptuous tone.

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[20] Art Lange, "Changing the Shape of Music: Another View of Lennie Tritstano, Lee Konitz, and Warne Marsh," *Coda Magazine*, Jan/Feb, 1999.

Unlike most critics active in the community at this time, Tristano was unique in that he was unwilling to engage in any form of critical discourse that acknowledged the acceptability of a middle ground between artistry and commerciality. For Tristano, one's vocational concerns were artistically irrelevant and therefore unacceptable as performative determinants. He acknowledged that the listening public had a predilection for jazz that was easier to digest but declared that "society ha[d] a real obligation [to] … foster the arts and encourage the artists even if the understanding [was] not immediate."[21]

In the Spring of 1945, Tristano wrote a piece of criticism for *Jazz Quarterly* dedicated to the state of jazz in his hometown of Chicago, Illinois. Characteristic of his writing style, the article contains a balance of intellectual parlance and idiomatic slang—a combination that often reads as stilted, and at times, condescending. It examines issues of artistic originality, the role of commercial enterprise in the Chicago jazz scene, and the adverse effects of stylistic imitation on the development of musical competency.[22] In June and July of 1947, Tristano wrote a feature for *Metronome* magazine in the form of two articles. These articles, entitled "What's Wrong with the Beboppers"[23] and "What's Right with the Beboppers"[24] are concerned not only with bebop but jazz modernism as a whole. The first article begins by critiquing bebop participants for prioritizing the upkeep of a collective bebop persona and concludes with an objection to those who deny the importance of a modernist jazz aesthetic. The second article praises bebop for contributing to the development of an artistically viable jazz dialect and declares that its popularity has no impact on its artistic value.

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[21] Lennie Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers," *Metronome*, July, 1947, 31.
[22] Lennie Tristano, "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz," *Jazz Quarterly*, Spring, 1945.
[23] Lennie Tristano, "What's Wrong with the Beboppers," *Metronome*, June, 1947
[24] Lennie Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers", 14, 31.

In the remainder of the chapter, I identify sections in Tristano's criticism that indicate his musical philosophy was driven by the belief that commerciality and artistry are mutually incompatible. Although his relationship with publicity was atypical—often hinting at themes of anticommercialism in his and his student's careers—his decision to provide (and commit to writing) commentary on developments he considered artistically detrimental to jazz enables us to strengthen our understanding of the reasons behind his seemingly reclusive nature. If we allow his writings to contribute to the widely-held image of Tristano as an outspoken iconoclast, we can begin to associate his antisocial behaviour with conscious and deliberate acts of protest.

Tristano's initial foray into jazz criticism is interesting for a number of reasons. One of the most notable being its effect on his accusatory nature. Although he was certainly never one to shy away from accusation, his entry into the critical community undeniably changed the way he went about doing so. Upon entering into a critical discourse outside of the privacy of his studio, the focus of his criticism began to shift from specific individuals in the jazz community to the institutions and ideologies they represented—perhaps in an effort to establish a layer of self-protection or to simply adhere to a perceived status quo within the critical community. Regardless, this was a significant change because it resulted in Tristano making sweeping generalizations about large bodies of individuals. In the spring of 1945, for example, Tristano published an article on the state of jazz in Chicago as a whole. His opening statement begins by indicating that a temporarily undefined force had corrupted the city's capacity to produce artistically valuable jazz thus making it incapable of attaining a geographically-oriented stylistic identity. He says: "The discussion of Chicago Jazz, as an entity, is problematical; it simply does not exist. The variegated depravities infecting the Windy City's jazz and musicians have

smothered every evidence of originality."[25] This alleged artistic depletion, according to Tristano, stemmed from the belief that jazz in Chicago was crippled by the greed of a business community unsympathetic to the artistic aspirations of its practitioners. He says: "The polluted, acquisitive nature of bookers and cafe owners, who have a strangle hold on the life line of jazz, has instilled in the musician the attitude that they must either conform, commercially, or starve, causing them to commit artistic suicide. Since the high-brows refuse to admit that the jazz man is an artist, perhaps it does not matter. The applied terminology, instead of being artistic suicides, should be commercial casualties."[26] Here Tristano implies that the city's booking agents and venue owners instilled a collective attitude in its musicians that forced them to associate their value with their ability to draw crowds. He believes that it was this attitude that inevitably gave rise to the stylistic development he unceremoniously refers to as the "mickey" band—a notoriously hackneyed show ensemble with overwhelming public appeal. He writes:

> One of the most devastating circumstances working against Chicago's output of jazz is the spread and prominence of mickey bands, those deliberately out of tune tenor bands in which everybody plays the lead, except the piano player whose neurotic style vacillates from moments of bursting, scintillating, technical joy to moments of tempoless inanity. They play the two beat society music, which means schmaltzy fiddles, three part harmony, stuttering cornets, the frequent wail of a too lightly pitched trombone, the throw back tuba, the "please let me sing in your band. I'm a has-been, and I promise to sing flat!" vocalist.[27]

The disparaging quality of these words seems to imply that Tristano felt this was a music so overwhelmingly steeped in melodrama it was simply incapable of producing any semblance of creative musicality. Not only does he refuse to acknowledge the historical relevance of jazz showmanship, he hints at a preferred understanding that excludes it from the jazz moniker in its

[25] Tristano, "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz," 23.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

entirety.[28] He adds: "The effects of the mickey band are several. First, it brings the process of educating the public to good jazz to a stand still. People appreciate only what they are told to appreciate; and, as long as this sort of thing is shoved down their collective throat, jazz is doomed. The effect it has on the musician is worse. The man who of necessity plays in a mickey band… breaks contact with the spontaneous and improvisational qualities of jazz, and falls into an attitude of reckless indifference."[29] Here, Tristano claims that the general listener is incapable of making appropriate judgements of value due to an inability to identify artistically inferior jazz. He hints that it is this ineptitude that contributes to a performance environment where one's artistic creativity is not reflected in its audience base. And, he acknowledges the willingness of the city's musicians to engage in a creatively limiting dialect to be an act of career preservation—a reluctant conformation with the stylistic expectations of a commercial industry in an effort to make ends meet. As is to be expected, Tristano's target is clear. Situated within an anticommercial ideology rooted in the tradition of white modernist critics like Nat Hentoff, Leonard Feather, and Barry Ulanov, Tristano's first piece of criticism reconstructs the well-established entertainment/art dichotomy by examining the role of commercial influence in the Chicago jazz scene.[30] He accuses the city's "bookers and cafe owners" of "stamping the life out of jazz" in Chicago stating that they have "complete control of the [city's] jazz output" and are effectively "abusing it."[31]

After a brief two-year hiatus, Tristano made his return to jazz criticism by publishing a two-month feature in *Metronome* magazine on the pros and cons of bebop. In June of 1947, he

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[28] For a good example of this type of exclusion see David Ake's chapter on Louis Jordan; David Ake, "Jazz Historiography and the Problem of Louis Jordan," in *Jazz Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 42-61.
[29] Tristano, "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz," 24.
[30] John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 174.
[31] Ibid.

released the first half of the feature in an article entitled "What's Wrong with the Beboppers."[32] Tristano utilizes this article as an opportunity to explain why the stereotypical bebop persona is harmful to the style. He begins by claiming that "it is the musicians themselves, the vendors of jazz, who in many cases make their own lives difficult. The protagonists of Dixieland regard bebop as a war-time fad. However the supercilious attitude and lack of originality of the young hipsters constitute no less a menace to the existence of bebop." For Tristano, a lack of originality and the resulting tendency toward musical plagiarism and imitation are as much a detriment to modern jazz as are its formal detractors. He states that "bebop [is] an advanced and complex outgrowth of … jazz [that] exists precariously above the uncomprehending ears of the average person" but fails to account for the fact that many of its early practitioners also struggled to comprehend its complexities and felt forced to appropriate the phrases of established beboppers like Gillespie and Parker in order to remain musically relevant. The problem he identifies is an alleged tendency within the bebop community to prioritize extramusical style-traits like fashion and behaviour at the expense of developing musico-stylistic competency. On this topic he says:

> These young boppers spend most of their time acquiring pseudo-hip affectations instead of studying and analyzing modern jazz with the aim of contributing something original to it. A typical manifestation peculiar to them is their *effort* to appear completely relaxed. Sitting implies muscular tension, so they slouch. They don't walk; they amble—with a delayed beat. They gaze indifferently at the uninitiated through drooping lids, muttering, "It's cool, Daddy-o." There is an unfortunate belief that to play like the great jazzmen, you must live like them. Close examination might reveal that the productivity of these creative minds has often been stagnated by self-destructive habits. A better approach for boppers would consist of studying, then analyzing the idiom. This would determine its harmonic structure, unique inflections, and phraseology. The next step is the use of these components in improvisation. Since lightness, fleetness, and facility are attributes of modern jazz, they should be integrated with originality and knowledge to form an expression which may be similar in style but different according to individual personalities. Even the phraseology may be utilized if it is done with inventiveness rather than through plagiarism.[33]

[32] Tristano "What's Wrong with the Beboppers," 16.
[33] Ibid.

Tristano's chosen examples of these alleged behavioural tendencies serve two purposes. First, they poke fun at a set of overwhelmingly theatrical behaviours; and second, they imply that the spectacle of performance now exists in the context of a representative bebop caricature—an eccentric figure for the public to marvel at and be amused by. He criticizes beboppers for being content with a superficial understanding of the style and urges them to fill the gaps in their knowledge. Tristano concludes the article with a declaration. He says that jazz is a medium that will eventually achieve artistic recognition despite its commercial ties. He says: "It will not be held back by the dancing public, [nor will it be] profaned by its deified critics, or restricted in its growth by its poor imitators, even when they imitate jazz at its best."[34]

In the following month, Tristano published his third piece of criticism and the second half of his *Metronome* feature: "What's Right with the Beboppers."[35] He begins by attempting to situate bebop within a broader historical jazz context by examining the philosophy surrounding its melodic and harmonic construction and comparing it to that of the Dixieland tradition. What he identifies is a musical system unlike that of its predecessor—a system that celebrates the linearity of the individual line, effectively praising its individual participants for their harmonic and melodic ingenuity. According to Tristano, this is a system free from the downsides of collective improvisation, and therefore, one unaffected by the need to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a collective musical mood. He calls this an "aphrodisiac mood" and argues that it is the type of device that undermines intellectually stimulating musical contribution. Finally, he praises bebop for being one of the first to rid jazz of such a device. He says:

[34] Ibid.
[35] Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers", 14, 31.

> Though Dixieland presents a single and crude form of counterpoint, its contrapuntal development ends in a blind alley. Each line is governed by the end result which is collective improvisation. Collective improvisation is limited by a small number of chords, perhaps six or seven. A good melodic line is sacrificed completely. The music strives to induce an aphrodisiac mood which for many years has been considered the essence of jazz. Anything that requires a degree of *intelligent* comprehension is ruled out. Therefore the means becomes the end. Artistic development is unnecessary – in fact, detrimental[36]

His solution to this dilemma is, of course, the adoption of a modernist aesthetic like bebop. He says: "Bebop is a valiant attempt to raise jazz to a thoughtful level" and notes that "it is successfully combatting the putrefying effects of commercialism."[37] Although he gives little indication of how exactly it is doing so, we do know that he views artistic stagnation as a byproduct of deliberate attempts by the music's practitioners to appease the musically uneducated and that bebop was one of the first dialects to reject this historical trend. He notes that "bebop… [is] an advanced and complex outgrowth of … jazz [that] exists precariously above the uncomprehending ears of the average person"[38] and comments that it is the lack of public interest combined with the pressures of living a life of musical tradesmanship that leads to the abandonment of bebop and a regression of artistic values among jazz's musicians

Toward the end of the article, Tristano addresses this issue directly. He begins by saying: "The development of jazz must be the concern of every musician who attempts to play it."[39] In doing so, he implies that it is no longer acceptable to define a jazz musician as someone who adheres to a set of idiomatic traits, they must now be conscious of their position in an ever-changing artistic medium and aware that their musical decisions have the ability to advance or

[36] Ibid, 14.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Tristano, "What's Wrong with the Beboppers," 16.
[39] Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers," 31.

impede the idiom's artistic development. He adds: "Jazz is not a form of popular entertainment; it is art for its own sake. Its popularity or unpopularity is coincidental."[40] In doing so, he challenges the idea that popularity and demand can serve as markers of musico-artistic value in a medium like jazz thought by many to be above the influence of commercial motivators. In his article "Constructing the Jazz Tradition," Scott DeVeuax addresses this very topic. He says: "Whether conceived of as art music or folk music, jazz is consistently seen as something separate from the popular music industry. The stigmatization of 'commercialism' as a disruptive or corrupting influence, and in any case as something external to the tradition, has a long history in writings on jazz."[41] He goes on to quote examples of criticism by Leonard Feather and Ross Russell to demonstrate what he refers to as a "demoniz[ation] of the economic system that allow[s] musicians to survive"—a factor of seemingly little concern to Tristano given his and his students willingness to teach as their primary means of income.[42] Finally, Tristano concludes with a passage that challenges readers to reorient their understandings of jazz. He asks us to acknowledge the idiom's stylistic identifiers while giving priority to an artistically transcendent quality capable of overruling the extent to which those identifiers qualify a contribution as jazz. He says: "The man who plays to entertain is not as objectionable as the man who plays to entertain and at the same time protests that he is playing jazz"[43] and in doing so, identifies entertainment as a factor that makes one's contribution idiomatically inadmissible.

Historically, statements of authenticity in the jazz community have gone hand in hand with anticommercial sentiments and proclamations of musical ownership each of which

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 529-530.
[42] Ibid, 529.
[43] Tristano, "What's Right with the Beboppers", 31.

perpetuate racialized and gendered structures of power and privilege. Both of these approaches—often but not always separate—have been successful because they've recognized the value in vilifying an opposing force in an effort to strengthen their own ideological positions. Individuals who had anticommercial leanings, for example, identified the market as a cancer killing creative individuality, whereas those in adherence with ideologies of racial essentialism identified white participants as a community undermining the purity of authentic jazz creation. To address one without the other while discussing Lennie Tristano is irresponsible as both contribute significantly to an understanding of the ways in which he defined his own music within the idiom. This chapter began by looking at the "cool" aesthetic. It examined the way its meaning changed over time and showed how stylistic labels were imbued with derogatory qualities that often threatened to undermine the artistic validity of musicians' contributions. What we learned by looking at the comments of his contemporaries was that Tristano rejected the "cool jazz" label for two reasons—both of which had little to do with musical aesthetics. The first reason was because "cool jazz" had become synonymous with "white-jazz," and "whiteness" in jazz had a tendency to imply inauthenticity and artistic inferiority (two qualities he closely associated with commerciality). And the second, was because "coolness" often implied a cold cerebrality that Tristano did not associate with his own work. Tristano, I would argue, was a rare example of a white jazz musician abnormally sensitive to the effects of Afrocentric rhetoric on his own artistic output. Firmly rooted in an anticommercial philosophy that saw authentic jazz creation as the ultimate artistic objective, Tristano, like many others, struggled in an environment where he felt his value as a contributor was predetermined on the basis of his race. As a result, he spent much of his career attempting to find a balance that allowed him to acknowledge African Americans

for their contributions to jazz while simultaneously repudiating Afrocentric ideological claims he felt undermined the contributions of the idiom's white participants.

Much like his music, Tristano's writing was met with animosity. His unwillingness to adhere to the *modi operandi* of modernist *and* revivalist critics put him in a position where neither could effectively disregard his critical contribution on the basis of its affiliation with the other. Although Tristano was a modernist, his unwillingness to designate bebop as the idiom's exclusive modern dialect challenged much of what was assumed about its artistic importance. In his writings, Tristano made it clear that he felt bebop was not artistically infallible. Like any other style, he believed that it was subject to commercial corruption at the level of the music and its participants. As a result, the three articles he published in the mid to late 1940s celebrated the dialect's contribution to jazz modernism while chastising its participants for undermining the idiomatic contribution of its pioneers. To Tristano, bebop represented an expression of idiomatic individuality. It was not something that could be copied, nor was it something that could be expressed through extramusical style-traits like fashion or behaviour. If one, for example, was not fully dedicated to the production of raw musical individuality, Tristano felt that they were effectively allowing their plagiaristic tendencies to contribute to the construction of a generic reproducible style-type—one that empowered the community's club owners by enabling them to request or reject it based solely on commercial interests. One thing that is abundantly clear in Tristano's criticism is that the relationship between modern jazz and commercialism was and is extremely complex. He demonstrates that there are a multitude of commercial factors constantly influencing artists' decisions informed by but unrelated to the traditional performer/owner work dynamic. These (secondary) commercial concerns are often affiliated with the notions of authenticity, creativity, and artistic honesty. The path one takes in achieving vocational

preparedness, for example, can provide indication of an artist's priorities. Knowing the point at which a musician considers themselves qualified to play at a professional level also indicates to what degree, if at all, the artist considers performance a responsibility that reflects the artistic viability of the idiom. Another indication is the artist's willingness to engage in musical dialects that are not conducive to the same level of creativity as their primary musical style. It should, therefore, come as little surprise that each one of these examples contributed to the development of Tristano's pedagogy in his own career as an educator and our next chapter delves into them all.

CHAPTER 3: Anticommercialism in the Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano

No study of Tristano's life would be complete without an analysis of his pedagogical contribution to jazz. After all, he saw in himself and others a mutual responsibility to prepare not only the future generation of improvisers but its listeners to appreciate the intricacies of an ever-changing medium. For Tristano, teaching was an active part of the idiom's development. It enabled the music to grow unrestricted by commercial concerns and served as a way of ensuring its participants learn to cope with the inhibitory qualities of a medium steeped in marketplace values. During the latter part of his career, Tristano identified as a teacher first and a performer second. His choice of personnel in the late 1940s (Konitz and Marsh[1]), his gradual withdrawal from public performance in the 1950s, and the increase in demand for his pedagogical services throughout the remainder of his career are all indicative of this fact.

To this day, Tristano has been called everything from a musical guru, to a "musician-philosopher."[2] A major component of that alleged philosophy was the idea that jazz developed through a series of "originals"—masterful improvisers whose contributions offered unique alternatives to the idiomatic status quo. In his dissertation "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," John Francis McKinney identifies seven originals that influenced Tristano and his cohort in an attempt to identify aspects of their contributions that contributed to his pedagogy. The artists he names are Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Roy Eldridge, Lester Young, Charlie Christian, Charlie Parker, and Bud Powell.[3] Tristano's pedagogical intent in celebrating these artists was to have

[1] Two of Tristano's most renowned pupils.
[2] Andy Hamilton and Lee Konitz, *Lee Konitz: Conversations on the Improvisers Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 12.
[3] John F McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano" (EdD diss., Farleigh Dickinson University, 1978), 35-55.

his students obtain an appreciation for their work so that they would recognize jazz as an art form with enormous creative potential. Tristano saw teaching as an opportunity to develop his students into originals but felt that this was only possible if they recognized and appreciated the music's inherent artistic value. His goal then was to prove that jazz improvisation was a natural extension of a musician's artistic psyche—one that required a rejection of commercial influence in order to attain the improvisational pureness required to contribute to the idiom in a meaningful way. Central to his pedagogy was the idea that artistic purity in jazz came from a musical expression of the unconscious mind. "True" improvisation then was an intuitive act not only unwilling but incapable of communicating that which was not an honest expression of an artist's inner self. Jago notes that "Tristano's method rested upon the student obtaining a complete mastery of certain musical basics and of learning to internalize [that] material in such a way as to facilitate unfettered and unconscious improvisation."[4] Although it is important to be aware of which "musical basics" he favoured as an educator, we need also to examine the reasons these "basics" were chosen and the ways he used them to construct a coherent pedagogical program based on a concept of "wholeness." Interestingly, this concept has been applied to Tristano's pedagogy on more than one occasion, the most notable of which is most likely his commentary on his own pedagogical process. In a 1962 interview-article by Bill Coss, Tristano says: "I teach from the conceptual point of view—according to the individual of course. I'm not interesting in teaching parts, only the whole. The whole is greater than the parts. Everyone learns that in school. Bird was certainly greater than all his licks. That's why the imitators are not great. They're only doing the parts."[5] Here he alludes to one of the central tenets of his ideology: the

[4] Marian Jago, "Musical Koryu - Lineal Traditions in Jazz: Lennie Tristano/Lee Konitz," *MUSICultures: Journal of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music* 38 (2011): 209.
[5] Bill Coss, "Lennie Tristano Speaks out," *Down Beat*, December 2, 1962, 19.

idea that authentic jazz creation has been polluted by individuals content with a surface understanding of the idiomatic material in question. He names Parker [Bird] as the musical archetype that should be aspired to—a musician whose artistic dedication to jazz enabled him to develop a personal approach to improvisation that ultimately redefined the idiom. However, he also challenges those who misappropriate the techniques of originals like Parker in order to draw attention to the community's dependence on the market and the negative impact that has on the artistry of the medium's participants. In her article "Dig – It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," Jago draws attention to one of the primary anticommercial themes in Tristano's pedagogy. She says: "One of the most distinguishing characteristics of [his] pedagogical approach was the sheer amount of time required to absorb and make use of the materials. In terms of acquiring a kind of professional competence for commercial jazz work there were and are much faster and more efficient models. But Tristano's methodology had precious little to do with the development of employable skills; it was bent on artistic development, and artistic development takes time."[6] This passage indicates that Tristano had little interest in preparing his students to function as professional musicians. His role as an educator was to guide them through a process of artistic self-discovery—one that enabled them to express themselves on their instruments as effortlessly as they would if they were speaking their native language.

Another scholar who identifies "wholeness" in Tristano's musical approach is Eddie S. Meadows. He begins by drawing attention to the presence of Gestaltist holism in two areas of Tristano's career. The first, attempts to account for the unusual ways he interacted with rhythm sections; and the second, attempts to understand the reason behind the length of his students' apprenticeships. Tristano was known to be overly critical of rhythm section players who

[6] Marian Jago, "Dig – It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 10, no. 2 (2009): 107.

attempted to break free from their instrument's traditional supportive role. Meadows notes that "while [Tristano] advocated spontaneous creativity and individuality in theory, in practice, he required his sidemen to function as accompanists, in a subdued and subtle manner, within the aesthetics and style of the group."[7] Meadows likens this to a form of Gestaltism relating it to themes common in earlier jazz dialects. He says: "Tristano's gestalt philosophy was generic to 1950s and 1960s jazz. In fact, gestalt concepts date back to the styles of Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Bebop. In both the earlier styles and Bebop, instruments had specific functions within the whole, but the performance was judged on the basis that the whole was more than the sum total of its parts."[8] Meadows also identifies a pedagogical facet of Tristano's philosophy with similar features. He forces us to consider the reason Tristano's lessons seemed as if they had no foreseeable end date, and address the ways in which that affected his students.[9] Meadows writes: "While pursuing his goal of developing complete musicians, [Tristano] encountered frustration…because some students quit rather than pursuing 'the whole.'"[10] It should come as little surprise then that his practice saw the kind of turnover it did in an idiom where one-off lessons were largely the norm. Tristano developed a pedagogy that not only refused to address the vocational needs of its professional students (employable skills, for example, were omitted from his curriculum,) but made it difficult for them to obtain musical employment under his tutelage. Students were expected to strive for artistic "wholeness" in a manner that exceeded that which was expected of commercial performers. The upcoming section looks at a few of the "musical basics" Tristano made use of as a teacher in an effort to

[7] Eddie S. Meadows, *Bebop to Cool: Context, Ideology and Musical Identity* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 325.
[8] Ibid.
[9] For example, Sal Mosca—one of Tristano's most notable students—studied with Tristano for well over 8 years.
[10] Meadows, *Bebop to Cool*, 326.

understand their collective role in preparing students to shield themselves from the stylistic influences of a commercial market.

According to both McKinney and Shim, one of the most notable features of Tristano's pedagogy was his willingness to admit his inexperience and allow students to show him how and what it meant to teach jazz.[11] In both instances, this theory derives from a single quotation made by Tristano in the early 1960s. In a *Down Beat* article by Bill Coss entitled "Lennie Tristano Speaks Out," Tristano said: "I think the reason it all began, and this was in Chicago, was because no one else there was trying to teach anything special besides reading and embouchure building. So musicians came to me. I really didn't know how to teach, but students who wanted to learn taught me how to teach."[12] I would argue, however, to suggest—as McKinney does—that Tristano "reversed the usual roles" of the student/teacher dynamic is to ignore what we know of his domineering personality.[13] Although there are anecdotal examples of students controlling the trajectory of their lessons with Tristano, I believe a closer look will indicate that any sense of freedom they might have had was extremely controlled. Although Tristano's choice of pedagogical material changed throughout the course of his career and did, in fact, cater to the artistic needs (and musical desires) of the individual student, he also had definitive ideas about the kinds of material appropriate for serious jazz learning. This meant not only an unwillingness to stray from this body of material, but an unwillingness to accept students incapable of recognizing its alleged pedagogical value—a process of evaluation that typically involved an informal teacher/student interview where questions were asked that enabled Tristano to

[11] McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," 81, 182; Eunmi Shim, *Lennie Tristano: His Life in Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 124.
[12] Coss, "Lennie Tristano Speaks Out," 19.
[13] McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," 182.

determine whether the student held similar beliefs as him about jazz and its development as an art form.[14] Lee Konitz, perhaps Tristano's most famous pupil, notes that the content of his and his colleague Warne Marsh's lessons differed significantly. He notes that "Tristano didn't dwell on harmonic subtleties with [him] because [he] wasn't that responsive … [to that approach]." He says: "I didn't play the keyboard at the time, I was a 'one-note' guy." On the other hand, "Warne [(Marsh)] started out on the piano" and was, therefore, more comfortable with an approach that emphasized jazz harmony.[15] With that said, the underlying material from which both of their lessons derived and its selection due to the improvisational ideology that informed it—one that equated artistic purity with anticommercial sentiment—remained relatively fixed throughout Tristano's career as a teacher. Tristano developed a way of teaching that gave him and his students a certain amount of flexibility with respect to what material was emphasized, but each and every part of that material was necessary, according to Tristano, to produce artistically competent musicians.

The core of Tristano's pedagogy centered around the belief that one could only obtain improvisational freedom if one could internalize the essential building blocks of the jazz language and develop the technical facility necessary to execute spontaneous phrases as imagined in the mind's ear. This philosophy effectively redefined the meaning of improvisation in its idiomatic context. No longer was it appropriate to call a spontaneous musical idea improvisation if it was not a direct reflection of the musician's *immediate* inner artistic voice. And, for Tristano, it was not a direct reflection of that voice if there was a conscious decision to

[14] According to McKinney, this process involved the following two questions: 1. Why do you want to be a jazz musician? And 2. Why do you want to study with me? -- The first was intended to illuminate whether the student-candidate had any motives that happened to conflict with a primary desire to be artistically creative. And the second, to determine whether they were willing to submit to the pedagogical regimen Tristano felt necessary to develop their individual voice.

[15] Hamilton and Konitz, *Lee Konitz*, 14-15.

restate material, utilize material that had been worked out ahead of time, or employ the material of others in a way that had no valid quotational purpose. Konitz expresses this idea in his criticism of Charlie Parker and John Coltrane for adopting what he calls a "compositional" approach to improvisation—one where one's musical vocabulary is composed of predefined licks or phrases that serve, in the best case, as logical building blocks in an improvisational whole, and in the worst, as a security blanket for an improviser lacking idiomatic competence.[16] The way Tristano addressed this concern was by identifying a set of rudimentary exercises that enabled the student to train their ear while preparing their fingers to execute any creative phrase the ear might imagine. McKinney describes this process as a technical unshackling of sorts. He says: "Creativity is what it's all about. It is accomplished, initially, by not having your ideas shackled by a lack of facility. One takes the shackles off by learning and retaining basic things—then he [or she] is not lost for a 'word' as he [or she] or improvises a solo."[17] Although the material in question was often rather basic, Tristano's approach required of his students a dedication to each exercise that far surpassed the ability to replicate it in performance. The student was expected to practice each exercise and every conceivable variation of that exercise until it became second nature. He felt that until a student had internalized a body of idiomatically-oriented source material and come to an adequate understanding of its pedagogical relevance, that student would be incapable of improvising intuitively. Outside of additional expectations placed on specific instrumentalists, Tristano required his students learn, internalize, and perform basic scales, idiomatic rhythms, standard jazz harmony, standard jazz tunes, and so on. In addition, students were expected to engage in an intense regimen of ear training via interval recognition, chord identification, and aural transcription. And finally, all of his students

[16] Ibid, 102-104.
[17] McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," 120.

were expected to sing and sing accurately. He felt that the voice was the most natural extension of the inner musician and was convinced that it was the best way to internalize musical material. Because of this, he did not permit his students to perform their transcriptions on their respective instruments until they had mastered and memorized them with their voices. Jago notes:

> The student was not simply to copy pitches, but to learn to sing along in such a way that they could visualize themselves playing the solo. Time feel, accent placement, timbre, articulation and mood were all as essential as the pitch elements of the solo and needed to be embodied in the process of this initial learning of the solo… The student was to aim for an embodied understanding of *how* the solo was being played, rather than simply an accurate reproduction of the notes in question.[18]

With respect to scalar knowledge, Tristano required of his students a complete familiarity with the major, melodic, harmonic, and natural minor scales. If one was incapable of performing a scale or showed lesser ability in a particular key, they were forced to repeat the lesson before they could move on to new material. Even then, a perfect performance was not an indication that one had internalized the material. After all, Tristano was not interested in a display of technical proficiency. His students were expected to demonstrate that their proficiency derived from their internal connection with the music. If they were incapable of doing so, they would be forced to repeat the lesson until they could. Former student and bassist Peter Ind recalls the moment he realized Tristano was looking for something more artistically substantial than high levels of technical proficiency. He says:

> I remember Lennie asking me to play a scale. It soon became clear to me that playing scales was not a mere technical exercise, but real music making. Prior to this, I had regarded scales as an elemental task in becoming familiar with the instrument… I found studying with Lennie in the early days somewhat disconcerting. When he asked me to play something, I responded by showing my technique: how I could do things on the bass

[18] Marian Jago, "Jedi Mind Tricks: Lennie Tristano and Techniques for Imaginative Musical Practice," *Jazz Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (2013): 194.

> that were unusual, at least in those days… As I later realized while studying with Lennie, such an approach completely missed the point. Lennie was trying to show me how to make deeper contact with the music, not merely demonstrating skill, like the ability to show how fast or fluently notes could be played. He always emphasized the need to make contact with the music. Just to play a note with real profundity is something of which a beginner is seldom aware.[19]

For Tristano, the internalization of a rudimentary exercise demonstrated a deepening of musical understanding. It contributed to a student's idiomatic familiarity and enabled them to function within the language in a way that was personal, intuitive, and creatively honest. Konitz refers to this as "ethical" music making, the purpose of which is to not only to create something coherent but something coherent and meaningful to the "speaker." Konitz describes an "ethical [musical] product" as a musical contribution that stems from one's "true musicality."[20] He identifies former colleague and Tristano pupil Warne Marsh as an example of an ethical musician. He says: "[Warne Marsh] was… primarily concerned with playing the music, which takes 100 percent of your effort. He knew that there were a few people out there who would appreciate that—and that's who it was designed for."[21] In doing so, he implies that there is a virtuousness in the act of dedicating your whole self to the process of artistic creation, and does so by utilizing popularity—or a lack thereof—as a measure of musical ethicality and purity of expression. This anticommercial motif is one that appears again and again in the careers or Tristano and his students and becomes more apparent in his pedagogy as we step away from the material he emphasized and begin to take a closer look at his methodology.

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[19] Peter Ind, *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano and his Legacy* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing UK, 2008), 18.
[20] See Hamilton and Konitz, *Lee Konitz*, 236.
[21] Ibid.

In her work on his role as a teacher, Jago argues that Tristano developed a pedagogy conducive to those whose primary means of income was non-musical. She also, however, claims that his primary concern was in helping students learn to express their artistic uniqueness. She notes that "it has often been said of Tristano that his largest concern was in helping his students to find their own musical way" a process that "extended into ensuring … each student was treated individually, [and] with care taken to address variances in background, experience, interest, and temperament."[22] Indeed, Tristano encouraged his students to develop their artistic individualities, but, to suggest—as Jago does—that Tristano's pedagogical process involved a careful consideration of one's experiences is to suggest that Tristano believed experience itself played an important role in defining one's artistry. This claim is problematic as it interferes with much of what we know of Tristano's anticommercial outlook.[23] The frequency with which one performs, for example, would have been of little meaning to Tristano unless it was the type of performance that warranted artistic respect. The rigidity of his pedagogical process and refusal to admit students unwilling to change the dynamic of their profession is indicative of this fact. Tristano, it seems, had strong opinions on the types of experiences that would enable students to grow as artists, and rather than creating a pedagogical environment beneficial to those whose life experiences derived from non-musical employment, Tristano, I would argue, designed his pedagogy to exclude those incapable or unwilling to accept as fact his belief that musical employment was detrimental to one's artistry. This, of course, raises serious ethical questions. Is it appropriate to assume, for example, that it is an educator's right to put their own interests above the interests of their students? Or, did Tristano's unwillingness to accept students with blatant commercial objectives (objectives that DeVeaux has linked to an African-American

[22] Jago, "Musical Koryu," 211.
[23] See Lennie Tristano, "What's Wrong with Chicago Jazz," *Jazz Quarterly*, Spring, 1945.

vocational necessity) indirectly contribute to the historical discrimination of black musicians in the jazz community?[24] It is interesting to note that themes of ethicality pervade Tristano's theoretical understandings of jazz artistry but are surprisingly absent from areas of his career that directly impact the community and its participants.

An interesting feature of Tristano's pedagogy is the fact that students were expected to commit to substantial periods of focused and unbroken study in order to be considered viable pupils in the eyes of the educator. This fact is one that has been touched on repeatedly by scholars McKinney and Jago as well as critics of the Tristano aesthetic like Francis Davis.[25] Although this requirement has typically been attributed to Tristano looking out for the financial and artistic well-beings of his students, what has often been overlooked is the extent to which it *forced* students to adhere to the anticommercial ideology he advocated as a critic in the mid to late 1940s. In the third chapter of his dissertation, McKinney examines the way Tristano prepared his students to handle the psychological stressors of studying a then unrespected creative idiom rife with "financial instability, … poor working conditions, … limitations on one's social life, and the resentment that [might arise] from family and friends" unresponsive to idiom's artistic value.[26] He notes that "a student might love the music, but there [are] sociological considerations he [or she] ha[s] to face [that] often dr[ive] players from the music completely or ma[ke] them into part-time players [who perform] just for 'kicks.'" Although Tristano was not opposed to the idea of part-time musicianship, he was opposed to it if it cheapened the idiom's artistic output. McKinney notes that "Tristano made it quite evident that

[24] Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 207.
[25] Davis accused Tristano of manipulating his students into believing it was necessary to extend the duration of their studies indefinitely; See Francis Davis, "Tristanoitis," in *Bebop and Nothingness* (London: Schirmer Trade Books, 1996), 92-94.
[26] McKinney, "The Pedagogy of Lennie Tristano," 57.

the study of jazz was a very long process, one which would take many years as all art involves a 'long becoming.'" He adds: "If Tristano's methods were to succeed, they would have to be worked out for years, even a decade, and perhaps longer. The question was now not whether the student had the ability; the question was whether he [or she] had the determination."[27]

Drawing on similar themes as McKinney, Jago notes that "Tristano required… his students commit to a minimum of one year's unbroken study, a condition which prevented students from taking work in touring orchestras or ensembles. Instead, Tristano encouraged many of his students to take non-musical day jobs which provided the financial security and stable schedule required to support a concentrated period of musical study."[28] It is important to note, however, that the example she provides shows former student Ted Brown acknowledging the artistic value of Tristano's expectations while lamenting the fact that it prevented him from dedicating himself to the music in a professional capacity. She says:

> Tristano was well aware that his approach took an immense amount of time, focus, and commitment to certain artistic ideals that made earning a living through music somewhat problematic. The encouragement Tristano gave to Ted Brown with regard to having a day-job was not unusual advice, and many of Tristano's students worked alternate careers while continuing their studies. Though Brown admits to wishing that he could have spent more time focusing solely on his music, he also allows that the financial stability offered by regular work had advantages for one pursuing artistic, rather than [a] commercial approach to music.[29]

According to Shim, "Tristano stressed that commercial factors should not interfere with creative expression" taking note of the fact he said: "If you really want to get into your music, get a job. Because there's no gigs out there, the jazz scene is not happening. If you really want to do it in a

[27] Ibid, 60.
[28] Jago, "Dig – It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," 99.
[29] Ibid, 108.

deep way, you… make your money doing something else."[30] To imply that Ted Brown was unhappy with his work environment and/or displeased with the fact that he was encouraged to find a day-job in order to support himself is an assumption I am unwilling to make. However, it is interesting to note that this example does indicate Tristano was comfortable including in his pedagogy a set of expectations that actively made it difficult for students to object to aspects of his anticommercial ideology if they intended to continue their studies. Jago notes that "this commitment to an unbroken series of lessons, in conjunction with Tristano's emphasis upon artistic practice over immediately useable professional skills, required that those studying with Tristano reject a great many professional opportunities, such as employment with touring dance-bands still active in certain areas of the United States." This fact has traditionally been explained as an attempt by Tristano to protect his students from commercially-oriented artistic contamination. According to Shim, "there was a moralistic element [to] Tristano's teaching. Many students believed that he embodied the principles of his teaching through his devotion to his music, emboldened by his strong conviction and powerful personality."[31] Given Tristano's controversial status as an outspoken anticommercialist, it is not unreasonable to think that he might have included this pedagogical expectation as part of an attempt to build a community of student-musicians unable to adhere to commercial performance expectations due in part to financial responsibilities in their primary cities of residence. Tristano, for example, required that his students commit not only to an extended period of study but a regular payment schedule regardless of attendance. Although this is standard practice of most teaching studios today, it is important to note that at the time both of these requirements were unusual in the jazz community. If a student was unable to attend a lesson, regardless of their circumstance, they were expected

[30] Shim, *Lennie Tristano*, 126.
[31] Ibid.

the cover Tristano's fee—thus creating a financial expectation insensitive to the financial hardships of non-salaried musical contractors.[32] Although Tristano allowed his students to make up for missed lessons, it is fair to assume that the stress associated with weekly payments was enough to encourage certain students to look for work environments with greater stability than that which was offered by contract work in the music industry. In order to support this claim, it is necessary to identify additional elements of Tristano's pedagogy that indicate he developed his teaching style with non-musically careered students in mind.

In her article "Jedi Mind Tricks: Lennie Tristano and Techniques for Imaginative Musical Practice," Jago identifies a defining feature of Tristano's pedagogy—the belief that visualized practice serves as an effective technique for "free[ing] the musician from the habits and techniques of muscle memory."[33] Among many advocates of the Tristano aesthetic, muscle memory has been seen as artistically detrimental because it encourages musicians to revert to areas of comfort (both musically and instrumentally) through the repetition of patterns often unrelated to one's own internal musicality. In an interview conducted by Andy Hamilton, valve trombonist, arranger, and composer Bob Brookmeyer referred to these areas as "vanilla fudge" in an effort to express their tendencies to cheapen one's artistic output. He said: "There are these 'vanilla fudge' areas in every instrument that give instant gratification from their historical reference, but some of us try to avoid such cheap thrills in search of some meaning in our work."[34] As an educator, Tristano noticed that this often served as an act of self-preservation in a medium where the general competency level had not yet reached the idiom's modern musical expectations. As a result, Tristano attempted to develop a methodology that addressed this lack

[32] Jago, "Dig – It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," 107.
[33] Jago, "Jedi Mind Tricks," 189.
[34] Hamilton and Konitz, *Lee Konitz*, 107.

of competency in a way he felt prevented students from reverting to mechanical habits traditionally developed during the process of instrumental practice. He felt the best way of doing so was by designing a practice regimen that took place away from a student's instrument, thus making it impossible for them to develop physical habits and instrument-specific patterns capable of undermining their internal artistry. For Tristano, "true" improvisation was an expression of the *id*, and, that which did not derive from it was an artistically impure contribution to the idiom.[35] For Tristano, improvisatory utterance was pure only insofar as it could be considered conceptual but not cerebral, meaningful but not emotional, technical but not mechanical, and free from the influences of a commercial market. Of course, the level of subjectivity associated with these distinctions makes an objective evaluation next to impossible, effectively empowering Tristano to make unchallengeable value judgements by setting up clear demarcations between good and bad, but giving little indication of the properties that make up these distinctions. To combat these alleged contaminants, Tristano had students undergo a practice regimen that took place away from the instrument with the goal of "cultivating their aural imagination[s]."[36] Jago notes that "a visceral understanding of pitches and pitch relationships divorced from… specific instrumental technique ensure[s] that… musical information ha[s] meaning beyond the specific confines of a particular instrument."[37]

Former Tristano student and tenor saxophonist Ted Brown is a notable example of a "part-time" musician respected in the jazz community despite his non-musical occupation. Initially known by few outside of the immediate Tristano circle, today he is widely recognized by a community traditionally unenthusiastic about accepting those unwilling or incapable of

[35] Ind, *Jazz Visions*, 107-108
[36] Jago, "Jedi Mind Tricks," 189.
[37] Ibid.

dedicating their lives to jazz exclusively. Before retiring, Brown was an IT professional by trade. His decision to work a day-job was a conscious choice and one he does not regret. He says it allowed him to avoid "worry[ing] about [his] financial situation" which enabled him to focus on musical material with a level of artistic integrity matched by few.[38] In the Tristano aesthetic, a musical contribution is artistically pure if it is a product of the inner voice. Brown's decision to distance himself from the commercial jazz market echoes Tristano's sentiment that the inner voice is only accessible to those who reject commercial influence in their music making.

With respect to his lessons, Ted Brown recalls being encouraged by Tristano to utilize free moments throughout the day to work on musical exercises that required little to no audible sound. He says: "Except for working with records, I did most of my ear training on my lunch hour [at work]. Fortunately, in those days I had the luxury of a whole hour for lunch and found places that were quiet so I could hear it in my head and sing it or whistle it softly to myself. Eventually I was able to work on some of the lines in my head as well. [(Tristano encouraged students to compose melodies over established jazz standards as a way of slowing down the process of improvisation and experimenting with new ideas)]."[39] Jago notes that although Brown was only able to dedicate a small amount of time to his instrument, the material Tristano emphasized with him enabled him to make steady progress through a process of "silent, concentrated mental practice."[40] She notes that "Tristano's emphasis upon improvisation and melodic development over learned materials len[t] itself particularly well to forms of practice that [did] not involve use of the instrument"[41] In yet another example, Brown recalls singing the

[38] Jago, "Dig – It: The Musical Life of Ted Brown," 115.
[39] Ibid, 110.
[40] Ibid, 109.
[41] Ibid.

roots to—and familiarizing himself with the harmony of—standard jazz tunes during his daily commute. This served as preparatory practice—the purpose of which was to make each session as productive as possible by minimizing trial and error during the few hours of the day he was, in fact, able to access his instrument. He also recalls Tristano encouraging him to visualize his instrument while working on scales and exercises. Doing so prevented him from using his instrument as a crutch, effectively forcing him to rely on his ear in order to tune each note. Instead, Tristano permitted students to utilize pitch pipes on the first and last notes of a passage to determine whether the pitches they imagined were accurate in the context of the key in which they were working.

Traditionally, scholars have explained the visualized aspect of Tristano's pedagogy in what can be regarded as an attempt by the educator to train the *audiatory* abilities of his students (a term coined by Edwin Gordon in 1986).[42] According to Christopher Azzara, "audiation [is what occurs] when one comprehends music for which sound is not physically present."[43] In his work on improvisation, John Kratus has said that "a knowledgeable improviser is able to hear inwardly… sounds as [he or] she is making them on an instrument or voice… and it enables them to make predictions as to what sounds will occur while improvising." He notes that "these predictions occur in a split second and are likely to be unconscious" and follows by saying "if one cannot audiate and make predictions as to what sounds will occur while improvising, then one cannot structure the sounds musically in a purposeful way."[44] Although this philosophy was not introduced to the academy until after Tristano's death, his pedagogy was most certainly

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[42] Edwin Gordon, *Manual for the Primary Measure of Music Audiation and the Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation: Music Aptitude Tests for Kindergarten and First, Second, Third, and Fourth Grade Children* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 1986).
[43] Christopher Azzara, "Audiation, Improvisation, and Music Learning Theory," *The Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1991): 106.
[44] John Kratus, "A Developmental Approach to Teaching Musical Improvisation," *International Journal of Music Education* 26, no.1 (1995): 23.

rooted in many of the principles we associate with it today. Ultimately, Tristano believed that improvisational mastery was dependent on one's ability to express the products of their audition with high levels of performative precision. In order to teach his students to do so, Tristano designed a pedagogy that used ear training and transcription to develop his students' idiomatic imaginations while utilizing visualization as a tool to prevent students them from relying on instrument-specific patterns that he felt undermined the creative thought processes that made them unique. One aspect of his pedagogy that has remained underexplored, however, is the *reason* he established a methodology better suited to individuals who pursued a non-performance oriented career. Jago believes that Tristano simply altered his pedagogical approach to one more considerate of his students' availabilities in an attempt to alleviate some of the stresses associated with jobs that left little time for traditional practice. She says: "In order to balance the musical demands made of his students with the realities of living and working in an urban environment, Tristano's pedagogical approach placed a great emphasis upon techniques and methods of musical development that took place *away* from the instrument."[45] Although this is a fair assumption, it seems unlikely given what we know of Tristano's disposition. His unwillingness, for example, to compromise in other areas of his career makes it seem unlikely that he would consider doing so in the one area he considered his true calling—that is, unless of course, it served his own ideological purposes. Shim notes that the year before his death "he cited teaching as a moral duty, describing himself as more of a teacher than an artist.[46] She also notes that "Tristano's lifelong pursuit of independence from the jazz world… affected his teaching, including his anticommercial crusade and consequent isolation from the mainstream jazz

[45] Jago, "Jedi Mind Tricks," 188.
[46] Shim, *Lennie Tristano,* 123.

scene."[47] It, therefore, seems more reasonable to assume that Tristano developed a methodology better suited to those with non-performance oriented careers because it encouraged students with a natural separation from the commercial jazz market to look to Tristano—an anticommercialist—for artistic guidance. One can argue that he saw the educational value in an audiatory method of instruction, but benefited most from the fact it contributed to the creation of a student body that adhered to anticommercial principles due to their occupations.

Tristano's anticommercial ideology was extreme in that it permeated multiple areas of his career including his role as a teacher. He held strong opinions on the types of material worth teaching, the ways in which it should be taught, and the ways one should go about learning it. More often than not, these opinions stemmed from the belief that artistic purity was achievable alone through a rejection of commercial values. Tristano, of course, saw this as a constant uphill battle due to the fact that he was working within an idiom largely built on the interpretation of commercial material. Internalization, audiation, visualization, and the acquisition of technical facility were all staples of Tristano's pedagogy—each of which was deeply rooted in anticommercial rationale. He saw internalization as the primary method of building idiomatic familiarity; audiation and visualization as ways of accessing and learning to prioritize one's internal voice while distancing one's self from the external influences of muscle memory and commerciality; and the acquisition of technical facility as a way of producing the sounds imagined in the mind's ear. Together these factors collectively worked to create a pedagogical template that taught students to trust their inner musician. It encouraged them to listen within and express only that which is creatively unique and artistically honest. Although it was effective in what it set out to do, it failed many because it was not designed to address the concerns of

[47] Ibid, 167.

musical craftsmen. Tristano established a set of pedagogical expectations that were mutually beneficial to him and his ideal student: an individual with a day-job and no financial attachment to the jazz community. Interestingly, it was their lack of reliance on employable opportunity that created the preferred teacher/student dynamic that allowed Tristano to impress upon them the importance of creative individuality and the negative impact he felt commercialism had on the idiom's artists. Historically, Tristano's pedagogy has been successful in developing artists fully and completely—many of whom, like Brown, are and were sympathetic to Tristano's anticommercial cause. His pedagogical expertise spurned a series of second generation educators who closely followed his methodology and were highly successful in their attempts. Some of these individuals include former students like Warne Marsh, Sal Mosca, and Lee Konitz, among others. Tristano's teaching may very well be his most substantial contribution to jazz. After all, he changed the face of jazz and jazz education by redefining what it meant to improvise from within. Central to this pedagogical mission, as I've detailed here, was a radical anticommercial ideology that made him the teacher he was and will be remembered as for years to come.

Conclusion

Today, nearly 40 years after his death, Tristano's legacy continues to polarize the jazz community as much as he did at the height of his career. For many, Tristano has come to represent a radical brand of Eurocentric jazz purism. Tristano was indeed known to challenge notions of Afromodernist jazz ownership—a fact that undoubtedly contributed to and continues to contribute to his controversial status in the jazz community. He did so by indicating that jazz was only capable of evolving through the influences of "key" figures—figures he deemed to be of artistic importance. Although he credited African American artists like Young and Parker while holding them in the highest regard, his unwillingness to credit jazz as a foundationally African American expressive art form—preferring instead to call it "American"—propagated a colour-blind ideology complicit with white-privilege. This, of course, made it difficult for many to determine whether it was and is appropriate to support Tristano's contributions to the idiom. One individual who has taken it upon himself to publically reject his contribution is African American critic and author Stanley Crouch. In an email with modern jazz pianist and blogger Ethan Iverson, Crouch had the following to say about Tristano and his approach to jazz creation:

> I think it is also important to contemplate the quality of the Tristano sound, which I think is also a rejection of what you call "African diaspora." You have cited the famous Marsh/Tabackin story. I think that ironically, the reason they loved Young and Parker so much was because their tones were doorways to white nationalism! Lee Konitz has told me many times that though Tristano never said it, he always got the impression that his intent was to create a style of jazz that was, for lack of a better word, white. In overall aesthetic terms, there is nothing actually wrong or out of line in this decision because so much of modern art in the twentieth century was about using one's eth[n]ic (sic) cultural background as an aesthetic element of fundamental importance. Picasso did it, so did Joyce, Faulkner, Ellison, and Bellow. Those additions can provide nuances that made the aesthetic artifact more complex rather than less. The question then is whether the "expressive" timbral elements of instrumental jazz, all of which can be traced to blues, folk, and work song singing, comprised for Tristano an academy that he rejected. What

separates Tristano from those other artists I listed is very simple: they added their ethnic particulars, mixed them in instead of removing as many of the fundamental technical accomplishments as possible while claiming an attachment to the things they were erasing.[1]

For Crouch, Tristano's failure (as a jazz musician) derived from his unwillingness to allow jazz's "aesthetic artifact" to inform his modern restyling of the music. This much becomes evident when we look at his preliminary message to Iverson after being prompted to give his opinion on the subject. He says: "As you know, I do not accept the idea that jazz advances itself by following new directions, harmonies or rhythms from European classical music."[2] Unlike Tristano, Crouch and many others like him, see jazz as a musical extension of African American culture. It is an idiom so closely tied to black cultural trends, thoughts of disassociating it with that community or taking a stance that willfully ignores its relevance threatens its musico-cultural identity. Part of what makes Tristano such a polarizing figure in the jazz community today is the fact that his focus as a jazz musician so rarely acknowledged the idiom's origins.[3] Alternatively, he constructed a way of understanding jazz that allowed him to distance himself from its origins by effectively redefining its meaning.

For Tristano, jazz was akin to improvisation. Much more than a musical style defined by its aesthetic traits, jazz was an expression of individuality. It was an act of musical spontaneity and one supported by a declaration of creative honesty. It was a moral agreement with one's self and one's community to produce only that which was artistically pure and unaffected by foreign influence. Because of this, Tristano was able to challenge established definitions of jazz by

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[1] Ethan Iverson, "All in the Mix (Lennie Tristano)," *Do The M@TH* (blog), https://ethaniverson.com/rhythm-and-blues/all-in-the-mix-lennie-tristano/.
[2] Ibid.
[3] I would like to clarify that my use of the term "origins" refers alone to the implicit musical qualities of jazz associated with "blues, folk, and work song singing:" the idiom's "aesthetic artifact."

implying that artistic honesty was an essential feature of the idiom—a theory that effectively enabled him to strip musicians of their affiliations with the jazz label based on subjective judgements about the artistic validity of their musics.

As an advocate for an artistically purified form of jazz, one of the predominant foreign influences that Tristano spoke out against was the commercial market. He repeatedly identified club owners, café owners, booking agents, and record producers as individuals actively participating in jazz's artistic marginalization and accused them of doing so in an effort to exploit its musicians for financial profit. For Tristano, however, this was only one aspect of a relatively complex issue—one that he felt went far beyond its business community. Because of the jazz idiom's commercial origins, Tristano felt that the majority of its musicians had developed commercially-oriented attitudes on jazz that hurt their abilities to create artistically meaningful content. As a result, Tristano identified sets of musical behaviours that developed in association with these attitudes and saw their elimination as the next logical step in freeing artists to express themselves. One of these behaviours was the community's tendency to turn recreational music making into competition. Tristano, for example, identified the modern jam session as a commercial event in need of reform. He felt its role as a vocational proving ground fostered a relationship between participants that was unnecessarily competitive and artistically detrimental due to its tendency to discourage experimentation. Even though the jam session theoretically offered jazz musicians an artistically unrestricted performance environment, the learned behaviours of a community accustomed to commercial interference fostered ways of interacting with participants that undermined what Tristano felt was its primary artistic purpose. As important as it was for Tristano to rebuke the actions of its business community, he saw that it would be impossible to reform jazz without first addressing the self-limiting behaviours of its

musicians.

In addition to his concern regarding the collective social behaviours of a commercially-minded musical community, Tristano also identified commercial influence at the individual level and believed it interfered with one's ability to express one's inner voice. To address this problem, he developed a teaching style intended to make musical learning more intuitive. This particular style included the use of techniques like vocal transcription, instrumental visualization, and imagined musical practice. His goal was to convince the jazz community that "true" improvisation was an act that occurred in the mind's ear with the hope of discouraging participants from rehashing transcribed material from commercially successful musicians. He considered this problematic not just because it was artistically unoriginal, but because it was also often intended to appease an audience.

Each of the three chapters in this thesis address themes of anticommercialism in Tristano's career. Although they ultimately look at unique ways in which his anticommercial attitudes manifested in specific environments (including the jam session and the teaching studio,) together they contribute to a coherent ideologically-oriented image of the artist that does well to explain his actions in the community. I have argued that anticommercialism was the ideological driving force that informed his career and stress that it enabled him to renegotiate the meaning of jazz in a way that he considered ethically acceptable. Although my research indicates this is the first study to consider the implications of anticommercialism on the career of an individual jazz musician, it is one of many to address the ramifications of commercialism on jazz artistry as a whole. For those interested in expanding upon this study, I might suggest examining the careers of Tristano's contemporaries (such as Lee Konitz, Warne Marsh, Sal Mosca, Peter Ind, Ronnie Ball, Ted Brown, and Connie Crothers) to see if similar ideologies emerge. For those interested

in Tristano himself, studies on his blindness might help us learn more about his demeanor and could be useful in explaining his adverse relationship with audiences. With that said, my goal in producing this study is simply to encourage others to think critically and decide whether an artist's catalogue is an adequate measure of one's contribution. I personally do not believe it is, and I think Tristano illustrates that there is often more to a jazz musician than the music they record.

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