It Does Too Matter:

Aesthetic value(s), avant-garde art, and problems of theory choice

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Abstract

My dissertation is concerned with two central issues: analysis of theory-practice gaps in aesthetic theories applied to avant-garde musics, and problems of visibility and respect in theorizing across cultures. In the first chapter, I examine a case study, John Coltrane's successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things," under two different theories in order to show how theories shape our view of the practices we are trying to explain. In the second chapter, I take up Coltrane's practices and their relations to theories once again but, in a reversal of the previous chapter's focus, I show how examining theories through practices can reveal these theory-practice gaps and problematic assumptions. I move, from there, to an analysis, informed by feminist standpoint epistemology, of the extent to which political values influence our theory choices and thus help construct our metaphysical views. Out of this discussion, my third chapter argues that attempts to universalize a culturally-situated notion of 'the musical work' (one drawn from Western classical music) do violence to works and artists situated in other cultural traditions. Thus I construct an alternative view of the musical work that I call 'contextualized nominalism' which has the merit of being sensitive to these issues of cultural situation. The fourth chapter explores connections between avant-garde jazz practices and oppositional politics which can be made visible when performances of works are accorded priority over composition. Here I construct a performative notion of community which, in addition to making the most sense of improvisational musical practices, can also be the ground of an 'ethos of improvisation' extendable into other social contexts. Finally I turn to the need for a pluralistic framework in aesthetic evaluation of polycultural artistic processes and products, through a critical examination of universal notions of aesthetic value. I argue, from this and all of the preceding chapters, that where we cross cultures, or mix them, in aesthetic evaluations, we must do so as respectful pluralists and within a pluralist framework.

Résumé

Ma dissertation se concentre sur deux problèmes centraux : premièrement l'analyse du clivage entre théorie et pratique dans les théories esthétiques appliquées aux musiques d'avant-garde et deuxièmement les problèmes de visibilité et de respect dans les théories qui veulent englober des cultures différentes. Premièrement, j'examine le cas des diverses improvisations de John Coltrane sur le thème de « My Favorite Things » à partir de deux théories différentes dans le but de montrer comment les théories donnent forme à notre vision de ces pratiques mêmes que nous essayons d'expliquer. Deuxièmement, je reprends les improvisations de Coltrane et leurs relations aux théories. Mais je renverse l'ordre utilisé dans le chapitre précédent pour maintenant étudier comment l'examen des théories à partir des pratiques peut révéler le clivage entre théories et pratiques et le statut problématique de certaines assomptions. J'élabore ensuite une analyse, qui s'inspire de l'épistémologie féministe, de l'influence des valeurs politiques sur le choix de nos théories ainsi que sur la construction de nos positions métaphysiques. Mon troisième chapitre défend que les tentatives pour universaliser une notion 'd'œuvre musicale' issue d'une culture particulière (en particulier celle dérivée de la tradition de la musique classique occidentale) fait violence aux œuvres et artistes issues d'autres traditions. Je construis donc une conception alternative de l'œuvre musicale, conception que je nomme 'nominalisme contextualisé' et qui a le mérite d'être sensible aux problèmes de l'origine culturelle des œuvres. Le quatrième chapitre explore les connections entre l'avant-garde du jazz et la résistance politique, connections qui deviennent particulièrement visibles lorsque la priorité est donnée à au jeu musical plutôt qu'à la composition. Je construis une notion de communauté performative qui, en plus d'expliquer la plupart des pratiques d'improvisation, peut aussi soutenir une 'éthique de l'improvisation' qui peut être étendue à divers autres contextes. Finalement, je critique les prétentions d'universalité en esthétique pour révéler le besoin d'un cadre pluraliste dans l'évaluation des procédés et produits artistiques multiculturels. Je conclue que là où nous traversons ou mixons les cultures dans les évaluations esthétiques, nous devons le faire en tant que pluralistes respectueux et au sein d'un cadre pluraliste.

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Introduction

In an essay on the principles of a contemporary movement in literature, *écriture*, Michel Foucault quotes a rhetorical question posed by Thomas Beckett: "what does it matter who is speaking?" (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 205). My response, that it *does* matter, is asserted in the title of my dissertation, and my analysis of why it matters focuses on the problem of suppression (e.g., of cultural traditions or artistic motivations) that results from obscuring contexts of production and reception. This potential for suppression of an artwork's context raises the two central and inter-related issues with which this dissertation is concerned: analysis of gaps, or mismatches, between aesthetic theories and the avant-garde musical practices to which they are applied; and problems of visibility and respect in theorizing across cultures.

Because of the diverse ways in which their experimentalism may be manifested, avant-garde jazz improvisations can be a particularly fruitful site for investigation of theory choices. One pitfall of this diversity, however, is that we have very little guidance in deciding which theories are appropriate to analysis and evaluation of these avant-garde practices. I argue that we need to be guided by values[1]: what values the aesthetic theories appear to privilege; what values the improvisatory practices appear to privilege; and how well the argument for a value-fit between theory and practice can be justified, given the existence of

[1] By values, I mean, for instance, standardly recognized aesthetic values such as originality, but I also want to include political and ethical values such as openness to collaboration and receptivity to one's performance partners.

competing claims. And because, in my view, there always will be theories capable of making competing claims to reveal the (array of) values of a given practice, the larger backdrop of my dissertation is a commitment to theory-pluralism and value-pluralism.

This commitment to pluralism is strengthened by considerations of cross-cultural and polycultural theorizing because attending to cultural differences can help us to see different perspectives on the interplay of aesthetic, political, and ethical values, and examination of these perspectives is crucial to understanding the different evaluations they promote of both aesthetic theories and improvising practices. In stressing the inherent sociality of music, I am theorizing in the vein of Jacques Attali's project, a political-economic survey of the history of European music and culture which argues that music both predicts and orders social forces, and what I borrow from him in particular is the idea that there are distinct, powerful social norms that are embedded in musical practices as aesthetic values (Attali 4-6). I am also indebted to Charles Taylor's richly multicultural account of deliberative democracy – especially for its emphasis on negotiation as a strategy of consensus-building, and for the crucial importance attached to claims of 'recognition' (e.g., the awareness of differences among political actors in a shared situation) in inclusive political discourse (Taylor 25-37). This emphasis on negotiation that is respectful of individual and group differences strikes me as an important corrective to liberalism's central commitment, the equality of all persons. Taylor distinguishes his view from the standard view, 'procedural liberalism', which holds that governments must treat all their citizens as equals and must be impartial with respect to the possible lifestyles and conceptions of the good chosen by their citizens (Taylor 56-7). A liberalism that builds in attention to difference – attention to what Taylor calls 'the politics of recognition' – is, by contrast, a 'substantive liberalism' because it is not entirely neutral with respect to the choices citizens make (Taylor 58-73); Taylor's

substantive view privileges as better, because more likely to lead to a non-repressive social discourse, those choices of lifestyle, behaviour, and value-commitment that are built around inclusion, negotiation, and the acknowledgement that differences among individuals are significant for questions of identity (while still holding to the principle of equal status for all political actors). These influences situate my philosophizing of improvisation at the intersection of aesthetics and politics, hence my interest in extending the link between improvisation's performance of negotiation and its capacity for inspiring social change beyond a descriptive account, into a prescriptive analysis of an 'ethos of improvisation'.

I undertake this project through an examination of improvisation within the jazz tradition and how these improvisatory practices have been treated within philosophy of music. Traditional theorizing fails to capture these practices fully and accurately because, for the most part, it takes as its starting point aesthetic commitments grounded in through-composed art music (so-called 'Western classical music'), rather than examining jazz improvisation on its own terms. But, I argue, the assumption that improvisation can be assessed, ontologically and aesthetically, solely by reference to musical structure (as is the tendency in formalist analysis of through-composed music) forecloses investigation into what improvising artists take themselves to be doing. When we step back and ask jazz musicians to describe their projects and their motivations in working with improvised music, a different picture of jazz improvisation can emerge, one which foregrounds performance itself (as opposed to an emphasis upon the improvisation's scoreable/notatable musical structure). This performativity is explicitly presented by many improvising artists as one that builds community: between performers, and between the performing ensemble and their audiences. I use this identified difference between improvisation so-construed and through-composed music to develop a philosophy of improvised music which can provide a model

for non-authoritarian, grass-roots community building, and I also argue that the existence of these incommensurable musical traditions requires a pluralist approach to comparative aesthetics. Thus I am concerned to defend three theses in this dissertation: the importance of the context in which we apply theories to practices, the distinctness from other music-making practices that a particular conception of improvisation licenses, and the need for a pluralist framework.

The first thesis, that a wide-ranging attention to context needs to inform our theorizing of practices, is argued for primarily in the first and second chapters, although it also partly informs my third chapter. In the first chapter, I examine a case study, John Coltrane's successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things," in order to show how theories shape our view of musical practices differently and emphasize different aspects of these practices. My exemplar theories, Theodor Adorno's formalist-Marxist theory of autonomous artworks and Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s contextualist literary theory, signifyin(g), have both been used to explain and evaluate jazz, and are interesting to compare because their very different evaluations of the music's overall merit are grounded in different conceptions of 'originality'. For Adorno, originality and autonomy are constitutive of aesthetic value: autonomy is grounded in expressiveness and meaningfulness of formal musical structures, and only structures which meet these criteria will be judged original (Adorno, "On Popular Music" 18-21). Originality allows a particular piece of music to fulfill the essential goal of art, social liberation, by modelling for its audiences an independence from commodified social relations (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 4-18). Because he saw jazz as a standardized production of music by the 'culture industry' (Adorno, "Perennial Fashion – Jazz" 200-2), Adorno thought that jazz could not fulfill this essential function but, as I show in my analysis, Coltrane's improvisations can be understood as fulfilling every demand that

Adorno makes of serious 'art' music. For Gates, on the other hand, originality resides in interpretation, in altering something so that it includes one's own perspective (Gates 113-8). His theory, signifyin(g), is developed out of African-American discursive practices, habitual and traditional ways of playing with words and other communicable elements, and attaches considerable importance to the notion of revision (Gates xix-xxiv). Signifyin(g) is a theory well suited to jazz improvisation because it takes great care to show the creativity that goes into investing a cultural product (e.g., a musical standard) with multiple interpretations and levels of meaning. In addition to explaining the creativity present in jazz projects like Coltrane's, Gates' connection of revision to discursive practices within African-American communities also provides a cogent explanation of the widespread undervaluing of African-American contributions to the arts: revision has been dismissed historically (and mistakenly) as 'mere copying' and so the genuine creativity resident in these contributions has been systematically devalued (Gates 113, 118). The different conceptions of a guiding value (originality) that these very different theories bring to analysis of Coltrane's improvising practices show us that the question of which theory to apply will always be a matter of better fit, and application will need therefore to be justified in every instance.

In the second chapter, I undertake an analysis of how practices can reveal aspects of the theories which are applied to them, specifically, how we can come to see implicit biases in theories. In the first section, I reconstruct the critical discourse of 1960s jazz journalism to show how formalist tendencies in this criticism obscured motivations of (at least some) jazz musicians and, by extension, their artistic projects. As in chapter one, I again use Coltrane as my primary example of musicians whose complex musical projects were diminished by the harmful narrowing of formalism, which ignored contextual elements such as performance practices, artistic philosophies, and community politicization in order to

focus solely on elements of musical structure as constitutive of aesthetic value. Attention to these contextual elements shows how formalism distorted musical projects by assuming that only a narrow range of (scoreable) elements 'in the work' need to be acknowledged within the critical discourse. In the second section, I turn to a contextualist account of theorizing, Michel Foucault's defence of *écriture* in "What Is an Author?", and examine how Foucault's celebration of 'the death of the author' can lead to precisely the kinds of repercussions he seeks to make impossible. Foucault's ideal, in this essay, is a discourse about texts in which any and all potential meanings might be advanced without any one of them claiming a privileged status (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 221). Because he is considering literature (e.g., the works of Shakespeare), Foucault is particularly concerned to banish the control over textual meanings that the author (or author-function) is capable of exerting (Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 222). But what he fails to acknowledge adequately is that the control exerted in these authors' names is not merely a function of their being a work's creator, but also a function of the social (cultural, political) privilege which attaches to their names, their social status as contributors to (highbrow) culture. In circumstances (e.g., the jazz world) where the creators of music are often members of marginalized classes and social communities and the critics are the ones who have, and exercise, social privilege, articulation of artists' intentions is an important corrective to the dominant critical discourse, and can actually preserve the proliferation of meanings that Foucault wants to endorse. In these cases, intentions, while not fully determinative, should matter to interpretations. In both of these sections, I show that attending to what the artist does, and says about what he or she does, can reveal explanatory (and, by extension, evaluative) gaps in our theories. Another way of revealing these gaps, however, is through the addition of theories that build in critical self-reflection. For this reason, I turn in the final section to feminist standpoint

epistemology as a systematic theoretical frame for analysis of the extent to which political values influence our theory choices and thus help construct our metaphysical views. My general discussion here of standpoint epistemology acts as a bridge between the analysis in the first two sections of how examining practices can expose theoretical biases and my discussion in chapter three of the particularly pressing need for attention to context in cross-cultural analysis. Here I offer a general argument that theory choices are made and justified within the context of a prior commitment to values.

In the third chapter, I elaborate on that general argument with a more specific analysis of how the musical theory we choose determines how we answer ontological questions about what a musical work is. Chapter three thus has a dual purpose: it concludes my arguments for my first thesis, that our choice of theories must be context-sensitive; and it sets the stage for my second thesis, the distinct nature of jazz improvisations, by demonstrating that we need a more fluid ontology of musical works than is often found appropriate for looking at Western classical music. I begin with an examination of the violence that universal application of a culturally-situated notion of 'the musical work' (one drawn from Western classical music) can do to works and artists situated in other (or blended) cultural traditions. Then I analyze the strengths and weaknesses of two influential views within philosophy of music: Nelson Goodman's nominalist account in which the musical work is the class of performances complying with a score meeting the requirements of a notational system (Goodman 173, 178); and Jerry Levinson's broadly contextualist 'modified Platonism' which defines the musical work as a sound structure joined to a performance-means structure and individuated by its creative context (Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is" 79). The strength these views share is that they both offer an ontology which can serve as a basis for an account of aesthetic value; by telling us what a musical

work is and is not, ontology strongly influences the objects our aesthetic discourse is about. But, both Goodmanian and Levinsonian ontologies use a privileged object of a dominant culture, Western 'classical' music, as their standard and neither ontology is fully equipped to provide an account of the musical work to which aesthetic values identified by many improvisers can attach. To prepare the ground for the argument of my second thesis, I offer an alternative view of the musical work ('contextualized nominalism') – built out of a synthesis of Goodman's nominalism and Levinson's contextualism – which has the merits of being sensitive to issues of cultural situation (of musical works, of artists, of judgements about works and artists) and being capable of accounting for music-making in both performative and compositional paradigms. From considering what works would look like under this reformulated definition, a relaxed concept indebted to Cressida Heyes' recent feminist reading of Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' notion, I move to the question of whether a relaxed concept of the musical work is either necessary or desirable in cross-cultural or polycultural analyses. I conclude that as long as evaluative discussions take place, in courtrooms or in classrooms, concepts like 'musical work' will be used to clarify the issues under discussion and, if not adequately scrutinized for cross-cultural sensitivity and pluralist definition, they will retain their potential to function repressively.

Having surveyed the ontological ground, I open chapter four with my second thesis, that avant-garde jazz improvisations are often understood by those who perform them as negotiated explorations of community and identity and, because of this, improvisation has something unique to tell us about how subjective political identities are formed. I have already noted in chapter three that mutual reinforcement of an ontology and aesthetic for through-composed music within the context of its own tradition is a virtue of standard views in philosophy of music. Thus, I am here concerned with a parallel account of how ontology

and aesthetic values can work together within improvisatory musical practices. Instead of speaking of structured objects, improvising jazz musicians often understand their performances as processes, dialogues or conversations, which explore the nature of identity within community. This performative notion of identity-community relations and the role of improvisatory processes in constituting these relations invite us to see the liberatory nature of jazz improvisation; one must perform one's role in community (which requires some individual interpretation of performance norms and strategies) and one need not use any pre-established rules or models of participation to constitute these relations. Within the bounds of what one thinks the discourse conventions are reasonably capable of recognizing, one is free to speak in one's own voice. Both an ethics and a politically-informed aesthetics follow from this understanding of improvisation because, in this case, the central aesthetic value of the practice, that of negotiating community, can be seen as having obvious political and ethical implications. Because of this interplay of values, the dialogical model of improvisation can be extended to grass-roots, democratic community building through attention to what these musical practices have to say about how to build better communities. Here I trace the similarity of this conception of improvisation to Taylor's liberalism, specifically, the emphasis on valuing negotiation and the play of individuals' differences within community, and argue that philosophy of improvised music enriches this political discourse. What I think we gain from this extension of improvised music into politics is practical insight: improvisation as a model contributes its own particular community-building norms to the analysis found in political theory literature.

In the final chapter, I argue for my third thesis: in order to be open to the diversity of articulated identities and possibilities for forming communities, we need to commit ourselves to evaluation (of musical performances and political claims) within a pluralist

framework. I see this argument as the necessary backdrop to the commitments to contextually-driven theory choice and cross-cultural visibility and respect that I have defended throughout the preceding chapters. We cannot collapse all aesthetic insights into a single perspective without simplifying, distorting, and/or excluding at least some of those insights so, in my view, there is a vital role for pluralism in making sense of how theoretical viewpoints can co-exist, need to learn how to co-exist, and why. I begin with a critical examination of universal notions of aesthetic value, looking primarily at how claims of a universal standard of taste have been advanced by Kant and Hume and refined into a universalizing formalist aesthetic over the last two centuries. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological work on relations of social class to aesthetic preferences, I show that we cannot assume universal agreement as a starting point from which to theorize. I then endorse, as an alternative conception of universalism, Bruno Latour's recent account of inclusive, pluralist negotiations conducted in the hope that a consensus will emerge – an endpoint universalism which carries with it always the risk of failure to achieve consensus in the face of cultural diversity, but is nonetheless the only respectful, non-repressive option. This need for inclusivity and pluralism is made more pressing by the existence of culturally-hybrid artistic projects, those which blend values and cultural practices in ways that require multiple perspectives through which to construct aesthetic evaluations capable of recognizing the many ways in which a work might be interpreted. Because of this multiplicity of aesthetic values and aesthetic theories, we give ourselves the greatest evaluative range if we commit ourselves to pluralism. And, in the context of societies made up out of a blend of cultures, we have more than just the pragmatic argument of greater range to motivate our pluralism: we have the substantive political commitment that Taylor articulates as "the presumption of equal worth" (Taylor 72) with respect to competing, culturally-situated value judgements,

and the theories these values suggest. Indeed, this aesthetic pluralism can be seen as a corollary of the political value of social justice, and acceptance of pluralism in the aesthetic domain can help build our competence to actively participate in a genuinely democratic politics.

Note to the Reader:

In the interest of readability, I have followed the MLA style of parenthetical citations wherever possible, and reserved footnotes for explanatory and supplementary discussion. But parenthetical citation has proved inadequate or overly awkward for citation of electronic sources, conference presentations, artists' workshops, and performances. Thus, the general rule I have applied with respect to citation in this dissertation is to cite all conventionally published texts using the author-page number system prescribed by MLA standards (including the text's title in the case of any author for whom I draw from more than one text) and to cite all non-print text sources using Chicago-style footnotes. The single exception to this rule is chapter five's discussion of David Hume's text "On the Standard of Taste": I used an online version of this article that had paragraph numbers added to it so, in order to make my discussion as readable as possible, I have cited author and paragraph number in parentheses.

1
John Coltrane's Favorite Things

What was John Coltrane doing in his successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things"? What artistic and extra-artistic goals and values can we discern in these improvisations? What relation do they bear to his larger body of work? My concern in this first chapter is to explore possible answers to these questions within the context of two very different aesthetic theories and, in so doing, to show how these theories construct their views of a practice or project.

The critique of jazz offered to us by Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno is situated within a theoretical framework in which the value of a musical work is to be assessed primarily by reference to its originality (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 22). Originality is crucial for Adorno because he sees social liberation as one of the essential goals of art; good art is good in part because, in being a unique creation, it offers us (at least the possibility of) insight into our social reality that is entirely independent of the rhetoric manufactured and licensed by the existing power structure (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 226-7). As we shall see later in this chapter, analysis of Coltrane's work under Adorno's theory is of interest precisely because the values underlying Adorno's theory are remarkably consistent with those underlying Coltrane's work and yet, in his jazz critiques, Adorno uses this theory to categorically reject the very notion of aesthetic merit in jazz music. Thus we have on our hands a curious paradox: the possibility that Coltrane's aesthetic project can be validated under a theory which belittles it.

Contemporary literary theorist Henry Louis Gates, Jr., on the other hand, has a quite different aesthetic theory to offer, one which stresses what he understands as a distinctively African-American cultural tradition of commenting, or signifyin(g), on the works of others and suggests that theories seeming to privilege the same value (in this case, originality) can nonetheless define that value in very different ways (Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, xix-xx). On Gates' view, originality consists in revising some cultural product (a statement, narrative, or piece of music, for example) so that the revised version carries both the contextual associations of the first, unrevised, version and the associations imposed by the revision (Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, 113-8).[1] So Coltrane's reworkings of "My Favorite Things" would suggest to a listener both associations with the song from the Broadway play ("whiskers on kittens") and commentary added by Coltrane's changes. Here originality resides in interpretation, in altering something so that it includes one's own perspective.[2]

For Adorno, however, there is a real worry that reproduction, especially large-scale manufacturing, of existing cultural products (particular works with a provenance and a price tag) can never be more than mere copying, regardless of the ingenuity demonstrated in the act of alteration (Adorno, "Perennial Fashion—Jazz," 200-2). Adorno thinks this 'reworking' of existing cultural products is problematic because the conformity of the unrevised product (specifically, conformity to the worldview imposed by the socio-cultural power structure, including the "culture industry") flows through the revised product,

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[1] Contextual associations could include things like performer's intentions or literary school, from which meanings might be constructed.

[2] This makes the scope within which originality can appear broader for Gates than it is for Adorno. Adorno's notion of how meanings can be manifested in artworks is complex and nuanced but it is fundamentally dependent upon formal elements to generate those meanings – which may or may not be judged original. Gates' theory, because it extends originality into interpretive fields, would have to acknowledge the possibilities for originality in performance and would have to acknowledge them widely enough to account for intended/performed expressions (originality in the interpreter's performance) and readings by audiences (say, of irony based on a perceived tension between the artwork and its performance/exhibition space).

negating entirely the value of any 'original' contribution within the revisioning (Adorno, "On Popular Music," 32-9). On the subject of aesthetic merits of artworks, the crucial point of divergence between Gates and Adorno lies in their respective answers to the question of whether a product informed by popular culture can be imbued with oppositional or critical nuance through the addition of a non-conforming perspective.[3] The discussion which follows engages Coltrane's improvisations as a case study through which the constructive processes of these divergent theories are revealed, and then takes up the question of aspects of Coltrane's improvisations that cannot be accounted for by either theory.

Coltrane's testimony: A few of his favorite things

John Coltrane's position in the jazz world has something of a mythic quality about it. He first made a name for himself amongst jazz afficionados largely as a result of his work in the late 1950s with ensembles led by Miles Davis, another of the widely acknowledged giants of the field, before going on to establish himself as one of the truly great artistic innovators in jazz history. The standard biographies[4] represent Coltrane's evolving choice of musical instruments (his first instrument, in a school band, was the clarinet which he set aside in

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[3] It is interesting to think about this question through the example of Andy Warhol's contribution to Pop Art which presented representations of soup cans and cleaning accessories to the artworld as a challenge to prevailing notions of art. As Tom Wolfe wittily notes in *The Painted Word* (69-75), passing off kitsch under ironic commentaries "rejuvenated the New York art scene" (69). This might seem to confirm Adorno's indictment of 'mass-produced' art as mere marketing. But is Warhol's contribution really no more than a cynical marketing scam? It seems at very least plausible to say that his work has attained the status of art over the years since it was first introduced, regardless of how we might have evaluated it at its unveiling. I don't think that I need to go to the extreme of endorsing the 'institutional theory' of art here (the notion that Warhol is art because MOMA says so) in order to make the point that he has become a part of artistic traditions in the New York/North American art scene. His work makes no claim to formal originality (in fact, seems to glory in rejecting the marks of provenance that Gatesian originality might attach to) but, in the context of cultural worries about commercialization (e.g. Adbusters magazine, Buy Nothing Day), Warhol might be understood as offering, in his ironic commentary, aesthetic repudiation of the material trappings of contemporary culture. If this interpretation is at all plausible, then Warhol stands as one counterexample to Adorno's claim that popular culture taints all it touches.

[4] See especially Lewis Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) and J.C. Thomas' *Chasin' the Trane: The Music and Mystique of John Coltrane* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).

favour of, first, the alto saxophone, then the tenor sax until, finally, he adopted a repertoire which made use of both the tenor and soprano saxes) as a quest for a higher register, a 'striving upward', which they explicitly link to his intense spiritualism. This spiritualism was both a feature of his personality and a feature of his music, and was widely recognized even by those who felt that his later attempts to articulate it in progressively experimental music-making compromised the 'beauty' (read: accessibility) of his music.[5]

Coltrane began the 1960s performing and recording in ensembles which he led, which freed him to exercise his own judgement in choice of material and arrangements. Although many of these early recordings feature 'standards' (notably the album *My Favorite Things*, in which all four tracks are Coltrane's interpretations of popular tunes), his career from this point on is marked by a continuing progression towards original composition.[6] By 1964, the year at which his popularity was at its highest and the year in which he recorded his commercially successful and critically acclaimed album *A Love Supreme*, all of the pieces recorded by his quartet were his own compositions. However, even his renditions of standards were characterized by an increasing experimentalism which he pursued, until his death in 1967, in the face of resistance and rejection from (some) listeners and critics alike.

Coltrane's experimentalism was driven by his study of musical traditions: the African-based diasporic traditions within which the origins of jazz itself are situated, the raga tradition in Indian classical music, and Western classical music. His goal in blending elements of these traditions into his improvisations on compositions (his own and others') was to communicate his belief that music could universally be a positive force in people's

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[5] This link between experimentalism and spiritualism is identified by Eric Porter (chapter 5 of *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*) as a common feature of the projects of avant-garde jazz musicians. Coltrane's spiritualism, then, defines him, but not uniquely.

[6] See http://home.att.net/~dawild/john_coltrane_discography.htm for detailed information.

lives.[7] This last belief, evidenced by his liner notes for *A Love Supreme*, derived from a hard-won insight into the connection between music, God, and personal transformation. In these notes he speaks of a "spiritual awakening" that he experienced in 1957, followed by a period of his life in which he pursued a contradictory path until he was once again reconciled to the omnipotent spiritual force who inspired him to compose the music on this album as an offering of thanks. His elliptical reference to a "contradictory path" picks out the heroin addiction he was able to overcome thanks, he believed, to the power of his faith in God. Thus, for Coltrane, movement towards avant-garde, experimental music is not a choice grounded only in the desire for artistic progress; it is also an affirmation of the redemptive power of God and the resilience of the human soul. This is because, for him, music is an expression of spirituality, and spirituality centrally involves striving for self-betterment and originality of voice.[8]

Entering Coltrane's overall project through the question of why "My Favorite Things" held so much appeal for him provides a frame within which to observe this significant interrelationship between his artistic choices and his philosophical and spiritual commitments. His first recording of the piece, a 1960 appearance on the Atlantic label as the leader of a quartet[9] (himself, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Steve Davis, and drummer Elvin Jones), featured a recently adopted instrument, the soprano saxophone which he

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[7] See especially Coltrane and Don DeMicheal's interview, "Coltrane on Coltrane," and Valerie Wilmer's "Conversation with Coltrane" for Coltrane's discussion of his belief that combining different musical traditions would lead people to a universal ground from which spiritual insights can be derived. And see Bill Cole's *John Coltrane* for a biographical study which foregrounds this link between experimentalism and spirituality.

[8] See Frank Kofsky's interview with Coltrane, in *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* (New York: Pathfinder, 1998), pp. 432-56.

[9] As previously noted, he had, up until this time, worked as a member of groups led by others, most recently with Miles Davis. Although this was not Coltrane's first recording date with Atlantic (that was *Giant Steps*, in 1959), it was the first time that the quartet he led from 1960 through 1965 (here with Steve Davis standing in for regular bassist Jimmy Garrison) recorded together.

helped popularize.[10] A number of live recordings of the piece were made throughout the rest of Coltrane's career: most notably, at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1963 and 1965 (Imp IZ9346-2 and Imp IZ9345-2 respectively), *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* in 1966 (AS-9124/IMPD-213), and his final recorded performance in 1967, *The Olatunji Concert: The Last Live Recording* (Imp 314 589 120-2). While this continuity might not initially strike one as surprising, given the widespread practice within the jazz tradition of reworking 'standard' tunes, it is crucial to understand that, in Coltrane's case, this continuity in choice of material represents an anomaly in an otherwise unpredictable program of musical experimentation. Coltrane's career path consisted not in reworking tunes to be played repeatedly in the popular nightclubs of the time but in rigorous study of, and experimentation with, different musical instruments and traditions, a path that ultimately led him to his belief that all musics had a universal ground, from which it might be possible to tease genuine metaphysical revelation.[11]

So, why "My Favorite Things"? That Coltrane was fond of the song is undeniable; Lewis Porter's biography *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* quotes him telling an interviewer that "My Favorite Things" was the "favorite piece of all those I have recorded" (184).[12]

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[10] In a talk he gave for the Project on Improvisation, Steve Lacy recounted a conversation he had with Coltrane right around the time Coltrane was embarking on this frontman path. Lacy was playing the soprano sax one night in the Five Spot when Coltrane approached him and asked about the sax and its differences from the tenor sax. Two weeks later, Lacy recalled, Don Cherry called him from Chicago and held up the phone so Lacy could hear Coltrane playing the soprano sax. "Projet Steve Lacy," lecture at McGill University, Montréal, 30 January 2004.

[11] I take it though that there could not be a single revelation, or type of revelation, that everyone would experience in the same way. This would be inconsistent with human diversity (manifested both in musical traditions and individual performances and receptions) and the deliberate non-definitiveness of Coltrane's improvisations (a point I address later in my discussion of Gates' theory). The issue of a single ground for revelation – universally accessible across this diversity – might seem to be equally controversial but from everything that Coltrane said about this notion of a universal ground, it seems to me that he understood universality as an endpoint of blended traditions, along the lines of the conception of universality I discuss in chapter five with reference to Bruno Latour and Georgina Born.

[12] The interviewer was François Postif and the interview appears to have been published as "John Coltrane: Une Interview," in *Jazz Hot*, January 1962. See the bibliographic reference on page 381 of Porter's biography for a more detailed discussion of publication details.

Coltrane elaborates this point further, calling the song "a terrain that renews itself according to the impulse that you give it" (Porter 184). Porter describes this terrain as characterized by its AAA'B structure and correlates the A sections with the "happy things" mentioned in the original lyrics[13] (the "raindrops and roses") while the B section is a reference to darker, more negative things ("when the dog bites") (182). The meaning attributed to the B section, on Porter's analysis, is "that the good things help us to overcome the bad" (182). However, this attributed meaning, that the blessings in one's life provide one with the resources necessary to endure life's tragedies, seems to go beyond even the conservatism embedded in the original lyrics where we are urged only to *remember* the good things so that they can comfort us when the bad things happen (see Appendix). And, in the grand scheme of things, the universe depicted in the lyrics is populated by some pretty minor damages (dog bites and bee stings). If we are going to attribute meanings to Coltrane's improvisations which involve any sort of commentary on this world, then any meaning that is not oppositional to, or critical of, that lyrical universe is not just an endorsement of conservatism; it is also a trivialization of the dangers and difficulties involved in what might be termed a shared human project – learning how to live with each other respectfully – and it is a trivialization of the important insights the jazz world has nurtured, and borne witness to (I am thinking, for instance, about the contributions to anti-racist and anti-colonialist discourses that Frank Kofsky discusses in connection with Coltrane, Archie Shepp, and others in the 'new black music', in *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*). At any rate, to suggest that we can account for an anomalous series of repetitions (the successive improvisations) within a program of experimentalism by attributing to Coltrane, a man deeply interested in the metaphysical power of music, a desire to preach the value of mere distraction seems inadequate at best.

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[13] See Appendix for the lyrics of the original song.

Elsewhere in his biography of Coltrane, Porter attempts further explanation of the appeal of "My Favorite Things" by calling attention to a partial reliance of Miles Davis' music upon the "contrast of aesthetics" arising from original improvisations on popular standards, a contrast "between the world of light and pretty and theatrical, and the guts and intensity of the blues and the black American experience" (104). Porter speculates that, having achieved success and acclaim through working with Davis, Coltrane may well have been influenced by Davis' aesthetic practices when choosing "My Favorite Things" as the title track of his quartet's first recording.[14] Ascribing too much significance to this possible aesthetic motivation (the desire to explore contrast), however, might turn out to be problematic, as Porter doesn't even offer us an explanation for why Davis' work would show a preference for contrast as an aesthetic feature, let alone an explanation for why Coltrane might have been motivated to attend to the same feature. As we shall see later, one of the advantages of Gates' theory of signifyin(g) is that it can make clear to us why both artists might see contrast as aesthetically valuable, without leaving Davis' use of it mysterious or rendering Coltrane a mere follower of trends, but Porter's 'explanation' (more properly understood as an *identification* of an aesthetic practice than an *explanation*) falls far short of an analysis of common aesthetic practices. Filling in the blanks Porter leaves us, we might speculate that Davis was intentionally contrasting white and black experiences of American culture as, respectively, veneer and substance, thus identifying as a social reality the shallowness of the dominant culture and the depth of insight concerning privilege and

[14] According to Porter (181), the show from which the song is taken, *The Sound of Music*, was a Broadway hit in 1960. Thus the possibility of aesthetic contrast existed at the time, and Porter's explanation of Coltrane's decision to record the song by reference to the notion of contrast does seem at least possible (if not plausible).

oppression that is available to those who are marginalized.[15] But we are then left to assume that Coltrane, more or less intentionally, decided to use the same aesthetic device to articulate the same social statement.

Although he was neither unaware of nor insensitive to socio-political realities, Coltrane's own comments about his work typically demonstrate a preference for talking about music rather than social philosophy. In an interview with Frank Kofsky, Coltrane addresses the question of whether his music is expressing views on political and social issues (most particularly, black nationalism) by saying simply "the issues are part of what *is* at this time. So naturally, as musicians, we express whatever is" ("John Coltrane: An Interview" 135). Although Coltrane willingly admits the connection between his music and its socio-political context, he appears to be resisting attempts to depict his music as merely the conduit through which he seeks to disseminate social commentary.[16] This resistance, coming from any black American musician in the late 1960s, might reasonably be attributed to a desire to avoid unnecessary provocation and conflict, to avoid 'biting the hand' of the record-buying public. But in Coltrane's case, attribution of a desire to preserve marketability is not a particularly plausible explanation, in part because his pursuit of experimentalism was already alienating many of his former admirers. More plausibly, I think, we can see his resistance as a desire to protect his music from the devaluation that might result from identifying it as just 'the method of delivery' for his social views. For Coltrane, musical experimentation was not just a way to make a point about society; it was an exploration of

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[15] This point about the respective shallowness and depth of dominant and marginalized cultures is a condensation of a view that has been articulated in feminist theory as 'situated knowledges' and/or 'standpoint epistemology'. Donna Haraway critically examines this project of theorizing "the vantage points of the subjugated" as a way of building anti-oppression coalitions in the essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" and she cites in particular work done by Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock, Chela Sandoval, and Gloria Anzaldúa. See Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, pp. 183-201.

[16] I shall have more to say in the next chapter about why Kofsky might have been so concerned to push Coltrane into interpretations of his work that he was inclined to resist.

underlying truths and realities that would have been trivialized if perceived as 'the packaging' of a political message. Thus, as much as his statement that "the issues are part of what is" might seem evasive, for him, the true evasion would have been in allowing popular reporting on a (then-)current political movement to obscure a metaphysical investigation.[17]

Later in the same interview, Coltrane tells Kofsky: "I know that there are bad forces, forces put here that bring suffering to others and misery to the world, but I want to be the force which is truly for good" (153). This desire of Coltrane's to be a positive force was variously expressed in terms of a number of potentially conflicting values and motivations – originality, commentary, beauty[18] – in other interviews. Porter's biography quotes Coltrane's comments on originality in a 1961 interview with Kitty Grime for *Jazz News*: "I had this desire [when playing with Miles Davis' group], which I think we all have, to be as original as I could, and as honest as I could" (100). Elsewhere, in a collaborative article with Don DeMicheal for *Down Beat*, Coltrane says of his experimentation with harmonics, "I want to progress, but I don't want to go so far out that I can't see what others are doing" (Coltrane and DeMicheal 102). And he tells writer Valerie Wilmer, "I know that I want to produce beautiful music, music that does things to people that they need" ("Conversation with Coltrane" 108). Although couched in terms of different values, each of these statements presents a man committed to pursuing 'the good' through his art and I believe they lend further credence to the interpretation I have offered of why Coltrane resists speaking of his work merely as an instrument of socio-political expression.

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[17] This assumption that music can/does have metaphysical meaning may sound strange to modern ears but it has been a central assumption of some strands of theorizing since the Romantic era. See for instance Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy," and Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art."

[18] Potential for conflict could arise, for example, between originality and commentary (how can one's idea be original when it is obviously a response to someone else?) or between originality and beauty (why would we consider something beautiful just because it's never been done before?). Obviously, both the creation of conflict and its resolution reside in issues of how these terms are defined. My point here is just that, depending on how they are defined, the possibility of conflicting values exists.

As we shall see upon examining their respective theories, Adorno has an aesthetic framework capable of supporting Coltrane's attention to originality (although not necessarily willing to endorse him as a creator of original music), while Gates can provide an account of the aesthetic merit of Coltrane's desire to comment on other works and traditions. Bracketing for now the question of whether beauty is related to, or reconcilable with, either of these values,[19] I shall now take up the issue of how Coltrane's artistic practices and commitments may be viewed within the theoretical frameworks offered by Adorno and Gates.

Adorno's critique: Fetishizing newness

Adorno's scathing and notorious dismissal of jazz as "a bad moment" in the history of the arts is based on two interwoven and mutually supporting critiques: a formalist critique of jazz music and a Marxist critique of jazz culture. It is important to keep in mind that his initial evaluation is based on the music and culture of the 1930s, a time at which jazz *was* the popular music, and therefore his conclusions predate many of the features we tend to associate with more modern jazz, such as its widespread commitment to making art rather than entertainment, and its relatively small, musically knowledgeable audiences.[20] In the essay "Perennial Fashion—Jazz,"[21] Adorno describes jazz as "music which fuses the most rudimentary melodic, harmonic, metric, and formal structure with the ostensibly disruptive principle of syncopation, yet without ever really disturbing the crude unity of the basic

[19] The question of how beauty, frequently identified as the paradigmatic aesthetic value, relates to other values – originality, for instance – is too complex and too important to be adequately expressed within the scope of this chapter. I shall return to the question of these relations in chapter five.
[20] It is also worth noting that at least one of the jazz critiques I discuss here, "Farewell to Jazz," is interpreted by philosopher of music Lydia Goehr as an indirect critique. In her view, while Adorno's subject in the article is jazz, the standardization, commodification, and social control that he deplores reveal the hidden target of his critique: fascism. Lydia Goehr, question and answer session following her talk "On the Philosophical Idea of Movement in Music," McGill University, Montréal, 9 April 2005.
[21] Henceforth referred to as "Fashion."

rhythm, the identically sustained meter, the quarter note" (199) – a description which quite likely was an accurate assessment of the American jazz that would have played on German radios during the interwar years. Apparent changes in style in this 'crude and vulgar form of music' are simply cosmetic, he charges in a book review of two late 1930s surveys of jazz.[22] What seems to be development in form is, in fact, the distribution of identical product in novel packaging ("Review" 168).

In both "Fashion" and another essay titled "On Popular Music,"[23] Adorno criticizes the interchangeability of parts in the structure of jazz tunes, claiming that this feature precludes any ascription of meaningfulness to such works ("Fashion" 202, "Music" 18-9). Another of its objectionable features, he says, is its use of infantile expressions in the lyrics of popular songs – repetitive babbling, limited vocabulary, deliberate breaches of grammar, and nursery rhymes – to 'entertain' its putatively adult consumers ("Music" 30). Dismissing the improvisational elements in jazz as "mere frills," Adorno castigates the music for its showy emptiness, which he sees illustrated in its tendency to 'dress up' popular tunes instead of presenting original compositions ("Fashion" 200-1). Its apparent spontaneity disguises a carefully planned and marketed packaging of "tricks, formulas, and clichés" ("Fashion" 201). Any contributions jazz might make to music are, says Adorno, "extremely limited" and, at any rate, cannot be counted as innovations because Western art music, from Brahms through Schoenberg, has already developed and surpassed such features ("Fashion" 201).

Far from being a liberating alternative to the stale decadence of European culture (a view Adorno attributes to his cultural contemporaries), America's popular music is a standardized and recycled product, cynically passed off to consumers by the music industry

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[22] "Reviews of *American Jazz Music*, by Wilder Hobson, and *Jazz Hot and Hybrid*, by Winthrop Sargeant," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9.1 (1941): 167-78, henceforth referred to as "Review."
[23] Henceforth referred to as "Music."

as being 'new and improv(is)ed' ("Fashion" 200). On Adorno's view, jazz is twice damned: it is both a stale commodity, and a means of social control. Its "commodity character" demands the sacrifice of the genuinely creative and challenging in favour of what is easily consumable ("Review" 171-2). And its folk music origins combined with formal elements of military marches make it an intrinsically conservative tool of the power structure ("Farewell To Jazz" 1).[24] Because of these characteristics, says Adorno, "[t]hose who ask for a song of social significance ask for it through a medium which deprives it of social significance" ("Music" 40).

From his critique we can discern that Adorno is theoretically committed to the view that expressiveness and meaningfulness supervene upon the formal elements of a musical work, particularly the relation of parts to the whole,[25] thus making them (expressiveness and meaningfulness) the appropriate aesthetic criteria for avant-garde music. These criteria are, of course, the very features he deems impossible to embody in popular music because such music is fundamentally characterized by standardization ("Music" 17). In contrast to what Adorno calls 'serious' music, or art music (Western classical music), popular music's parts are

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[24] Adorno's passing reference to the folk origins of jazz does not spell out why he thinks folk music is inherently conservative but I think we can infer his reasoning from his overall emphasis on a connection between newness and liberation. Folk music occupies a position in culture in which its primary value is typically historical; it is a 'backwards-looking' and tradition-rooted style of music often prized (to the extent that it is prized) for its accessibility even to the uneducated and musically ignorant. Thus, for Adorno, folk music is clearly in opposition to the experimentalism of 'art music' whence the possibility of social liberation might arise. However, the 'folk' music which is the most obvious origin of jazz is the *corpus* of spirituals and work songs arising out of the African experience of the New World, not the European 'volk' music Adorno would have known. This difference in traditions suggests the possibility that Adorno's attribution of conservatism mischaracterizes (black) American folk music by virtue of his failure to consider the social context of the music, which repudiates slavery and affirms progressive (i.e., liberatory) values of equality and dignity for all.

[25] The view that emerges from the critiques (most clearly from "Fashion") appears to come from the standpoint of the musically astute listener, thus the formal elements would seem to be sonic events and the parts-whole relation Adorno is concerned to endorse would seem to be a relation in which these sonic events are organized into a coherent yet complex structure capable of being followed by an attentive listener. (This can be deduced from his criticism of jazz as being such that "all its components can be moved about at will, just as no single measure follows from the logic of the musical progression," ("Fashion" 202).) On this view, aesthetic experience (of the music's expressiveness and meaningfulness) arises out of intellectual experience (of the challenge posed by the musical structure).

arbitrarily positioned; there is no logical relation or structural unity that would be impaired by substituting or transposing parts ("Music" 18-9). Serious music's ability to generate meaning and expressiveness derives from the composer's attention to just such logical relations and structural unities, he claims ("Music" 20). The listener grasps the framework, the whole, by understanding each of its parts in their proper relation. Popular music demands no such understanding, providing as it does "predigested" models which relieve the listener of the effort of discerning the total structure ("Music" 22). Thus, "[s]tandardization and non-standardization are the key contrasting terms" by which popular and serious musics are to be formally differentiated ("Music" 21).

These points are perhaps made clearer through a brief recapitulation of one of Adorno's later works, the posthumously-published *Aesthetic Theory*.[26] This work demonstrates the importance Adorno places upon organic unity, the need to integrate an artwork's thematic strata and details into a guiding framework, a "law of form" that is immanent to the artwork, and unique to it, not imposed upon it *a priori* as would be the case in standardized production (7). The ideas an artwork is attempting to execute serve as the basic determinant of the coherence of its formal elements, with the result that each work follows its own 'law' and demonstrates its own unique structural principles and coordination of parts, as indeed does any organic entity. This commitment to integration and coordination of parts precludes any purely arbitrary or non-integral elements in the work and would also seem to preclude any elements that conflict with, contradict, or otherwise fail to be subsumed by the work's organizing principles. However, while Adorno does reject the arbitrary in artworks as being formally meaningless, he does not want to dismiss conflict or contradiction as non-integral. In fact, his desire to avoid homogenization of the work's

[26] The material relating to Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is adapted from an unpublished essay of mine, "Reflection Becomes Critique: Adorno's Meditations on Art's 'Social Criticism' Function."

elements – understood here as the extreme case in which one demands that all of these elements serve the work's guiding idea (and a concept that he would likely associate with standardization) – leads him to caution us that integration alone is inadequate to guarantee the work's quality. It is precisely the existence of anomalous elements challenging the guiding idea(s) of the work that serves to confirm the work's organic unity. The analogy we are to make here is with the living body: benign mutations are possible and do not threaten the overall integrity of the body; indeed, precisely because they are seen as anomalous, they can be understood as throwing that overall integrity into greater prominence. Adorno's thinking here is that the existence of anomalous elements proves the dynamism of the work in its striving to fulfill its guiding framework and conclusively distinguishes such works from the standardized commodities mass-produced by the culture industry. Thus conflict and contradiction within the work are a vital part of the work's synthesis, evidence of its internal struggle to achieve integration rather than to passively receive a synthesis that is forced upon it from outside (*Aesthetic Theory* 7). This striving towards integration and resolution,[27] not mere integration itself, appears to be the precondition of a work's 'autonomy', the characteristic which permits it to comment on social realities through articulation of an independent 'world' (a demonstration of what 'could have been otherwise' which, just in showing that things could be other than what they are, obliges us to take note of the non-naturalness of what is). The picture Adorno is offering us of the artwork is of an artifact which is constructed in accordance with an organizing principle that nonetheless admits of dissent, or conflict, among the work's elements and which presents itself, through the

[27] This attention to striving towards an organizing principle suggests that performativity might be precisely the notion that Adorno needs in order to contrast the serious and valuable art music he champions with the standardized popular music he rejects. As I show in my subsequent discussion of Coltrane's practices under Adorno's theory, it is improvisation's stress on performativity that leads towards an integrated unity which does not depend on pre-given structure.

coordination of its elements, as having an internal 'logic' such that meanings which are neither arbitrary nor exhaustive can reasonably be ascribed to the work (an objective account of musical meaning).

The theoretical commitments underpinning Adorno's jazz critiques thus require works to demonstrate newness and non-commercialism, but as outcomes not preconditions. That is, being new and non-commercial is not what determines a work's ability to offer social commentary; as we have seen, Adorno believes it is the self-sufficiency of the work's formal elements taken as a whole which gives it the appearance of seeming to offer meaningful critique. The extent to which both newness and non-commercialism are achieved by a work's formal structure is tied to the work's struggle to achieve autonomy. The artwork is trying to coordinate and mediate between its elements in order to achieve its organic unity and, in so doing, the aesthetically successful work achieves, first, meaningfulness (autonomy), then non-commercialism and newness (originality). The originality with which a composition incorporates its elements is precisely what cannot be attributed to the easily recognizable popular tune; nothing 'new' can be grasped because the linking of elements (the organizing principle) is "pre-given" just as the elements themselves (the sonic events) are ("Music" 33).

The underlying cause of popular music's standardization is, Adorno suggests, the culture industry which controls the production process and markets only musical products whose success is predictable because they are imitating previous hits ("Music" 23). Crucial to the marketing of these hits are the 'plugging' practices of the industry, the endless repetition of the same song, or type of song, in order to gain the recognition, and ultimately the acceptance, of the listening public ("Music" 27-32). Adorno explains the receptivity of the masses to popular music in part by contrasting the worker's desire for effortless

relaxation with the desire for "[a] fully concentrated and conscious experience of art" possible only to the leisure class ("Music" 38). The masses "want this stuff" because it effortlessly distracts them from "the boredom of mechanized labor" ("Music" 38). But if popular music provides an escape, the escape is illusory and serves only to strengthen the control of the social powers that produce both the music and the consumer ("Music" 42). So just as jazz music fails to meet the formalist criteria of expressiveness and meaningfulness, jazz culture fails to meet the social criterion of autonomous critique as regards the power structure. Jazz cannot be art because it lacks the capacity for social liberation which is art's 'natural' function.

While Adorno found nothing in 1930s jazz that demonstrated either newness or non-commercialism,[28] Coltrane's work, among many others, would seem to pose a challenge to his critique. Porter's biography presents the avant-garde Coltrane of the mid-1960s (until his death in 1967) as committed to his art, and resolute in his decision not to compromise it or turn his back on it for the sake of public approval (*John Coltrane: His Life and Music* 275). Unless Adorno wants to claim that any success, no matter how small the audience one reaches, cancels out artistic commitment to originality, Coltrane's commitment starts to look a lot like Adorno's paradigm case of the musical artist: Schoenberg's rejection of commercial success in favour of serialism.[29] There is, however, at least one significant difference between Coltrane's commitment to newness and Schoenberg's (as Adorno presents him), a

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[28] But it is important to note, as Richard Middleton does in *Studying Popular Music*, that the Frankfurt School's notion (and, by implication, Adorno's notion) of 'the culture industry' overstates the homogeneity of 'ruling class' interests and understates the extent of persistent cultural dissent (and dissenters). (See Middleton, "'It's all over now'. Popular music and mass culture – Adorno's theory," in *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990, pp. 34-63.) Thus the mere fact of Adorno finding nothing of value in the jazz of that era should not be taken to mean that there was none to be found.

[29] By this point, Coltrane had largely stopped playing clubs because the time limits imposed on sets were too constraining for his improvisations and the general working conditions were not conducive to artistic performance (see his interview with Frank Kofsky, in *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, pp. 436-7). However, he was still recording on a major label so he had obviously not relinquished all of his links to commercialism.

difference that bears on the merits of 'newness' *qua* value. As evidenced by his desire to not "go so far out that [he] can't see what others are doing," Coltrane seemed to grasp that new creations and practices need, to some extent, to be grounded in tradition in order for their sound structures and social commentaries to be comprehended by others.[30] Clearly, Coltrane is sensitive, where Adorno is not (or is markedly less so), to the observation that 'meaningfulness' is to some extent audience-relative. This difference will of course have implications for any attempt to articulate distinct criteria for meaningfulness.

The extent to which Adorno needs to see something as independent of other works in order to license it as new seems dependent upon his commitment to what one might call the 'compositional' paradigm of music.[31] Conversely, Coltrane's emphasis on improvisation coupled with his innovative mastery of jazz traditions suggests that he saw himself as working within a 'performative' paradigm. Within this latter framework, we have the ability to talk about expressiveness and meaningfulness in improvisation as dependent upon how groups of musicians experiment with motifs, and develop contexts for them, how they develop a sensitivity to each other's 'sound', and how they draw on an ability to 'converse' within their performances – all of which play a role in developing an organic organizing principle for the improvisational work.[32] On this view, both expressiveness and

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[30] This grounding in tradition which relates a work to other, often previous, works is a demand that lies (necessarily, because of his attention to, and definition of, originality) outside Adorno's theoretical framework. It (grounding in tradition) requires a theory licensing intertextuality, one like the theory that Gates offers us in the next section of this chapter.

[31] The connection I see here is this: on a compositional view, the musical work is implicitly identified with the score (the instructions for performance, rather than performance itself), and the score itself must contain original elements in order to be meaningfully differentiated from other works. This obviously means that the compositional paradigm can count only scoreable features as potentially original. A performative paradigm, on the other hand, offers the freedom to identify different treatments of the same score (or different improvisations on the same standard) as distinct candidates for judgements of originality.

[32] This point might seem vulnerable to attack by those who would seek to argue that musical structure can be viewed as a problem-solution challenge and that composition is, in fact, more likely to produce 'better' (more coherent and sophisticated) music than is improvisation. However, I would argue that dialogical elements of improvisation make any problem-solution challenge that much greater (the composer, of course, has the luxury both of being the only decision-maker in the creative process and of correcting

meaningfulness may supervene on the performative act itself rather than specific features of composition. In *Chasin' the Trane: The Music and Mystique of John Coltrane*, J.C. Thomas offers such an example in his description of a live recording of "Chasin' the Trane" as:

> fifteen minutes and fifty-five seconds of energetic, expressive changes and counterchanges, interpolations and improvisations in a continuous stream-of-consciousness creation that would leave listeners shaking their heads not in negation but disbelief that such a difficult project had not only been attempted but had also emerged with such musically successful results. (147)

This description certainly implies a kind of the "striving towards" integration and resolution of elements that Adorno demands as a precondition of the autonomous artwork. The only obvious difference that I can see between Thomas' description and Adorno's demand is that Thomas is describing a performative act while Adorno's view asserts a notion of the musical work from squarely within the compositional paradigm under which aesthetic evaluations of Western classical music developed (and what is lost through this *a priori* restriction is precisely the attention to performance inherent in Thomas' description). If we want to be pluralists in our attention to musical traditions (and I frankly cannot see any reason why we would bother to compare different musical traditions if we didn't want to be), I believe we are obliged to ask ourselves whether the theories we seek to apply to artworks can transcend their own cultural situations. Thus I think that one test of the merit of Adorno's theory is whether its emphasis on originality and autonomy as constitutive of aesthetic value can be applied to discussions of performance as well as discussions of composition.

To test the importability of his theory into the performative context, we need to return to the question with which this paper began: what was John Coltrane doing in his

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mistakes before anyone finds out about them, a security that is simply not available to the live performer) and that, on this basis, we ought not to evaluate improvisation and composition on the same scale. That is, the question of greater or lesser achievements can be resolved by identifying them as different processes/achievements (within different paradigms).

successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things"? A web-published thesis by music history student Scott T. Anderson sheds some light on this question.[33] Anderson discusses several features of Coltrane's improvisations through which we can discern performative developments of "My Favorite Things": significant modification of the AAA'B form that identifies the overall form of the original melody, the interactions of the performers, and the influence of Indian and Western classical musical traditions.

Modification of the form is crucial to development of an organizing principle in each improvisation; Anderson notes that the A′ section is replaced in Coltrane's performances by purely improvised interludes, with the A section returned to repeatedly in order to provide a structural and organizational continuity and a harmonically modified B section typically used only to signal conclusion of a performance. Viewed developmentally, Coltrane's increasingly reduced reliance on returns to the A section as the piece's theme (reduced to the point of brief quotation in later performances – see *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* and *Olatunji* as examples[34]) indicates his striving towards performances that would indeed be governed by their own inherent organization (thus, on a 'performative' version of Adorno's theory, original and autonomous) rather than an imposed melodic theme.

The challenge of developing, in real time, a coherent organizing principle without recourse to a 'standard' structure that can be imposed on each performance appears to have been heightened by the personnel changes that saw Coltrane's band grow and change from

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[33] Scott T. Anderson, "John Coltrane, Avant Garde Jazz, and the Evolution of 'My Favorite Things'," www.room34.com/coltrane/thesis.html.

[34] Although note that in referring to these recordings, I am treating them unproblematically as recorded *performances* and ignoring questions of difference between recordings and performances. This conflation may be problematic in some respects (e.g., the inexorable decline in appreciation of performative aesthetics discussed by Jacques Attali in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 105-6) but, this many years after Coltrane's death, we have only recordings of performances available for analysis.

his 'classic quartet' (Coltrane, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison,[35] and drummer Elvin Jones) to a quintet (Coltrane, tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, pianist Alice Coltrane, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Rashied Ali), often supplemented with additional percussionists. Anderson's analysis notes particularly the shift from McCoy Tyner's piano style to Alice Coltrane's – a shift which results in notes selected for tone colour[36] rather than harmonic function. And he makes the same point about differences between Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali, presenting Ali as also more concerned with colour than with playing a rhythmic line from which the other players could take their cue.

In order to even attempt the integration of elements that Adorno speaks of as the basis for meaningfulness, the performative act would have to be striving towards progressively more complex organizing principles with each successive performance. Presumably the challenge that would remain at the end of each successful improvisation on "My Favorite Things" would be whether an organic unity could be achieved if more complexity were added (where complexity of integration arises out of experimental improvisations), or if 'complexity' were explored in different ways (say, tone colour instead of chord substitutions).[37] This second possibility, exploring complexity in different ways, could plausibly explain the personnel changes Coltrane made during the 1960s. His discussion of these changes, in interviews with Frank Kofsky, suggests that he saw the classic quartet's experimentation with harmonic progressions as having run its course, which then prompted him to search for other ways to experiment – such as the percussive complexity of an ensemble with two drummers, Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali, the diminished reliance on

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[35] It was Garrison who usually performed as Coltrane's bass player although, as I noted earlier (in footnote 9), Steve Davis stood in for him on the Atlantic recording of "My Favorite Things."

[36] This stylistic shift and its value are noted by Coltrane himself, as quoted in Nat Hentoff's liner notes from *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!*

[37] I take it that for both Adorno (given his interest in musical reception) and Coltrane (given his commitment to the non-definitive nature of each of his improvisations) we would be talking about complexity in sound events.

the piano to explicitly state notes, and the matching and contrastive possibilities opened up by the addition of another tenor sax, Pharoah Sanders (439-48).

And, of course, the challenge of integrating the improvisations of different performers into a piece that has little, if any, predetermined thematic unity is compounded by the attention Coltrane gave to other musical traditions (precisely because each tradition carries with it its own conventions for listening to one's fellow performers and responding to them, a blend of traditions gives rise to problems of 'translation'). Anderson notes in particular the influence of Indian ragas which can be seen in the scalar patterns of Coltrane's solo on the Atlantic recording and the use of tonic and dominant notes to create effects similar to those used in Indian classical music. These influences are supplemented by inspirations gleaned from a European musical text Coltrane used in practising with his instruments, Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns.*

The problem one might encounter here, from the point of view of Adornian theory, is not a problem of influences *per se.* (Recall, for instance, that Adorno valorizes Stravinsky's use of syncopation.) The worry is that blending multiple influences can only result in a patchwork that has no coherent organizing principle, exactly what Adorno objects to in music he dismisses as 'standardized'. Because Adornian notions of work integration and coherence of organization depend so heavily on European notions of structured musical works, there is always going to be a potential difficulty in evaluating performative play under his theorizing. This is so even in cases like Coltrane's where one might well expect that Adorno would recognize the artistic merit of experimental and highly original reconciliation of influences from different traditions as a legitimate aesthetic challenge.

Although Adorno's theory can be modified, with some limited success, to discussion of performances, it still presents a conception of originality largely incompatible with the

performative conception implicit in the jazz tradition, and also fails to accommodate the centrality of improvisation within the tradition. These constraints are not arbitrarily selected by Adorno; rather, they seem to cohere within what musicologist George Lewis dubs the "Eurological" musical tradition,[38] a tradition which privileges arrangement of formal elements in its aesthetic evaluations. Adorno's commitment to formalism drives his allegation that the degrading character of jazz can be seen in its tendency "to surrender altogether the magic language of music to the world of things" or commodities, whose value is expressed monetarily ("Review" 170). And his Eurological bias towards abstraction as a requisite of 'high art' means that concrete references to self, cultural context, and historical traditions are either ignored or used as a basis to exclude from consideration works containing such references.

Thus I suspect that, for Adorno, Coltrane's successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things" could not have genuine artistic merit and even his original compositions would be 'appreciated' within an evaluative framework incapable of recognizing many of the referential features he intended as contributions to the richness and meaning(s) of the work. While exclusive attention to formalism may benefit artists and audiences who engage only with the Eurological tradition,[39] imposition of this framework onto other traditions, e.g. the "Afrological"[40] tradition in which Coltrane is located, has disturbing consequences. Here we see the re-emergence of an earlier concern I had with Adorno's critique: his easy (and unwarranted) equation of American and European folk music traditions. The folk music of

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[38] Throughout this dissertation I use George Lewis' terms 'Eurological' and 'Afrological' to distinguish the separate cultural traditions and influences of Western classical music and African-American diasporic musics. See Lewis, "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," in *Black Music Research Journal* 16(1): Spring 1996, 91-122.

[39] As I discuss in the next chapter, formalist evaluation schemas were developed in concert with the "art for art's sake" movement which sought to liberate artistic achievement from external strangleholds exerted by censorship and patronage traditions. The benefit, then, for the artist was in a relaxing of constraints on what could or could not be said (and how).

[40] Also George Lewis' labeling.

enslaved African-Americans was one of the (very) few means by which their cultural heritage could be kept alive and their experiences could be articulated. To impose formalism on subsequent artistic contributions to this tradition is tantamount to devaluation or suppression of cultural history and context. And, insofar as the purposes of this chapter are concerned, a theory obscuring cultural connections in this manner precludes recognition of a feature of practice that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. identifies as central to the African-American aesthetic tradition: the use of commentary.[41]

Gates' interpretation: Signifyin(g) traditions

Gates' project, in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, is to present a critical theory drawn from traditions of black vernacular English and through which the African-American literary tradition can be understood (xix). He seeks a theoretical framework capable of incorporating features indigenous to African-American texts and textual traditions, a framework which does not 'whiten' the tradition by reducing or adapting its critical discourse to European models (xx). The feature he identifies as central to understanding African-American aesthetic practices is that of commenting on other texts and performances through a process of repetition and revision known in the vernacular as signifyin(g) (xxiv).[42] "[A]ll texts Signify upon other texts," Gates claims (xxiv). Thus, signifyin(g), the vernacular practice of commentary and critique through the deliberate

[41] Of course, we could equally reverse this claim and observe that the manner in which Gates brings in cultural motifs and other references to context precludes the work's striving for autonomy (in Adorno's sense). The point here is that the two theories have very different views of the artwork's relation to society, and what features of the work count as having aesthetic merit, such that they are unlikely to ever both endorse the same work for anything like the same reasons.

[42] It is worth noting that in identifying signifyin(g) as both a vernacular practice and a metaphor for formal revision Gates is presenting us with a theory that is not limited to explaining acts of commentary. While commentary is one of its central features, his articulation of signifyin(g) makes clear that this critical theory may be applied to any practice involving the use of formal revision, even if that practice is not obviously commenting on anything (i.e., Gates is concerned make room for cultural products like music without having to commit himself to notions of musical meaning consistent with propositional content).

creation of ambiguous meaning,[43] is also a metaphor for formal revision, or intertextuality (xxi, 55).

Gates emphasizes the relation between this practice and cultural traditions by tracing the history of signifyin(g) back through the history of the African diaspora. He argues that we can understand various black traditions as having a common tendency to "theorize about [themselves] in the vernacular" and that these traditions are related, are part of a larger unified phenomenon, by virtue of their functional equivalency (xxi). This equivalency can be seen, for instance, in the role accorded in myth to two "trickster figures": the Signifying Monkey and Esu-Elegbara. The Signifying Monkey is, says Gates, a figure unique to African-American culture; "the trope in which are encoded several other peculiarly black rhetorical tropes," and his language functions as a metaphor for intertextuality within this culture's literary tradition (xxi). Esu-Elegbara, on the other hand, is a figure who features in the mythologies of Yoruba-based African cultures (those found in West Africa, Brazil, and parts of the Caribbean) where his role is to represent linguistic practices of gods of interpretation and indeterminacy of meaning (xxi, 3-22).[44] He represents "the meta-level of formal language use, of the ontological and epistemological status of figurative language and its interpretation" and plays a mediating role between gods and human beings, although his trickster nature makes his mediations notoriously unreliable (6). The connection Gates sees between these two figures is their existence in "densely structured discursive universes"; the

[43] This ambiguity of meaning is such that Gates describes it as double-voiced, by which he means that the standard interpretation of the communication carries within it a second, deferred, meaning (a second communication) that the listener receives *only if* he or she understands that the communication *is* an act of signifyin(g).

[44] In his 1937 examination of life in the Central Plateau village of Mirebalais, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, Melville J. Herskovits makes similar points about the Haitian variant of this god, Legba. Although Herskovits identifies Legba as Dahomean in origin, he is, as Herskovits says, "the god of accident who gives to man a 'way out' in a world ruled by an otherwise inexorable fate" (28) and his role as interlocutor or mediator between humans and gods is further reinforced by the practice of identifying (or confusing) him with another powerful *loa* in the *vodun* pantheon, 'Maît' Carrefour', the Master of the Crossroads, also implicated in symbolism governing choice and indeterminacy (228).

poems in which the Monkey typically appears[45] are signifyin(g) systems in which meaning is displaced and deferred through rhetorical strategies (53).[46]

As used in standard (read: white) English, 'signification' is a term denoting 'meaning'; the decision within African-American culture to appropriate this term and invest it with a parallel definition, 're-interpretation' or 'commentary', is both consistent with the story Gates tells about the importance of riddles of interpretation in African(-based) cultures (46-7) and, interestingly, suggests a counter-example to Adorno's critique of culture. Recall that Adorno denies the possibility of liberation through artifacts and domains dominated by the power structure. Liberation, on his view, is possible only through experience of autonomous domains such as art, never through popular culture. Yet, here, in a discursive domain imposed upon, and negotiated by, African-American communities struggling out of slavery and oppression, liberation clearly can happen through subversion of meaning.[47] However, as J.M. Bernstein makes clear in his introduction to a collection of Adorno's essays on mass culture, this liberation through popular culture that Gates offers cannot really be

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[45] The typical narrative of such poems also reveals the trickster nature that the Monkey shares with Esu-Elegbara; he 'mediates' between the poem's two other standard characters, the lion and the elephant, by falsely reporting to the lion that the elephant has been insulting him behind his back, thereby inciting the lion to violence against the elephant (see www.dolemite.com for an example of a "Signifying Monkey" poem). Gates notes, however, that Signifying Monkey references are not limited to these poems; such references can be found throughout African-American culture and he offers examples of musicians working in various genres who have recorded songs about the Monkey and/or his signifyin(g) practices (51).

[46] It is precisely because these tales refer to, and depend for their significance upon, other tales in the genre that Gates sees the Monkey as being a metaphor for intertextuality (60).

[47] This link I am making here between African-American culture and popular culture is not suggesting that all African-American cultural experience is limited to popular culture. Rather I intend to point to the domain of 'American culture' and assert, *pace* Adorno, that African-American contributions to that culture have modelled anti-oppression strategies which have had the effect of reducing marginalization and encouraging widespread demands for equality and access. The prime example of cultural contribution I shall point to throughout this dissertation is Coltrane's improvisations, which call into question the authority of definitive (official) versions of texts, but some might argue that 1960s free jazz is not 'popular' culture. Another, more general, example of contribution to popular culture which has enlarged and reshaped boundaries of social discourse and participation for some African-Americans is rap, with its insistence on rhythmic disruption. This suggests to me that Adorno is simply wrong in his assertion that social liberation can only come through autonomous domains. A more specific example of liberation through subversion of meaning can, I think, be derived from my discussion of soup joumou in chapter five. Although I discuss it there as a metaphor for cultural hybridity, its cultural significance exists precisely because of its capacity to subvert meaning.

acknowledged by Adorno as a counter-example.[48] Adorno's commitment to the liberatory possibilities of autonomous art derives from his Marxist commitments (Bernstein 3). As such, he is committed to a view of society in which the 'exchange-value' of goods produced within a capitalist system crowds out the 'use-value' of items that are not mass-produced (Bernstein 5). When forces of production dominate, they demand the standardization and homogeneity of all goods so that they may be easily and profitably exchanged; the autonomy and singularity of artworks, on the other hand, disrupts this 'market principle' (Bernstein 5). Art is socially liberating for Adorno because it refuses to conform to society's demand that everything be subject to commodification. But Gates, unlike Adorno, does not accept that challenge can only come from 'outside' systems of domination. His notion of signifyin(g) as socially liberating depends on the opposite view: that systems of domination can be subverted from within relations governed by exchange-value by disrupting (revising) the standardized product.

Signifyin(g), as Gates presents the notion, serves to both illustrate and explain the play of identity and difference in African-American discourse: the paradox of the community's identification of itself as part of American culture and its awareness of having a very different relation to that culture[49] is summarized within his discussion of whether black America and white America are better described as "parallel discursive universes" or "perpendicular universes" (45, 49). He ultimately decides that the perpendicular universe is the more appropriate model, as this conception, in which rhetorical and semantic domains, black and white universes, intersect each other, allows for the duality which characterizes

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[48] See "Introduction," in *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991), 1-28.

[49] Note that while this issue may be the source of much controversy within African-American communities, the paradox I am describing is articulated by Gates and is also to be found in writings by W.E.B. Du Bois (*The Souls of Black Folk*), Lawrence Kramer (in his gloss on Du Bois in "Chiaroscuro," page 246), and Cornel West (*Race Matters*). A British cultural studies version of this point can be found in Paul Gilroy's discussion of Du Bois' 'double consciousness' notion in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

signifyin(g) – the simultaneous reception and deferral of standard meanings (48-9). This play of identity (received meaning) and difference (deferred meaning) is one way of understanding the jazz community's practice of improvising on standard tunes. In fact, asserts Gates, improvisation "so fundamental to the very idea of jazz, is 'nothing more' than repetition and revision" (63-4). Jazz is, he believes, "a mode of formal revision ... often characterized by pastiche, and, most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences" – playing on a standard so that it is both recognizably that standard *and* a unique interpretation (52).[50]

Gates argues that both the practice and purpose of repetition and revision in black contributions to the arts have been fundamentally misunderstood; black artists have been dismissed as mere imitators, lacking in originality, because members of white discursive communities saw only repetition in their works and failed to grasp that 'repetition with a signal difference' (repetition and revision) itself contributes an original voice, or perspective (113, 118). This habitual misunderstanding gives us a further way of making sense of Adorno's inability to see the aesthetic and liberatory possibilities of jazz: his dismissal of the practice of re-performing standard tunes and his contention that improvised differences in those performances are 'mere frills' are both consistent with a bias towards Eurological notions of originality that makes the originality of black contributions invisible.[51] Bob Thiele, producer of a number of Coltrane's recordings, observes that the same misunderstanding appears to have perpetuated itself in the field of music journalism. In an interview with Frank Kofsky, Thiele hypothesizes about why many critics responded harshly

[50] This strikes me as an impoverished definition of improvisation, especially for a project as complex and experimental as Coltrane's. The emphasis on repetition, in particular, diminishes improvisation but I do think that the attention to revision helps to bring out one of the central commitments of improvisatory music-making: that of non-definitiveness.

[51] Of course Gates' observation that "all texts Signify on other texts" gives us more than just an explanation for Adorno's flawed and dismissive critique of jazz; it offers us a basis upon which to challenge the legitimacy of these conceptions of originality.

to Coltrane's later, avant-garde improvisations, denouncing his experimentalism as 'anti-jazz'. Thiele says: "the music is Negro music to begin with"; that is to say, that the music is located within a tradition identifiable with African-American culture, and "for these guys to write about [it] as though it's an American music, that everybody plays equally[52]" is to fundamentally misunderstand and mislocate it ("The New Wave" 206).

This notion that the African-American community has some privileged position with respect to jazz (a position which can be developed out of Eric Porter's history of jazz and Thomas' biography of Coltrane) derives from accounts of the origins of jazz which situate it in the blues tradition that arose from the African slave's experience of America. In his mention of the work songs that were part of this tradition, Thomas makes explicit reference to the role of "'signifying' statements" in their communication practices (*Chasin' the Trane* 23). Thomas also argues for the thesis that there is a central role accorded to vocals in African music, describing the role of the choir as "sing[ing] 'around' the beat" (25). This brings to mind the music-speech (language) analogy so prevalent in discussions of jazz[53]: just as traditional African singing involved singing around the beat so did the signifying of the slave involve talking around the point. And, by extension, signifyin(g) on a jazz standard

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[52] I take this 'observation' about everyone playing equally to be a claim about the equal right of both white and black jazz musicians to label themselves 'jazz musicians'. This is a viewpoint generally ascribed to by jazz journalists and also supported by some musicians (see, for example, Eric Porter's account of Charles Mingus' career in chapter three of *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*) but one that Thiele is clearly rejecting as a distortion of 'the true nature of jazz'. Although Thiele doesn't make clear his reasons for rejecting what might be labelled the 'universalist' position on jazz, it seems likely that he is reacting to the success of white musicians like Dave Brubeck who was acclaimed for his more 'mainstream' (hence arguably less 'authentic') style while Coltrane's experimentalism was excoriated. Frank Kofsky, however, offers an eloquent account in *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* of why this 'universalist' position should be called into question: he argues, from an analogy with language, that sensitivity to jazz traditions and musical practices is dependent upon familiarity with (immersion in) the culture whence it arises. Citing the rarity of writers who display literary excellence in a language acquired as (even young) adults, he makes clear that his scepticism is not about *essential* differences between black and white musicians but about contingent differences in cultural education and development (16-23).

[53] This analogy is particularly noticeable in discussions of performance means: for, example, descriptions of saxophones as 'wailing' and the trumpet effects for which Ellington's band was noted.

might typically involve improvising on the scored head or theme of a tune.[54] Failure to recognize the traditional importance of this practice prevents any comprehensive analysis and appreciation of artistic achievements located in this discourse community.

Gates also notes that inducting children into the signifyin(g) tradition is called 'schooling' (84). This offers an amusing, but probably coincidental, repetition: Coltrane's decision to signify on "My Favorite Things" puts him, figuratively, in the same relationship with his audience that Maria, the governess in *The Sound of Music*, is in with the children whom she comforts with the song. Perhaps this repetition is the basis for Lewis Porter's willingness to attribute to Coltrane the naïve thesis that 'remembering the good things helps us overcome the bad'. A more sophisticated read, however, would be to cast Coltrane in the interpretive role that Esu-Elegbara occupies in Gates' theory and to argue that just as Maria seeks to help her charges interpret, and thus overcome, their fears so too Coltrane seeks to help his audience interpret their needs through music.[55] Positioning both of them, Maria and Coltrane, as seeking to interpret for others allows us to additionally hypothesize about the contrast in melody between the original version and Coltrane's many improvisations. Coltrane's reworking of the melody so that one can no longer follow the lyrics can be seen as having a point to it beyond experimentation for its own sake: disrupting the lyric-melody link is at least a critique, if not a rejection, of the conservatism sanctioned in the lyrics. And making the tune recognizable but incompatible with the lyrics further suggests that it is the

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[54] This is like talking around the point or singing around the beat in the sense that the scored head is the 'standard meaning' to be communicated and the improvisations around it are the possibilities for signifyin(g) on that standard meaning. However, it is important to note here Gates' clarification that one does not signify *something* but *in some way* (54). Thus it is neither the head, the object being revised, nor the revised musical outcome that is the significant element here but the process of improvising. Again, this adds plausibility to Gates' conception of originality (the unique process by which something is revised/revisioned) over Adorno's notion of originality as that which lies outside the commodification processes that govern capitalist societies.

[55] See the first section for his claim to Valerie Wilmer that he wants to produce music "that does things to people that they need" ("Conversation with Coltrane").

lyrics that are problematic. Indeed, consideration of the 'favorite things' the lyrics identify alongside the context of the African-American experience of life suggests that these trappings of European culture are too superficial to be of any real value (thus accounting for why the lyric-melody link is not worth preserving). Of what use are blue satin sashes when systemic racism cripples the economic opportunities of an entire segment of the population?

Gates, however, presents the relation of Coltrane's versions to the film version sung by Julie Andrews as one of dissemblance, where it suggests the tune through inversion and variation (104). "[O]ne does not signify something," Gates reminds us; "rather, one signifies in *some* way" (54). So, viewed as an act of Signification, the question of what message Coltrane may have intended in his improvisations is less important and less illuminating than the question of how he did it: filling a song received from the dominant culture with different, non-definitive variations on a theme signifies on that culture in a way that critiques the notion of the dominant as definitive, indeed critiques the very notion of definitiveness of meaning. What Coltrane's signifyin(g) seems to point to here is precisely the thing that Gary Tomlinson identifies as the necessarily dialogical aspect of Gates' thesis ("Cultural Dialogics and Jazz" 231), the way that engagement with older texts makes possible the creation of new ones (230). Here we can understand Coltrane as working with a more sophisticated conception of 'work integration' than what Adorno was endorsing: for Adorno, integration was internal to the scored, discrete structure that Eurological theory defines for us as a musical work. For Coltrane, however, integration is a challenge that ranges across performances, bringing each of them into relation (conversation) with all of the others such that we can never conclusively identify any of them as the definitive performance.[56]

[56] This understanding of integration as ranging over performances rather than occurring within a scored structure is made more plausible by the 'contextualized nominalist' account of musical works that I propose in chapter three.

This attention to dialogicality also raises the possibility of reworking the aesthetic criteria which Adorno identified as appropriate to avant-garde art: expressiveness and meaningfulness. Differently defined, they could equally function as criteria within Gatesian theory (although they would be more widely applicable, covering more than avant-garde art). Expressiveness here would basically be the intent to signify (perhaps on other performances within an artist's *oeuvre*, or on other artistic projects, or on social realities the artist wishes to critique), here understood as the conveying of a message. Meaningfulness would be the recognition by others that the performance is an act of signifyin(g). This way of conceiving expressiveness and meaningfulness is dialogical in two senses (two closely related aspects). First, when it comes to critically evaluating the performance, we see that the criteria are in dialogue with each other: expressiveness cannot be fully recognized within a performance unless meaningfulness is also understood to be present (without attributed meaningfulness, it could be recognized, at most, as an effort to express something). Second, the very nature of performance is understood to be dialogical: performers and audiences are engaged in a process of transmission and reception which reveals the audience to be a crucial part of the performance (I shall have more to say about the active role of the audience in chapter four). This conception of performance reinforces the audience-relativity of meaningfulness that, as I noted in the previous section, we can see Coltrane as accepting and Adorno as rejecting (or at least, minimizing).

As Coltrane tells Kofsky, culture, the source of ideas, is "a big reservoir, that we all dip out of" ("John Coltrane: An Interview" 145). This equally explains, in Coltrane's mind, all of the influences in his music, and the influence he has had on others. The notion of a reservoir of ideas illuminates Gates' description of signifyin(g) as "a rhetorical practice that is not engaged in the game of information-giving" (52). In order to fully grasp the difference

between signifyin(g) and information-giving as communicative practices we need to understand information-giving as a 'closed', necessarily hierarchical process in which one who has already been initiated offers a piece of 'knowledge' to one who is ignorant. Signifyin(g) departs from information-giving in that there is no necessary assumption of authority or hierarchical superiority on the part of the person who is signifyin(g) and the content communicated is not privileged as 'knowledge' (although it may perhaps be presented as 'insight') or, perhaps, as corrective of some deficiency on the part of the audience.

Clearly, what Coltrane was doing in his successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things" is quite different from the imparting of information (which, once received, does not need to presented again and again). And here we see the extent to which Gates' theory, and his account of its mythic origins, can make Coltrane's project visible: improvisation is necessarily an act of interpretation, and the commitment to indeterminacy attributed to the gods identified as the mythic 'originators' of the tradition imparts a socio-metaphysical injunction against the very notion of a canonical version of anything. This is one important sense in which we can say that Gates' theory is a better explanatory choice for Coltrane's project than Adorno's: the anti-canonical focus of signifyin(g) motivates successive, non-definitive improvisations more clearly than a structurally-focused analysis of creating original artworks (which, by virtue of their merit, would be candidates for a canon).

What was Coltrane doing?

It should be clear by now that Adorno's aesthetic theory is inadequate to explain Coltrane's work despite the emphasis they both place upon the value of originality (which, as we have seen, they conceive of quite differently such that what initially seemed like a shared

commitment now appears as mere homonymy). Gates' theory, however, can offer us both an understanding of Coltrane, and of why his contributions would fail to be recognized within a theoretical framework like Adorno's. The question I turn to now is: was there anything else going on that Gates' signifyin(g) thesis cannot incorporate?

Lewis Porter's biography includes extensive discussion of Coltrane's musical development which helps to answer this question. Pointing to recordings made when Coltrane was in the Armed Forces, Porter observes that one can hear in his solos evidence of his early development (*John Coltrane: His Life and Music* 44). He also notes that one of the ways musicians of Coltrane's generation learned to play jazz was through transcribing phrases and solos in the recordings of other musicians (63). In so doing, the musician "gets beyond a general sense of theory and improvisation into the details of style" (Porter 63) and gains a community of discursive partners. Porter also cites the piano books Coltrane practised with (C.L. Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist* and Carl Czerny's *The School of Velocity*) as indicative of the wide range of sources from which Coltrane was attempting to develop his personal style (83). Following Gates, it seems fruitful to view this eclecticism[57] as a desire to signify on other instrumental traditions *in a way* drawn from jazz's improvisatory practices, thereby expanding the boundaries of jazz itself.

Porter's account of Coltrane's development in the 1960s has him absorbed in the project of building a sense of structure into his solos (123).[58] Around the same time, notes Porter, Coltrane's performances were noticeably more autonomous than those of many

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[57] In the sense that the piano books were sources drawn from the Eurological tradition which Coltrane was interested in incorporating into his own 'musical universe' (just as he was interested in incorporating other musical traditions).

[58] This suggests that Coltrane was trying to do exactly what Adorno's parts-whole critique says jazz is unable to do, creating pieces in such a way that expressiveness and meaningfulness can supervene on the musical structure. However, given that the solos were embedded in ensemble performances, it might make more sense to understand Coltrane as trying to create pieces such that expressiveness and meaning could supervene on *parts* of the whole (something Adorno's theory would find incomprehensible).

fellow performers; he was playing the music he heard 'in the moment' and, for the most part, refraining from the popular practice of 'quoting' phrases from other works (Porter 124). On a surface level, this could be interpreted as a desire to get beyond the signifyin(g) practices of the crowd.[59] However, one might also interpret Coltrane as being interested in signifying on his own prior practices and on other traditions, and perhaps doing so at a more basic, structural level (the *in some way* of signifyin(g)). This latter interpretation has the advantage of being able to account for other observations Porter makes about Coltrane's musical inspirations: for instance, Porter cites Coltrane's growing interest in folk musics, both American and European (206). In fact, Porter credits Coltrane with a significant role in making jazz "an even more international music," citing his support of the growing movement of black American musicians incorporating African rhythms and his influence on European jazz composers who were inspired to borrow from their own folk traditions (214). Porter attributes Coltrane's originality to this eclecticism, observing "the more widespread one's sources, the less one sounds like any one of them" (216).[60] He also mentions Coltrane's growing (and pioneering) interest in world music, specifically in the common, universal base beneath the "purely ethnic characteristics" of different musical traditions (211). But this interest in world music was also an interest in the more mystical, more spiritual potentialities of music. In interview comments quoted by Porter, Coltrane tells Jean Clouzet and Michel Delorme that he is striving towards what he believes must be every musician's goal: to understand and control "the true powers of music" (211).[61]

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[59] Porter does say that "Coltrane was never partial to quoting" (*John Coltrane: His Life and Music* 216).
[60] This linking of eclecticism and originality raises the question of whether Adorno's conception of originality is even reasonable. If Porter's conception has anything to recommend it, then there would seem to be at least one definition (his) that, contra Adorno, prescribes attention to many sources as the means by which originality is attained, a 'synthetic' definition rather than an 'out of thin air' one.
[61] According to Porter's endnotes, the source for this material is Clouzet and Delorme, "Entretien avec John Coltrane," in *Les Cahiers du Jazz* 8 (1963): 1-14.

In his striving to achieve this goal, Coltrane and his fellow band members were searching for different ways to express themselves, to play "freer than before" (DeMicheal, "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics" 113). In this way Coltrane felt that he would be able to do "the main thing a musician would like to do ... to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe" (DeMicheal 114). This sharing of knowledge and wonder (of, one might say, his favourite things) is something Coltrane understands as a goal we all have, and all try to realize through whatever means available to us (DeMicheal 114). His view of meaning in music seems to implicitly depend upon an analogy with conversation (the 'dialogical' view advanced by some jazz theorists, among them Tomlinson): the performer may create a mood or theme but the listener will bring his or her own context to the experience, thus making possible a wealth of interpretations (DeMicheal 114-5). This deferral of interpretation suggests Claudia Mitchell-Kernan's observation that "only by virtue of the hearers defining the utterance as *signifying* [is] the speaker's intent ... realized" (quoted in Gates, 85), again stressing the necessary connection between expressiveness and meaningfulness. Elsewhere Coltrane says:

> When you begin to see the possibilities of music, you desire to do something really good for people, to help humanity free itself from its hangups. I think music can make the world better and, if I'm qualified, I want to do it. I'd like to point out to people the divine in a musical language that transcends words. I want to speak to their souls. (quoted in Porter 232[62])

This desire to move easily between the divine and the mundane, to interpret the world from a position beyond language, suggests an aspiration that Gates' theory does not acknowledge as possible: that of going beyond signifyin(g) to become a figure very much like Esu-Elegbara, the mythical god of interpretation (Gates 4-6). However this suggestion is problematic for two reasons.

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[62] Taken from an interview with Paul D. Zimmerman, "Death of a Jazzman," *Newsweek*, 31 July 1967: 78-9. (The interview took place in 1966 but was not published until after Coltrane's death.)

First, suggesting that interpreting the world from outside language is the same thing as going outside Gates' theory results in a gloss on signifyin(g) as necessarily propositional. Although much of what Gates provides by way of examples of signifyin(g) is indeed linguistic play, his exemplars do not define the boundaries of the practice. They serve instead to underscore the vernacular origins of his theory, a theory that, as he is careful to remind us, can explain the practice of signifyin(g) as a metaphor for all kinds of formal revision. So, when Gates' theory is understood as including formal revision, it is not at all clear that Coltrane's expressed desire to transcend words is outside the theory. As I have already observed, Coltrane moved beyond the lyrics of "My Favorite Things" into successive revisions of the melodic and harmonic structure of the song, and these improvisations are easily reconcilable as intertextual commentaries.

The second problem with this suggestion is its equation of transcendence and becoming an interpretive authority. The desire to "point out ... the divine" can be interpreted as the desire to articulate a view that is accepted as definitive, but it *need not be* exclusionary of other points of view, other visions of the divine. Here we return again to the question of whether Coltrane intended to take on the role of governess in any meaningful sense. Maria's message to her charges intends to provide a definitive way of understanding the world and the forces controlling it, a way that is better than their previous understanding: it is the provision of information to those who are ignorant (of the way that, allegedly, good things in life can ameliorate the bad). Having articulated that message once, the only reason why she would ever need to repeat it is to reinforce it, and that reinforcement would be most successfully achieved if the repeated message were identical in content (if not in form). But repetition of a definitive and unchanging content does not constitute an accurate description of Coltrane's project concerning "My Favorite Things." The interpretive aspect of the desire

suggested earlier can be read in quite easily, but not the desire to assert authority. That aspect is quite obviously undermined by the very project of creating different versions, none of which is ever accorded the status of 'definitive version'. Thus there seems little basis on which to argue that Coltrane's quest for a universal language of the soul is indicative of a desire to achieve a god-like authority.

Perhaps, however, we can find a lacuna in the applicability of Gates' theory by critically examining Coltrane's commitment to the notion of a universal language. From his beginnings, in which he Signified on players who influenced him (Johnny Hodges, Charlie Parker, Lester Young), through his musical development, signifyin(g) on traditions, Coltrane reached a spiritual and philosophical commitment to the idea of a universal 'language' of music upon which differing cultural conceptions are grounded. Can a theory (like Gates') which does so much to stress differences account for this 'underlying sameness' in the linguistic belief to which Coltrane is committed? Perhaps so, if we understand one merit of the theory as providing a meta-discursive commentary on traditions, a view consistent with Gates' claim that all texts signify on other texts. On this view, signifyin(g) allows us to do more than comment on other traditions; it allows us to redescribe the meta-discursive frames we use. By meta-discursive frames, I mean the schemas that Gates offers us, showing an intersection between the perpendicular universes of black vernacular and standard English, and rhetoric and semantics (48-9). As I understand it, Gates means to establish identity as/at the intersection of differing traditions. So we could relabel his axes to establish identity between Afrological and Eurological musical traditions, and speaking and writing.[63] In this way, we can see Coltrane's African-American musical background connecting with the other traditions he gleaned from his formal studies and classical music

[63] I do not mean by my suggestions that Gates' schemas should be replaced, but that they can be added to.

study books. And we can see the oral tradition that encompasses performance (both instrument and voice) as intersecting the written tradition of musical notation, one way in which compositional and performative paradigms might perhaps be reconciled. It seems that Gates' theory does indeed allow for the notion of a "universality" of sorts – at the intersection of different traditions, we can assert claims about the identity of the universal language that Coltrane sought.[64] The freedom of commentary, or signifyin(g), practices, then, with their fluid and endless capacity for revisiting and revising, is, as Coltrane said of his adoption of the soprano saxophone,[65] "like having another hand" with which to point at commonalities in distinct traditions.

To return again, in conclusion, to the aims I outlined in the beginning of this chapter, one of the issues I have tried to work through is the question of ways in which a theory may be, or fail to be, an appropriate conceptual framework within which to view a particular phenomenon. I have employed these theories, Gatesian contextualism and Adornian formalism, in constructing evaluations of my case study and assessing each theory's fit and fruitfulness, based on its evaluation of Coltrane's project. However, the discussion of competing theories in this paper has been conducted without any explicit consideration of the values that bear on choices about which theories to consider and, ultimately, which theory to adopt. I want to now make more explicit some of my reasons for choosing to analyze Coltrane's project through Gates and Adorno and some of the reasons why I ultimately find Gates' theory more illuminating. In particular, I want to make more obvious the extent to which expediency determines the *prima facie* choice of which theories to engage.

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[64] Although note that establishing 'identity' as the intersection of overlapping traditions is perhaps an overly restrictive notion, one that Coltrane might well reject in favour of a more metaphysically 'spooky' underlying unity.

[65] In the liner notes accompanying his 1960 Atlantic recording of "My Favorite Things."

Adorno's attention to (Western classical) music as a paradigmatic art form and his interweaving of formalism and social liberation result in a theory which promises to bring out some important elements of Coltrane's project – and is especially worth evaluating in light of the fact that Adorno uses his theory to dismiss, or at least diminish, the artistic possibilities of the entire genre in which Coltrane's music is situated. Indeed this theory seems to anticipate so much of what Coltrane was committed to that choosing not to examine it would seem to require explanation. However, one could equally make this claim with respect to Gates' theory. His is a theory developed to explain how distinctly African-American cultural practices operate in artistic domains and how appreciating (or even recognizing) these practices is a necessary condition for appreciating resulting contributions to the arts. Given that Coltrane, the art form in which he worked, and the theory Gates developed all sprung from the same culture, one would certainly expect there to be some fruitfulness in analyzing Coltrane's work under this theory of signifyin(g). It is ultimately this consistency of origins, this common source, that makes Gates' theory appear to me to be the better fit, hence the more illuminating theory. Much more than this, of course, needs to be said, and will be said in the following chapter, about how theories should be selected and assessed.

2
Coltrane, Foucault, and Dominant Positions

My concern in the previous chapter was with the question of how theories reveal practices and projects. Here, I want to take up the question of this relation again, but from the obverse standpoint: I want to examine what can be revealed about theories through the lens of practices and projects. First, I want to return to an examination of formalist commitments and examine how formalism has been applied in a context which one might think is obviously susceptible to distorting projects, jazz journalism. I shall move from there to the theorizing of Michel Foucault, in order to examine the extent to which even the most liberal and open theorizing can distort musical practices taking place within the jazz world. Finally, I shall take up the insights of feminist standpoint epistemology as a way of revealing theoretical pitfalls.

My examination of jazz journalism will make good on a promise I made in the first chapter (see footnote 16) to say more about the political characterization of extra-musical commitments that Frank Kofsky was presenting to John Coltrane for his endorsement. I shall argue that this political characterization was intended as a necessary corrective to the formalist theorizing (attention to elements of the artwork only, without consideration of its context) that has frequently dominated the discourse about projects and practices. The problematic nature of formalist analysis in jazz journalism is mitigated somewhat in the more contextualist theorizing that Foucault endorses in his discussion of *écriture* but is still marred by erasure of the artist (musician). In Foucault, the repressive role of theory functions more

covertly but the result remains the same: in both discourses, works are treated as if they existed on the same 'level playing field' by glossing over crucial differences in cultural context and thereby making it more difficult to see where political biases (racism, for instance) might be affecting aesthetic evaluations. Finally, I take up a theory, feminist standpoint epistemology, that can be a useful tool for revealing the kinds of biases that are embedded in the analyses I discuss. Feminist standpoint epistemology argues that all knowledge is situated, thus that theory choice takes place within a context of values to which the theorizer is already committed. Extending this insight to the case of aesthetics allows us to see its application to my argument that evaluation of works often takes place within a context in which power and/or social privilege is on the side of the theorizer, not the artist. I offer situated knowledges as a critical practice that we can turn upon theorizing to show how erasure of (or inattention to) context perpetuates biases held, wittingly or unwittingly, by the theorizer. My general discussion of standpoint epistemology in the final section acts as a bridge between the analysis in the first two sections of the way in which examining practices can expose theoretical biases and my discussion in chapter three of the particularly pressing need for attention to context in cross-cultural analysis.

Because attitudes of cynicism towards media and journalism are widespread these days, my arguments about the distorting effects of journalistic formalism may seem *prima facie* more plausible than the subsequent arguments about repressive political implications arising out of formalist traces in Foucault's thinking. However, I want to be clear about my goal in discussing both popular journalism and academic theorizing: they are not, in my mind, separate discussions. Academic theorizing may well have more credibility in (many/some) people's eyes than does journalism but where they both involve restricting discussion of aesthetic merits of works (e.g., to elements that are 'in the scoreable work' or

to an intertextualism that is silent as to authorship) – as opposed to engaging the full range of contextual elements which include performance practices, audience, and musical influences and goals – both discourses narrow our range of vision. In fact, journalism may even claim a higher regard on the basis that its analytic focus on actual works is closer to a genuine respect for musical practices than is academic theorizing about, say, the necessary and sufficient conditions for the abstract concept 'musical work'. This is not an attack on theorizing *per se*; I accept that we need theories to structure and make sense of what we 'see' in the world. That is, I acknowledge that theories make data visible but I question the extent to which we can safely and reasonably assume that what is made visible by a single theory are the only data which exist. This questioning of adherence to a single theory is, as I show in the next section, particularly necessary in the context of jazz journalism's long history of attending to works through Eurocentric formalist analysis.

The avant-garde through the lens of the media

While academic attention to connections between jazz and discourses of resistance has, until recently, been quite underdeveloped,[1] some of the more popularly accessible writing on jazz is equally accused of an overdeveloped attention to these connections, presenting them, sometimes misleadingly, as a central and primary part of a given artist's

[1] This underdevelopment is attributable in part to the paucity of formal relations that the academy has historically had with those who participated in African-American intellectual life. Previously-impoverished recognition of black intellectual traditions is now being corrected in a body of work that has emerged over the last couple of decades. Specific attention to jazz and resistance (often, explicitly oppositional politics) is given in, for example, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Ajay Heble's *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice*, and Eric Porter's *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?: African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists*. A more general attention to music and resistance can be found in Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*.

project.[2] Jazz journalism's preoccupation with making music accessible to readers, although entirely understandable, can thus be seen as making it more difficult to connect jazz with discourses of resistance or liberation because it oversimplifies these connections. This oversimplification, especially when it takes the form of explaining complex musical structures as being *just* a means of expressing an ideological commitment, diminishes the music, the artist, and the ideas informing the work. Thus, in the process of engaging popular jazz discourse, one issue that I see as worthy of investigation is the role that the critic engaged in jazz journalism has played in shaping our understanding of the artistic projects of jazz musicians. What interests me here is concerted efforts by journalists and interviewers to cajole artists into explaining themselves and their messages in particular predetermined ways, and the consequent potential for misconstrual and misrepresentation of other dimensions of the artist's project. This concern about (in)accuracy of representation is one way into the investigation which shapes this chapter; it allows us to ask how starting from practices (that is, privileging what the artist does, and says about what he or she does) can reveal explanatory (and, by extension, evaluative) gaps in our theories.

In this section, I explore possibilities of misrepresentation through critical examination of Frank Kofsky's writings on John Coltrane, specifically, "John Coltrane: An Interview" (originally published in *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*) in which Kofsky appears to be pushing Coltrane to articulate a connection between his music and his views on political and social issues. I ask why Kofsky would be preoccupied with a political interpretation of Coltrane's project, whether Coltrane's ambiguous responses to some of Kofsky's questions should be understood as resisting this interpretation, and what 'accurate

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[2] This accusation was leveled, for instance, at Frank Kofsky following the 1970 publication of *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, and was rebutted by Kofsky in the revised and expanded edition *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* (1998).

representation' (of a project) might be within the context of jazz discourse. In so doing, I want to defend the position that contextual elements such as the artist's intentions are integral features of (at least some) artworks, and argue from this position that a primary responsibility of the theorist or critic who seeks to interpret an artistic project is to capture the artist's phenomenological experience of his or her activity,[3] even where this complicates the task of making the work intelligible to a prospective audience.[4]

Before I get to the heart of the matter, I want to make some brief comments about decisions I have made in the writing of this section that I think should not just be left in the background as unexamined assumptions. First, why pick on journalism? This decision is grounded in the purely pragmatic recognition of the greater availability of jazz writings that would tend to be classified as journalism than those that would be classified as academic scholarship. In addition, journalism has the advantage over scholarly work of being a more immediate response to what audiences perceive as 'the next big thing'. At its best, it is a record of the processes of offering and negotiating explanations of an artist's projects – in current, rather than historical, terms – although, in reality, much of it substitutes critique in the narrow sense of album and performance reviews for broadly contextualized analysis of

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[3] This capturing of phenomenological experience would include what the artist is willing to disclose about his or her intentions but is not entirely reducible to intentions. It could also include the struggle to realize those intentions in the creative process, recognition of a process of creative evolution that has strayed from or altered the initial intentions, response to a reception of the artwork that fails to grasp what the artwork was intended to convey (or reception that sees in the work something the artist did not realize was there), and other such aspects of the relationship the artist feels to what he or she has created. Articulating this as a primary responsibility would ground the starting point of theorizing in the context of creation, thereby including the artist's experience, but it would not limit the theorizing to that perspective.

[4] Note that the artist's experience and the audience's comprehension are not the only standpoints from which one might describe and evaluate an artistic project. There is, for instance, Theodor Adorno's attempt in *Aesthetic Theory* to theorize from the interiority of the artwork. However, most work in aesthetics does take up either the artist's perspective or that of the audience/critic; even formalist analysis of works takes up the audience/critic's perspective in order to discuss what elements are 'in' the artwork. It is also worth noting (provisionally for now, although I shall return to discussion of this point in chapter four) that, just as the artist and audience perspectives are not the only ones available, neither are necessarily opposed to each other. They are in fact co-dependent; successful communication involves both transmission and reception from/to artists and audiences.

current trends. Most importantly, however, jazz journalism ought to be singled out because of the historical power that journalistic outlets have held over jazz musicians.[5]

Second, why single out, and question, Kofsky's depiction of Coltrane? The answer I would give here is that Kofsky's insistence on connecting aesthetic value and socio-political thought within a single cultural framework makes the interview an example of politicized criticism which clearly aims at something more than marketing a musical commodity to a titillated yet uninitiated audience. As I am concerned to show, the attention to political influences and commitments is quite obviously not a lazy journalist's 'easy way out' of Coltrane's complexity. Finally, one might ask why a politicized description of Coltrane should even be questioned for its appropriateness. Kofsky is not claiming that Coltrane ever explicitly endorsed black nationalist politics. Rather, he claims that jazz, when closely examined, reveals elements of "protonationalist thinking" which can serve to explain why members of this community might be more sympathetic to, or more easily swayed towards, black nationalist political thought.[6] So what is it about a possible intersection between a jazz musician's artistic project and black nationalist thought that would make us ask whether the person who emerges from this interview (an interpretation which I shall refer to throughout

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[5] This power is politico-aesthetic in the sense that it is the critics who choose the theories by which they will evaluate the jazz musician's work, but it is also an economic power that is being exercised: as Kofsky observes throughout his analyses of the 'free jazz' revolution (both the 1970 original text and the 1998 revised version), practices like critics ranking musicians in annual polls have direct consequences for the musician's livelihood because the ability to book performing dates and negotiate recording contracts is tied to the musician's 'popularity' as it is constructed by the journalistic outlets.

[6] Kofsky's Marxist (i.e. class- and socioeconomic status-sensitive) analysis explains this tendency towards nationalism within the jazz community by pointing to the disparity between the level of African-American artistry and the level of appropriate recognition given to that artistry by the white, record-buying, magazine-reading public (i.e. socioeconomic recognition). In the course of discussing this socioeconomic disparity, Kofsky mentions two separate anecdotes in which the status of 'acclaimed jazz artist' failed to protect musicians (Miles Davis and Cecil Taylor) from being physically attacked in alleys and back streets after performances. One of them (Davis), was beaten by a white policeman. (See *Black Nationalism*, 27-8.) Clearly this disparity is at least partially due to an abstract-concrete gap such that the police officer in the Davis anecdote could (possibly) acknowledge the cultural value of 'America's jazz greats' and also, simultaneously and without apparent contradiction, perceive the black man walking down the alley behind a New York nightclub as a threat justifying abuse of his law-enforcement authority.

this discussion as "Kofsky's Coltrane") is represented misleadingly? There is of course the objection which might be made by those who want to understand jazz as an 'American music', in contradistinction to understanding it as an 'African-American music'[7]: that presenting Coltrane as having black nationalist leanings dilutes his relevance for non-black listeners, and therefore dilutes his reach into that audience. On this view, attributing political sympathies to a jazz musician – particularly sympathies that were considered racially divisive – is dangerous because it compromises his marketability. The ability of a musician to sell records is obviously of great concern to the record company but, as Kofsky notes in his analysis of the difficulties jazz musicians experienced in earning a living, political neutrality is often a prudential benefit for the musician also.[8] The representational pitfall that concerns me, however, is whether this protonationalist "Kofsky's Coltrane" is reconcilable with the spiritualism which clearly was Coltrane's central extra-musical commitment (that is, whether the theorized Coltrane presented to readers is consistent with the artist's beliefs and practices). The question I shall be particularly concerned to ask of Kofsky is whether "dressing up" Coltrane as politically radical (relative to the point of view expressed by jazz magazines and their audiences) is paradoxically going to reveal a truer Coltrane.

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[7] This, obviously, is the point of view that Bob Thiele, quoted in the previous chapter, was reacting against in his charge that writing about jazz "as though it's an American music, that everybody plays equally" mislocates and misunderstands the music ("The New Wave: Bob Thiele Talks to Frank Kofsky about John Coltrane" 206). Note also that this view of jazz as 'an American music' (often, 'America's classical music') is still pervasive: recently endorsed, for instance, in Ken Burns' series *Jazz*, some thirty years after the historical moment that Thiele is criticizing.

[8] It may, however, be erroneous to apply this objection to Coltrane. The point in time at which Kofsky claims to see a 'protonationalist' trend in jazz is the early 1960s and, as I observed in chapter one, by that point Coltrane was already pursuing an experimental career path. Notwithstanding the release of the commercially successful album *A Love Supreme*, he was already winning or losing the members of his fan base due to this experimentalism, and association with a radical political program might not have had the negative economic repercussions for him that other musicians suffered. See the introductory essays in Kofsky's *Black Nationalism* and his revised analysis *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* for a general account of the economic hardships faced by jazz musicians, and Eric Porter's *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* for a specific discussion of the negative impact this political identification had on the career of jazz singer Abbey Lincoln (149-90).

The question suggested by this section's title – is the view of avant-garde jazz through a media lens corrective or defective? – lends itself to answers only if we first distinguish factions of criticism within journalism, factions I shall designate 'Establishment' and 'reactive' (of which Kofsky will be my primary example). A review by Sam Manuel in the socialist newspaper *The Militant* notes a similarity between the failure of "white liberals and radicals" to hear and understand the message of black nationalists (specifically, Malcolm X) and the failure of mostly white 'Establishment' music critics to hear and understand avant-garde jazz. Manuel distinguishes two 'Establishment' camps: those who question whether avant-garde jazz even has any standing as music, and those who acknowledge its validity but deny its roots in African-American culture.[9] The first camp judges as deficient those musics which do not reflect Western classical musical values whereas the second camp concedes avant-garde jazz's claim to being music but seeks to identify it as a musical product of mainstream – that is, white – American culture. In both cases, however, analysis is conducted with an emphasis on the formal elements of the music and what they might demonstrate about the value we should place on the work and the artist.[10] In this context,

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[9] Review of *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* (Kofsky's revised version of *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*), and *Black Music, White Business* (his account of the political economy of jazz), 1998. What Manuel does not make clear in his review is that Kofsky distinguishes the same two camps, in largely the same way. It is thus unclear whether Manuel is intentionally summarizing this aspect of Kofsky's argument or simply coincidentally employing the same analytic categories but, given the centrality of the distinction to Kofsky's analysis and the detail with which Manuel lays it out, summary is the likelier explanation.

[10] By 'formal elements' I mean the sound structure and qualities that can be said to supervene on it (originality, for instance, or perhaps 'swing'). One might well ask 'why did this tendency towards formalist analysis first arise in jazz?' This is an interesting and fruitful question because it raises a counterargument to the claim I make later, that formalism is an alien imposition upon the jazz tradition. As Ajay Heble makes clear in his analysis of stylistic developments in the history of jazz, the language of formalism is better positioned to explain the chromaticism of Charlie Parker's bebop style than is the earlier emotive/expressive language applied to Louis Armstrong's project of jazz as the representation of emotional meanings (chapter 1, *Landing on the Wrong Note*, 34-40). However, Heble also notes that bebop's formal innovations still need to be grounded within jazz's cultural and social context, black life in America (39). And it is not the emergence of formalism as a fruitful theoretical tool that I object to so much as it is the continued dominance of formalism as *the* only licensed theoretical frame for criticism. For clarification, see both footnote 27 of this chapter and the pluralist arguments I offer in chapter five.

we can see Kofsky as offering, in reaction, an affirmation of the conjunction of aesthetic value and socio-politic viewpoint which emerges from attention to cultural context.

The critic who best exemplifies Manuel's first camp of 'Establishment' criticism is then-associate editor of *Down Beat*, John Tynan, identified by Don DeMicheal (in his 1962 interview "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics,") as "the first to take a strong – and public – stand" (110) against Coltrane. DeMicheal notes that Tynan's tirade was a response to Dolphy's tour the previous year with Coltrane's quartet and quotes from Tynan's 1961 review of one of those performance dates. Tynan describes "a horrifying demonstration of what appears to be a growing anti-jazz trend ... a good rhythm section ... go[ing] to waste behind the nihilistic exercises of the two horns" (110). This denunciation of their work as "anti-jazz" prompted Coltrane (later in the same DeMicheal interview) to question what the critics meant by "anti-jazz" and to offer to explain his project to them (115). "The best thing a critic can do is to thoroughly understand what he is writing about and then jump in," Coltrane claimed at the time. "That's all he can do.... Understanding is what is needed" (116). Eight years later in his interview with Kofsky, Coltrane expresses disappointment that none of the critics who damned him as "anti-jazz" ever did contact him to gain a deeper understanding of his musical projects (*Black Nationalism* 236).[11]

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[11] Interestingly, there is a way of interpreting this 'anti-jazz' label which reveals a project that Coltrane might have been sympathetic to, perhaps might even have recognized as consistent with his own. Philosopher Amos Friedland uses the term 'anti-literature' to describe the writings of Hungarian author and Auschwitz/Buchenwald survivor Imre Kertész. Noting a similarity between Kertész's determination to strip down, or exhaust, language and the self-consciously minimalist late writings of Samuel Beckett, Friedland employs this term to denote Kertész's commitment to paring down literary devices and conventions to the 'point zero' of literature, the point at which as much language as is possible has been renounced (liquidated) in order that silence (the unspoken) might perhaps be heard (Friedland, course lecture from *The Literature of Imre Kertész*, McGill University, 7 June 2005). If we parse 'anti-jazz' in a similar fashion, we could understand Coltrane's deconstructions of jazz conventions as a paring down of, and playing with, musical structure in order to reveal this universal ground which he believed underpins all musics. While it is quite unlikely that Tynan intended this non-derogatory interpretation, I think that Coltrane might have found such a characterization of his project to be extremely fruitful, if only as a foil against which he could then clarify what he was trying to do.

A good example of the second camp of the 'Establishment' criticism Kofsky is reacting to can be found in Ira Gitler's profile "'Trane on the Track" (originally published in *Down Beat*, 16 October 1958). Gitler focuses his attention exclusively on Coltrane's professional history and stylistic influences (which, if it could be considered contextual at all, pretty clearly employs a very narrowly-defined conception of context), leading up to an account of Coltrane's then-current style in purely formal terms: the much-quoted description of Coltrane's multinote playing as "sheets of sound" (6). In fact, he talks about Coltrane's work without ever asking what goals or social context might motivate that work. Even when Coltrane articulates his playing philosophy: "Keep listening.... Live cleanly.... Do right.... You can improve as a player by improving as a person" (6) and characterizes this improvement as a duty that the player owes himself, Gitler leaves unexamined the obvious questions about what "doing right" and "improving as a person" might mean and what connection they might have to the kind of music Coltrane is trying to bring forth.[12] The decision to leave this connection between Coltrane's philosophy and his music unexamined exemplifies the second camp of criticism in its assumption that the work can be understood without understanding the artist. In this assumption, it treats jazz as indistinguishable from the Eurological music for which formalist analysis was devised.

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[12] Had he seen fit to interrogate this connection, I believe that Coltrane would have spoken, as he did with other interviewers, of his belief that personal honesty made him a better player (Kitty Grime, *Jazz News*), that even in experimentation it was important to remain aware of what others are doing (Don DeMicheal, *Down Beat*), and that a commitment to sharing the knowledge and wonder one finds in life leads to a freer style of playing (also Don DeMicheal, in a *Down Beat* interview with Coltrane and Eric Dolphy). These interviews, among others, give us reason to believe that Coltrane's musical progress is closely connected to his own sense of his spiritual development and to his relationships with other musicians – not simply in the narrow sense of stylistic influences that Gitler does attend to, but also in the wider sense of a commitment to dialogicality within the improvising community to which Coltrane belonged (the desire to progress without losing sight of "what others are doing"). Further evidence of this connection (for Coltrane) can be found in his interview with Kofsky in which he describes his understanding of music as an expression of spirituality, and spirituality as demanding of one a commitment to self-betterment (*John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* 432-56).

Some time after the 'Establishment' critics had led themselves astray with fulminations and formalism, Kofsky managed, in 1966, to establish an interview context in which Coltrane made some of his most comprehensive public comments on his project, and on the political ideas current at the time. In the prefatory comments to that interview, eventually published in 1970 as part of his book *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, Kofsky reveals that he had hypothesized a connection between Coltrane and Malcolm X (223). He attributes to both men a perception of "ultimate reality" drawn from life at the margins of society and a desire to share what they had learned about how to create ghetto-less societies, how to harness human potential. Kofsky recognizes in each of them purity of vision, avoidance of dogma, and commitment to authenticity. Recognizing these common ideals prompts him to question Coltrane about whether he believes that there is in his musical expression and Malcolm X's political expression any kind of 'shared project', however loosely construed.

Coltrane's initial response to Kofsky's question about whether he sees a relationship between Malcolm X's ideas and "the new music" is, I think, a model of ambiguity (perhaps in the 'double-voiced' sense of Gates' signifyin(g)). He says:

> Well, I think that music, being an expression of the human heart, or of the human being itself, does express just what *is* happening. I feel it expresses the whole thing – the whole of human experience at the particular time that it is being expressed. (Coltrane, quoted in *Black Nationalism* 225)

This response lends itself to at least two possible interpretations. First, we might see Coltrane as trying, politely, to deflect or evade a characterization of his music which might range anywhere from a distortion of his project to a professionally dangerous political

identification.[13] Alternatively, we might understand him as acknowledging the relationship as one grounded in cultural context and gently reinforcing the point that cultural context encompasses much more than political affiliations. Basically, the ambiguity of this response seems to neither rule out nor openly endorse the relationship Kofsky is questioning in this particular instance.

Coltrane is much more forthcoming on the question of the importance he attaches to the social and political issues Malcolm X spoke about and on whether he, Coltrane, tries to expresses his view on these issues in his music:

> I make a conscious attempt.... I've tried to say, 'Well, *this*, I feel, could be better, in my opinion, so I will try to do this to make it better.' This is what I feel that we feel in any situation that we find in our lives, when there's something we think could be better, we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it's the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives. (*Black Nationalism* 227)

But he makes clear a distinction between expression and exhortation when Kofsky asks whether Coltrane feels any responsibility to educate his audiences in ways that are not strictly musical. When Coltrane acknowledges that "you can't ram philosophies down anybody's throat" (*Black Nationalism* 241), I see his spiritualism asserting itself: if what each of us is really doing is seeking answers for questions on how to live, we are going to derive far more value from listening to what others think and then debating those views for, and within, ourselves than we will get from any lecture instructing us on what to believe.[14]

This preference for talking over teaching (for open-ended discussion among, or between, equals rather than purposive communication in a hierarchical setting) also appears

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[13] I feel I should note here that the interpretation I had applied on my first reading of this interview was indeed of Coltrane resisting a distortion of his project, although I now believe the alternative interpretation I offer better captures the commitments Coltrane was concerned to defend.

[14] Here we can see Coltrane as fundamentally committed to the open-ended, non-authoritative communicative practices that I contrasted with closed, hierarchical information-giving in my discussion of Gates' signifyin(g) in the previous chapter.

in the later post-interview, informal discussion that Kofsky and Coltrane had on the responsibility of the writer or critic to accurately represent the artist. Kofsky expresses the view that, in any conflict of opinions, the writer must "give the benefit of the doubt to the musician, because he knows the music far better than you'll ever know it" (*Black Nationalism* 242). Coltrane agrees, saying that the 'power' the writer has "is to be part of all, and the only way you can be part of all is to understand it. And when there's something you don't understand, you have to go humbly to it" (*Black Nationalism* 242). Not only did the formalist/Eurologically-oriented critics who damned him and Dolphy with the "anti-jazz" label not come to the music humbly and in a spirit of understanding, they actively distorted what was happening, charges Coltrane. "It was absolutely ridiculous," he says, "because they made it appear that we didn't even know the first thing about music – the first thing. And there we were really trying to push things off" (*Black Nationalism* 242).

This notion of accuracy of representation as conditioned by the artist's intentions is one that I think has to be taken seriously in the context of avant-garde jazz's emphasis on improvisation. Where improvised music is concerned, any fixed, stable object that might be designated 'the artwork' recedes[15] and aesthetic appreciation shifts to the performance. In improvisation, especially group improvisation, performative intentions differ from compositional intentions in that they are less well-formed, remaining fluid and subject to change so that the performer can respond to his or her partners and audiences. However, it is also fair to say that these more fluid intentions (and the responses) provide crucial insight into how the performance can be understood. Because performance *is* the practice that we are seeking to represent and theorize and because, as I said in the beginning of this

[15] I use the language of recession rather than replacement in order to leave open the possibility (explored in chapter three) that, rather than replacing all talk of musical works with talk only of particular performances, we can redefine musical works in a nominalist fashion such that a musical work just is all of the performances the musician puts under the label that is the work's title.

discussion, I think we need to ground the starting point of our analyses in the artist's experience of the work (which includes performative intentions) it's worth giving some weight to Kofsky's observation that the performing subject is in the best position of all to say what it is that the critic should be trying to represent (*Black Nationalism* 242). The mistake the critics made in not bringing a spirit of understanding to the Coltrane-Dolphy collaborations was basically that they retreated into theory in order to avoid the challenge of performative complexity. Instead of taking respectful account of improvising practices, and those who produce them, theory was used to justify the refusal to engage difficult practices – arbitrarily ruled 'out of bounds' – and the invitation to dialogue was simply ignored.

More recently, Kofsky has elaborated on the prefatory comments to that interview in the 1998 revised and expanded edition of *Black Nationalism* (*John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*). Referring to the world of jazz as a "hothouse environment," Kofsky argues that we can see it as a microcosm in which the avant-garde innovation of the early 1960s foreshadowed the emergence of black nationalism in the popular culture of the late 1960s (417). He observes that white writers and music executives responded to innovations in jazz which could be interpreted as "manifestations of black nationalism" in exactly the same way as white liberals reacted to the black nationalist shift away from an integrationist civil-rights political orientation: that is to say, "with implacable hostility" (Kofsky 417-8).

Kofsky identifies Coltrane as a "key figure" in this jazz-world schism, although he feels the need to make clear that he is not claiming any overt connection between Coltrane and the social movement which he designates "political black nationalism" (418). Kofsky carefully distinguishes Coltrane from this social movement on the grounds of his spiritual commitments, labelling Coltrane's point of view "cosmic mysticism." But, he argues, that mysticism had social implications; the change in thinking which Coltrane hoped to help

bring about with his music embraces brotherhood, an end to social ills such as war and poverty, and the idea of being "a force for real good" (Kofsky 419). Social reform, then, may not have been the overall point or goal of Coltrane's musical project but it was a clear implication of his project.[16] So, in this respect at least, "Kofsky's Coltrane" can be reconciled with the man himself and his stated goals. In addition to the argument that Coltrane's spiritualism implies the same desire for reform of a structurally racist society as that articulated by black nationalists, Kofsky's interview offers a second argument which points to ways in which Coltrane's avant-gardism can be read as resistance to the white power structure of the jazz world. Although Coltrane was not given to issuing political manifestos, Kofsky believes we can read resistance into Coltrane's increasing avoidance of nightclub performing, his interest in, and verbal support of, jazz collectives and self-help groups like the Jazz Composers Guild, and his preference, if pushed, to label his work 'classical' rather than 'jazz'[17] (418-20).

As Manuel notes in his review of Kofsky's book *Black Music, White Business* (both of them no doubt paraphrasing Archie Shepp), black musicians may create the art, but wealthy white businessmen own the means of production and distribution. This racial divide is

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[16] We can infer Coltrane's implicit commitment to social reform from his responses, discussed earlier in this section, to Kofsky's questions about whether there is any 'shared project' between him and Malcolm X ("we must make an effort to try and make [things] better ... socially, musically, politically" *Black Nationalism*, 227), and from his comments that jazz expresses ideals such as peace and solidarity (227). It is also evident in his interview with Paul Zimmerman which I quote from in chapter one: "I think music can make the world better and, if I'm qualified, I want to do it" ("Death of a Jazzman, *Newsweek*, 31 July 1967). Specific support for the racial equality sought by black nationalists can be deduced from Kofsky's account of how they first came to meet: in 1961, Coltrane had agreed to do a benefit concert for the Students for Racial Equality at the University of California, with proceeds going to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Kofsky was the student liaison (*Black Nationalism*, 221-2). (Sadly, says Kofsky, the concert never took place because, in the days before the Free Speech Movement radicalized UC campuses, Chancellor Clark Kerr would not permit on-campus fundraising for SNCC.)

[17] This preference in labeling was because, in Coltrane's view, the term 'classical music' picks out a country's art music and distinguishes it from that country's popular music. Thus, there are many 'classical musics' (including, but not limited to, European musics) and terming his experimental practices 'American classical music' struck him as more helpful and less vague than the term 'jazz' with all its baggage (Coltrane, quoted in "John Coltrane: An Interview" 418-9).

significant in that both Manuel and Kofsky implicate racism in the motivation for a jazz journalism committed to formalist analysis. The group of critics exemplified by Gitler and Tynan offer a biased view of avant-garde jazz, severing formal criteria and stylistic trends from their cultural context, because of what Kofsky identifies, in *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, as a "curious dichotomy" in the thinking of many white Americans in the 1960s (9). As Manuel noted earlier, Kofsky argues that many outside the jazz world had few qualms about acknowledging jazz as a black cultural tradition, although they resisted acknowledging it as an art worthy of their respect (*Black Nationalism* 10). An example of this strand of thought can be seen in Theodor Adorno's contention (see chapter one) that jazz has no aesthetic merit because all of its allegedly 'new and original' musical features, such as syncopation, are already to be found in Stravinsky's musical experimentations ("Farewell to Jazz" 4). Those inside the jazz world (the critics, producers, and other hangers-on whom Kofsky labels the "semi-literati"), on the other hand, were quite insistent about jazz's artistic merits but, for the most part, vehemently denied that there was anything essentially black about it (*Black Nationalism* 9-11). The formalism they employed aided these attempts to erase the cultural traditions from which jazz is derived by giving the critics a language in which they could endorse its claims to being art without conceding its roots in African-American culture. Analysis emphasizing the formal elements of the music lent credence to their position that jazz was a musical product of mainstream – again, white – American culture.[18]

[18] Formalist analysis 'bleached' jazz by talking about it under theories developed to analyze Western art musics. This not only severed jazz from its situation in African-American culture; it also reinforced the notion that art is what Europeans do. Here we see the racism with which Manuel and Kofsky charge the 'Establishment' critics: if jazz is art, then it must be amenable to theorizing under the Eurological values and methodologies that are both the traditions and counterparts of white America. If Eurological theories are imposed on Coltrane's improvisations, then he is being compared to Mozart and Beethoven under standards designed for their music-making practices, not his. So, once again, as Gates observed in chapter one, African-American contributions to the arts are being judged in terms of how successfully they mimic Eurological traditions.

Kofsky further asserts that these very things he and others want to read as Coltrane's resistance are the things for which he incurred the displeasure of 'Establishment' critics who scorned him as "anti-jazz." Kofsky's verdict concerning this 'Establishment' criticism is that it represents the lowest point in what he describes as "a decades-long tale of white incomprehension or outright rejection of black musical art" (*John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution* 421). Given this verdict, I think we can see "Kofsky's Coltrane" as a necessary correction, a kind of 'reactive affirmation' intended to be, in much the same way as Picasso once described art, a lie which tells us the truth.[19] That is to say, I think that Kofsky's distortion is not of Coltrane himself but of 'Establishment' criticism of Coltrane and, in distorting their distortion, he is trying to reveal a truer Coltrane. On this view, "Kofsky's Coltrane," the perceived distortion of Coltrane as having or endorsing a socio-political aim in his music, is an arguably necessary corrective of mainstream attempts at erasure of context. "Kofsky's Coltrane" is not simply 'Malcolm with a soprano sax'. He is a man who values and embodies his social context, drawing from it to express his views on the universality of music and the human impulse towards solidarity. It is these commitments, and the extent to which they play out in his practices, which show us the limitations, the narrowness of vision, in formalist-influenced journalism. As a theoretical lens through which to understand Coltrane, formalism in this domain fails precisely because it cannot, or chooses not to, account for those aspects of practices which lie outside Eurological norms.

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[19] Quoted in *The Arts*, 1923, reprinted in *N.Y. Times*, obituary, 1973. See George Seldes, *The Great Thoughts*, New York: Ballantine, 1985, 364.

What does it matter who is speaking?[20]

French post-structuralist Michel Foucault is often credited with making space for new paths of critical inquiry within the academy: among them, postcolonialism and queer theory. Although his analyses into the ways in which power is exerted are conducted without holding out any hope that individuals can extricate themselves from, or otherwise reconfigure, the relations which govern them, the mere existence of these analyses is often seen as liberating because, at very least, they reveal the processes of knowledge-production and social control which constrain what can be said, how it must be presented in order to qualify as knowledge, and how it will be heard. However, what interests me here is the extent to which a body of writings which have stimulated diversity within academic theorizing nonetheless retain traces of theoretical commitments which have been used to close down resistance and diversity.

In an interview with Gérard Raulet, Foucault characterizes his overall project as concerned with tracing the relations between self and truth-telling ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 444-6). As part of this project, he analyzes the conditions of possibility of ideas present in cultures and time periods to show how objects of knowledge are produced, a process he terms 'archaeology of knowledge' (445). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault rejects the possibility of disinterested, or neutral, knowledge: all knowledge is produced by power in such a way that power relations[21] and fields of knowledge (the space of 'discourse') are simultaneously-constituted correlates (27). One consequence of these power-knowledge

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[20] An earlier version of the discussion in this section is forthcoming as "It Does Too Matter: Michel Foucault, John Coltrane, and Dominant Positions," in *Michel Foucault & Power Today*, eds. Alain Beaulieu and David Gabbard (Lexington Books).

[21] The important thing to note about power relations, as Foucault makes clear in his interview with Raulet, is that Foucault is not referencing official (political) relations between the state and the individual. Rather he is talking about power in a wider, more general sense, those multiple relations which play out "in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration" ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 451). Power relations are thus in evidence wherever there is an organized, or organizable, network of social interactions.

relations is the production of "domains of objects," one of which is 'the individual' who is, for Foucault, both "an 'ideological' representation of society" and "a reality fabricated by [a] specific technology of power" which he terms 'discipline' (*Discipline and Punish* 194).

These 'disciplines' are "general formulas of domination" – modern methods of control instituted within social networks such as prisons, schools, armies, universities – which make the exercise of power possible in more effective, less obviously coercive ways than the methods of the past (*Discipline and Punish* 137). Discipline, as Foucault presents it, works on the principle of conformity; the individual becomes more (politically) obedient as he or she comes to see his or her body as an (economically useful) instrument through which 'aptitudes' and 'capacities' can be expressed[22] (*Discipline and Punish* 138). Conformity comes about through a process of training which centrally involves the individual's efforts to normalize himself or herself in response to hierarchical observation; that is, aware of being observed, the individual engages in behaviours designed to blend in with the crowd (*Discipline and Punish* 170-1, 182-4). And in the use of measurement techniques such as examination, the individual comes 'into reality' as an entity differentiated from others in the crowd by virtue of assessments (judgements) about how effectively his or her normalizing behaviours meet the standard set as the 'norm' (*Discipline and Punish* 184). As a technology,

[22] What Foucault is describing here is a strange sort of alienation that discipline imposes: the individual is alienated from his or her body – it is the visible, tangible object which can perform tasks (the instrument with which one 'earns a living', for example) and it is the surface on which 'the authorities' can inscribe punishments for resistance and rewards for docility – and he or she is alienated from power, which now becomes a force separate from bodies, external to us and imposed upon us. (Power is no longer a capacity of persons, available to be exercised by any of us; it is now (mis)understood as a constellation of distinct and conferrable social privileges.) Now that power has been externalized, we are encouraged to see it as something which can be possessed, something that is granted to some, and not to others. One 'possesses' it if one 'has' the appropriate aptitudes and capacities: leadership abilities, perhaps, or the cunningness necessary to 'seize' power. Although Foucault does not make reference to art, industrial/capitalist economies or Marxist terminology in this discussion of modern methods of instilling obedience, this 'alienation' process that I take him to be describing suggests a partial parallel with what Adorno has borrowed from Marx. The individual's alienation from his or her body is a kind of commodification; as was the case with the jazz that was the popular music of Europe's interwar period, the body's exchange-value lies in its homogenization, or standardization (the extent to which it can be substituted for any other working body). See Theodor Adorno's "On Popular Music," 27-32.

this 'discipline' is more effective than crude, overt methods of force precisely because it depends not on repression by others, but on self-repression (*Discipline and Punish* 182-3).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Maori scholar and theorist of decolonizing possibilities for indigenous peoples, explicitly identifies the terminological ambiguity in Foucault's use of 'discipline', noting that it organizes both knowledge and persons/bodies (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 68). While she is primarily concerned with revealing the ways in which formulas of domination have been used to colonize 'the Other'[23] (68), she observes that what Foucault refers to as "the cultural archive" (the collection of ideas, texts, and systems of producing and manipulating knowledge) does contain multiple traditions of knowledge (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 44).[24] In particular, the sense in which Foucault's demarcation of 'knowledge' has liberatory potential, in her view, is its acknowledgement that testimony ('lived experience' and eyewitness accounts) takes its place, and exerts its influence, in the archive along with more privileged forms such as 'objective' scientific knowledge (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 2).

Edward Said's critical analysis in *Orientalism* of the ways in which 'Western' scholars and authors have (mis)represented Asian and Arab peoples observes that the role of 'discourse', as the notion appears in Foucault's writings, is to produce systematicity within a

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[23] This term has undergone some interesting transformations in 20th century philosophizing and theorizing. In Jean-Paul Sartre's work, 'the Other' is the consciousness that is not mine and the term is used to analyze aspects of consciousness and action that are oriented towards social interaction, i.e., being-for-others (see *Being and Nothingness*, 301-556). Simone de Beauvoir takes up the term as a political-epistemic category and, claiming that "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (xvii), she conducts an analysis of Western society in which the Other is seen as gendered, the inconsequential and socially constructed female against whom the (male) Subject measures and deploys his subjectivity (see *The Second Sex*). In the postcolonialist/anticolonialist discourses to which Edward Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith are contributing, the Other continues to function as a political-epistemic category but it is now a cultural Other, not a gendered one. As is the case with Beauvoir's usage, the postcolonial Other (the one who is colonized) is a diminished person whose value is questioned and subordinated by the dominant group (men, European colonizers).

[24] These multiple traditions may even include knowledges appropriated/stolen from indigenous cultures but, as Tuhiwai Smith observes – notably in the section titled "Ten Ways to be Researched (Colonized)," but also at many other points in her analysis – indigenous knowledges are frequently distorted into objectionable and unrecognizable forms in order to make them intelligible to their 'Western' beneficiaries.

discipline, also understood here both in the academic sense of being an organized field of knowledge and in the 'social control' sense of being a 'formula of domination' (3). It is this discourse (the specific tradition within which objects of knowledge are structured and validated) which is responsible for the texts produced out of it and the reality which these texts create, not the individual author of the text (*Orientalism* 94). Here, however, Said is concerned to identify a point of divergence between his view and Foucault's: for Said, the imprint of the individual author upon the text is significant; authors do not merely recede into uninfluential anonymity (*Orientalism* 23).

It is clearly this belief of Foucault's that the organizing principles of a discourse render the author superfluous which makes possible the endorsement of *écriture* (the central thesis of which is the 'death of the author') in his 1979 essay "What Is an Author?". As I am concerned to show in this section, I believe this endorsement entails commitments which, if applied to jazz, would function in the same way that formalist aesthetic theory has in jazz journalism and, in erasing the often oppositional consciousness of the musicians, would undermine the very thing Foucault wants to celebrate: the radical proliferation of meanings attributable to texts/works. Given what he has had to say about the structuring power of discourse, it is not surprising that this residue of formalism exists in Foucault's thinking: in the Raulet interview I mentioned earlier, Foucault talks about formalism as a theoretical current characterizing much of the politico-aesthetic thought of the twentieth century, including structuralism ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 433-4). And in conversation with Pierre Boulez, Foucault identifies the question of 'form' as the frame within which theoretical inquiries into music have been conducted in the twentieth century ("Contemporary Music and the Public" 314). Thus it would be more surprising if Foucault had somehow managed to avoid having formalism filter into his theorizing.

Although the aesthetic analysis Foucault offers us in "What Is an Author?" is necessarily contextualist (in its attention to intertextuality), problematic formalist traces remain. Based on my reading of this text, I want to show why I think Foucault's comments concerning the 'death of the author' and his proposed elimination of its substitute, 'the author-function', carry this residue of formalist aesthetic theories. Foucault's preoccupation with the ways in which discourse produces both texts and individuals leads him to see discourse as the explanatory crux of textual analysis. And, of course, this attention to the context within which art (or any cultural artifact, for that matter) is produced is important. But consigning the creators of works into the uninfluential anonymity that Said objects to and pretending that we can conduct a thorough contextualist analysis without attending to the individuals who brought those works into being reinscribes all of the postcolonialist worries that are raised by critics like Said and Tuhiwai Smith. Especially when we have cultural power imbalances, we can expect that erasure of the jazz musician's perspective from our theorizing about meanings of jazz performances is going to leave us with the impoverished inventory of Eurological theories through which to explain these performances. As Said's analysis in *Orientalism* makes clear, this inventory of theories has served for centuries to silence and obscure oppositional voices by presuming that all artifacts can be comprehended from a Western perspective. Thus, without a general commitment to attending to the perspective of the artist, it is hard to see how we could open up the analytic space to raise questions about whether silencing might be going on in a particular case.

The problem with Foucault's *écriture* commitment, in my view, lies in its capacity to function, like formalism, as a repressive social control mechanism within the artworld,

broadly construed.[25] While Foucault's theorizing is not formalist, it shares with formalism a disregard for the creators of works which permits the continuing exertion of theoretical-critical control over marginalized artistic communities. I believe this 'social control' function can be neutralized only by limiting the scope of works to which Foucault's analysis should be applied. And I think that this limitation can be achieved by introducing a distinction between types of artworks, a distinction which is grounded in cultural and aesthetic traditions and is signalled in the purpose, or goal, of the artwork. I shall argue both the potentially repressive function of anti-intentionalist (formalist and Foucaultian) theorizing in aesthetics[26] and the merits of my proposed distinction through contrasting two specific aesthetic projects which I see as exemplars: Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades' and John Coltrane's improvisations. I contend that Duchamp's ready-mades arise from the same European aesthetic traditions which gave rise to formalist theories such that both theory and practice can, in this instance, be properly seen as organic developments internal to a tradition. Coltrane's improvisations, on the other hand, are grounded in a non-European ("Afrological") tradition upon which anti-intentionalism must be imposed, and is *in fact* often imposed in a way which causes it to function as repression, rather than liberation, of possible meanings and aesthetic values – that is, causes anti-intentionalist theory to function as a social control mechanism. To clarify, I believe that the question of whether anti-intentionalism functions in a liberating or repressive way with respect to a particular artwork or artistic practice depends crucially on whether the work or practice under examination is

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[25] My reference to "the artworld, broadly construed" is intended to encompass all those who have an interest in artistic production and reception: most obviously, the artists themselves, critics and theorists, and the audiences who experience the artist's work, but also those who nurture the cultural traditions from which specific artistic practices arise.

[26] For the sake of clarity in my discussion, I shall use the term 'anti-intentionalism' wherever I am referring to both formalism *and* contextualist analyses like *écriture* that do not take note of authors'/artists' intentions.

internal to, or external to, the Eurological traditions which underpin this type of aesthetic theory.[27]

First, let me lay out my reading of the text. In the opening comments of "What Is an Author?" Foucault, quoting Beckett, poses the rhetorical question "what does it matter who is speaking?" as a starting point from which to acknowledge the 'death of the author' in literary theory and draw our attention to current acceptance, in place of the author, of an 'author-function' (205). This 'author-function' puts the context and lived experience of the author/artist outside the bounds of our critical theorizing and substitutes an intertextuality that depends on a type-identification, using the author only as a 'classificatory function' (Foucault 210). But, Foucault argues, even this substitution of a posited function in place of an individual is insufficient; the power, whether of a culturally-sanctioned function or of an actual person, to control the meanings we may derive from texts continues to exert its force. The function still permits us to group together restrictively texts whose relationships we wish to interrogate, such that Shakespeare, qua 'author-function', is the ideological figure through

[27] In my view, the determination of whether a work is taking shape within a particular tradition has nothing to do with the racial, ethnic, or cultural origins of the artist nor can it be *conclusively* determined by reference to formal elements of the work (although these formal elements may aid us in making provisional determinations). Such a determination must incorporate attention to the tradition(s) which the artist is intending to reference. Let me offer an example which shows why I think formal elements cannot be conclusive: that of the work of African-American artist Alison Saar, as discussed by bell hooks in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. Saar's work, as described by hooks, might initially seem to reference the same traditions which shaped the work of Marcel Duchamp (an example I take up later in this section). Saar received artistic training within traditional Eurocentric institutions and has done considerable work with 'found' or salvaged objects (hooks 14), suggesting a similarity to Duchamp's aesthetic trajectory. However, her work departs from his in that her use of found objects takes place within a context of fusion of European, African, African-American, and Native-American artistic/aesthetic traditions and seeks to foreground subjugated knowledges of African-American artists (hooks 14). Thus, although critical analysis of her work would clearly involve, and profit from, attention to her cultural borrowings and a residue of Eurocentric pedagogy in her approach to art-making, it would also crucially require acknowledgement of the 'aesthetic turn' which brought into her work a commitment to metaphysically-influenced folk arts from non-European traditions (hooks 14, 18-20). This example problematizes assumptions about easy identification of traditions based on formal elements alone, but also problematizes attempts to categorize works with reference to a single tradition (as does the body of work presented by John Coltrane). It is this blending and borrowing of traditions within artistic practices which convinces me that responsible theorizing and criticism needs to take place within a pluralistic context, one which can take note of the fruitfulness of different theories without seeking to collapse them into a single, universal meta-theory. I shall have more to say about hybridity and my endorsement of aesthetic pluralism in chapter five.

which we limit, exclude, and choose texts in order to close down the proliferation of meanings[28] (Foucault 221). *True* freedom – that being the freedom to constitute meanings not sanctioned by a power structure acting upon us – would seem to be impossible until we move beyond the author-function and create a conceptual space in which we can interrogate textual meanings without reference to their moment of creation. This call for unlimited freedom to attribute meanings to artworks is what I understand Foucault to be endorsing in his comments about 'the author' as an "ideological figure" who constrains "the proliferation of meaning" (222).

As I noted earlier, I believe that Foucault's endorsement of the demise of both authors and author-functions potentially casts him in the same repressive role as that occupied by formalists in cross-cultural theorizing and criticism. The overview of current theorizing about writing which begins his essay describes an artistic practice that has, in his words, "freed itself from the theme of expression" (Foucault 206). Writing is no longer the activity through which a single person's thoughts are made public, or accessible to others, but is instead "an interplay of signs" (Foucault 206). Similarly, his account of the critic's task, as currently understood, is "to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships" (Foucault 207). These ways of understanding the creation and criticism of artworks resemble formalism in that they present the work as something that can, and should, be analyzed in isolation from its creator and on

[28] Proliferation of meaning is closed down by virtue of the fact that Shakespeare the author-function draws a boundary around a certain set of texts in exactly the same way as Shakespeare the author. From the point of view of a hypothetical scholar hoping to generate a radical and diverse array of meanings through, say, interrogating intertextual connections in, say, *The Tempest* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, it makes no difference whether we ground our notions of special connections between texts in authors or author-functions. Either way, *The Tempest* gets grouped with other Shakespeare texts and carefully locked away with the rest of the 'great books' (of English literature).

the basis only of elements contained within the work itself.[29] Foucault's anti-intentionalist commitments also appear at the end of the essay, where he predicts the disappearance of the author-function and the possibility that works will instead be subjected to questions about their "modes of existence": how they can be used, circulated, and appropriated (222). Attention to use, circulation, and appropriation also treats works as discrete entities, theorizable only at the level of features contained within the work (in order to facilitate its use), and the extent to which those features differ from or resemble features found in other works.[30]

Given this reading of Foucault's essay, I now want to identify the point of disagreement I have with his view. I share Foucault's desire to celebrate and make possible the proliferation of artistic meanings. However, I question whether identification of an author/artist always leads us to an authoritative restriction of the meanings and values we might attribute.[31] Foucault assumes that any identification of a creator of an artistic work acts to suppress the meanings attributable to the artwork. While he is right to take seriously the notion of 'ownership' as one of the ways in which European-influenced cultures exert power over our ability to think new or subversive thoughts, it is not at all clear to me that 'ownership' functions in exactly the same way (that is, repressively) in all cultural contexts.

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[29] Formalism, in its broadest construal, tells us that each of us should be able to stand before a sculpture, poem, or musical performance and, knowing nothing of the person who brought forth the work, be able to imbue it with meanings and values derivable from the elements and relationships of elements which are 'there' in the work.

[30] The intertextuality made possible by use of other works is a weak contextualism compared to what I argue for in the previous section, a contextualized analysis which works outward from the artist's experience of the work's creation towards such links that theorists might care to make between the work and other works, social issues or movements, etc. This 'weak contextualism' erases the author and moves straight to a consideration of other (authorless) works, treating them as if they were either commodities (whose provenance is irrelevant) or natural objects (for which questions of creation are unanswerable).

[31] Note that I am here conflating discussion of artistic meanings and aesthetic values. This is done purely for pragmatic reasons of maintaining clarity. Foucault's interest, here in this essay, is in artistic meanings whereas my interest is in aesthetic values. While the distinction between meanings and values is obviously going to be significant in some discussions of artistic practices, I do not believe that anything I say here depends on, or otherwise references, that distinction.

In order to bring out the force of this worry more clearly, I want to draw on examples from within the framework of avant-garde, or experimental, artworks.

There are at least two ways in which we might understand the purpose, or *telos*, of an avant-garde work: we might see it as an attempt to interrogate our assumptions about the nature of artworks themselves (type-i artworks, exemplified in my argument by Marcel Duchamp's introduction of the 'ready made' work), or we might see it as an attempt to interrogate the relationship to his or her culture that the artist experiences (type-ii artworks, exemplified by Coltrane's improvisations).[32] In offering this distinction, I want to make clear that I am not claiming that all artworks, or even all avant-garde artworks, can have only one or the other purpose: in at least some cases, formal experimentation with the nature of artworks can be a political act and, in those cases, I think it is especially important to both acknowledge multiple purposes and seek a pluralist framework of analysis.[33] This distinction, then, is not intended to constrain artists to an exclusive choice of purpose; rather, it is intended to challenge the theorizer to examine the appropriateness of his or her theoretical analysis.

Should we accept this distinction, what we have is a clear starting point for our theorizing. If we take seriously the worry that imposed theories could obscure practices, then we need a way to begin theorizing that incorporates from the outset respect for artist's practices. Asking about the artist's purpose(s) gives us a base from which to start analyzing what meanings and values might possibly be attributed to their practices, and the artworks resulting from those practices. I, with Foucault, object to any attempt to restrict the range of

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[32] I owe thanks here to David Davies for identifying and helping me to clarify the usefulness of this distinction.

[33] Indeed where a type-ii interrogation proceeds via a formal (type-i) experimentation (or vice versa) it seems fruitful to acknowledge hierarchical *teloi*. So we need to ask of artworks not just 'what is its goal or purpose?' but whether there is a further, secondary purpose that is also being served and what the relationship between them is.

possible meanings and values by privileging the artist as the only authority capable of licensing interpretations, but I am particularly concerned to clarify the respective power of the artist and other interpretive 'experts'. The artist has perhaps the closest, most intimate relationship to the work[34] and, like all close relations, this one can both illuminate some features of the work for the artist and blind him or her to others. In some cases (the Duchamp case that I am about to turn to, for example), meanings and values which were not obviously present (therefore not intentional) may attach themselves to the work with the passage of time – perhaps by virtue of the artwork inaugurating an entirely new type of practice. For this reason, I think taking the position that only the artist can speak definitively about the artwork impoverishes our analyses. But from the fact that the artist is not an omniscient interpreter of the work, it does not follow that his or her voice has no place in debates about their works. I believe we should begin, as a matter of general principle, with the artist's understanding of what has been created, and move from there to asking what other analyses might fruitfully reveal aspects of the work. Particularly where the artwork emerges from cultural traditions which have been marginalized by a dominant class, it would be grossly inappropriate, in my view, to disregard the artist's understanding. This would be just another instance of cultural suppression, hardly the proliferation that Foucault champions.

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[34] This is the insight that underlies the Kofsky-Coltrane discussion I mentioned in the previous section about what it means for a critic to accurately represent an artistic project. To approach a new movement in art with a desire for understanding necessitates approaching it with humility, and that in turn necessitates engaging the artist in discussion of what he or she intends. It is, of course, possible for someone to say that he or she doesn't care about the artist's intentions – perhaps even while claiming to be interested in other aspects of the artist's experience with respect to the work. If this disregard for intentions is expressed by an audience member, someone who is making private judgements about the work, then it seems to me a trivial issue. What concerns me is the critical/theoretical judgements which purport to interpret for others. Even here, however, the critic or theorist might be able to make a convincing case for why we should disregard artist's intentions in a given instance. What I want to argue for is not that the artist's intentions constrain our interpretations, only that they should be considered; and that where they are considered and dismissed, a case should be made for their lack of relevance to the interpretation being offered.

Foucault's proposed approach, an attribution of meanings unconstrained by references to a work's creator, can perhaps assist us in the first case distinguished (type-i works), where the artist is trying to get people to see art differently,[35] but it offers little opportunity for discourse with the artist who is trying to get people to see their cultural traditions, and by extension themselves, differently (through type-ii works). The problem I see with Foucault's failure to recognize different *teloi* for artworks, and the point which I shall be concerned to make in my discussion of Coltrane's improvisations, is that we cannot legitimately assume that we all share the same cultural-aesthetic traditions, and therefore, the same interpretations of meanings and values. While this diversity of interpretations has the capacity to liberate meanings and values in type-i works, it also has the capacity to erase them in type-ii works precisely because divorcing them from their moment of creation erases the relationship to culture which the artist is scrutinizing. As I noted in my discussion of jazz journalism in the previous section, the deliberate inattention to creative context which resulted from the application of formalist theory was one of the ways in which violence was done to jazz improvisations. Treating them as if they were interchangeable with Eurological music-making suppressed their cultural significance and meanings, and distorted audience expectations of the values they might expect to find in the performances. Thus my point in making a *telos*-based distinction is to emphasize that the difference in appropriate treatment of works is due to an ontological difference as well as a political one: jazz improvisation and Western (Eurological) art music are not merely the same process in different cultural contexts – they are different things.

[35] Note that, although a Foucaultian approach to type-i works is acceptable to me (insofar as issues of suppression and exacerbated marginalization are not a problem), my formulation of this distinction in terms of artists' intentions is going to be highly objectionable to Foucault, given his endorsement of *écriture*.

In order to show how application of anti-intentionalist theory can be both a liberation and a repression of artistic practices, I want now to engage with the two examples that I mentioned earlier. Let me begin with an account of the example that I see as well-suited to both formalist analysis and Foucault's prescription of radically unconstrained meaning-attribution, that of Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain." In 1917, the Society of Independent Artists in New York organized an open exhibition, one which departed from the traditions of the day by dispensing with a jury who would screen out all 'inappropriate' submissions and instead announcing that the exhibition, "The Big Show," would be open to all exhibitors who paid the initiation and annual membership fees (de Duve 96-7). One such exhibitor, a Richard Mutt of Philadelphia, duly paid the required fees and entered his work, a porcelain urinal. Although many versions of this story have been circulated and none of these versions has ever been accorded the status of being a 'true account' of events, we know two things about Richard Mutt's "Fountain." We now know that Richard Mutt was really Marcel Duchamp, and we know that, despite having met the entrance requirements, "Fountain" was never exhibited in "The Big Show" (de Duve 98-9).

Left unresolved, however, is the question of how "Fountain" should be understood: was it a joke or a test? Given the motto of the Independents (as the society was popularly known) – "no jury, no prizes" – and the governing principle of "The Big Show" – "the independence of the work itself," it seems clear that the only basis on which exclusion of the work from the exhibition could possibly be legitimate is if it were deemed a joke (de Duve 97, 120). And yet, with the passage of time, it now seems much more plausible (to me, at least) to understand Duchamp's 'ready-made' as a test, a deliberate attempt to explore the limiting case of what an artwork is. It is a pivotal moment in a narrative in which formalist theory connects nineteenth-century European calls for "art for art's sake" (« l'art pour l'art »)

to the later emergence of twentieth-century modern art with its focus on technique over representation. Part of "art for art's sake" was the view that one did not paint subjects; one simply painted. This shift in artistic practice led to development of language (and theory) primarily concerned with arrangement of formal elements.[36]

One of the early formalist theories, Clive Bell's 1914 attempt to explain the aesthetic merits of Post-Impressionist painting, hypothesizes that any work deserving of the label 'genuine artwork' is characterized by 'significant form' – which he defines as "relations and combinations of line and colour" (6-8). In this context, Duchamp's submission of a 'readymade' object can be seen as extending the challenge posed to the artworld by Bell's theory: the urinal, if presented and judged as an art object, can clearly be discussed in terms of its relations and combinations of line and colour. It thus urges an even more radical reconceptualization of the nature of the artwork than formalist theories like Bell's had anticipated; *Fountain* takes seriously the formalist view that representation, or 'message', is not the essential criterion by which an artwork ought to be judged, and then poses the further question of why creatability ought to be a necessary characteristic of artworks. If only formal elements matter, 'found' objects would seem to have as legitimate a claim to being art as 'made' objects.

Formalism's focus on the artwork as a self-justifying entity liberated artists of the nineteenth century in two ways: it removed from them the imperative to create works in the representationalist tradition, and it provided them with theoretical grounds for resistance

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[36] For a historical overview which discusses Hanslick's formalism in music and Clive Bell's and Roger Fry's formalism in visual arts, see chapter four ("Form") of Anne Sheppard's *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*. For an account of formalism in poetry, see M.H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, especially the sections titled "Objective Theories" (Introduction), "The Poem as Heterocosm" (chapter X), and "The Use of Romantic Poetry" (chapter XI). An account of musical formalism can also be found in Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, section III of "Musical Meaning: Romantic Transcendence and the Separability Principle."

against the established practice of jury-administered *salons*.[37] Both of these liberating effects can be seen to manifest themselves in the circumstances surrounding Duchamp's work; the urinal, as an artwork, is not clearly representing anything, and the very notion of an open exhibition was a clear act of resistance against the guild principle of juries as gatekeepers to the artworld. Later artists working in avant-garde/experimental streams of European-American aesthetic traditions can even be understood as taking up the challenge of Duchamp's test. The 'ready-made' proved that an artwork did not necessarily need to meet criteria of creation; found objects, appropriately presented, could also qualify as artworks.

The worry here is that formalist approaches, considerations of the work in isolation, mislead us in theorizing Coltrane's 'free jazz' improvisations. How do we theorize the aesthetic merits of an improvised piece that is never (intended to be) notated? How relevant can formalism and other types of anti-intentionalism be to these types of works? These are precisely the kind of questions which are ruled out by Eurocentric analyses of jazz. Improvisation is often grasped in this framework as 'real-time composition' and this tempts one to believe uncritically that the improvisatory practices of African-American jazz musicians can be subsumed within a compositional framework of carefully arranged formal elements. Indeed, as noted earlier in this chapter, this temptation has driven much of the mainstream jazz journalism and criticism of the 1950s and 1960s. This is problematic because many performers of 'free jazz', like Coltrane, are very articulate about their artistic development, goals, and influences and take great pains to situate themselves within jazz

[37] Prior to the *salon des refusés* in 1874 France (inspired by rejection from the official *salon* of canvases submitted by Impressionist painter Edouard Manet), would-be painters had to submit their works to a jury charged with determining whether the painting merited exhibition. See de Duve's *Kant After Duchamp*, especially chapter four "The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas," for elaboration of this historical account.

traditions.[38] Journalism's failure to represent artists' voices is not, therefore, a result of these artists choosing to stay silent.

In the writings of more sympathetic and sensitive interviewers, this connection between the person and the music is made explicit. In the context of Coltrane's interview with Kofsky, for instance, it is quite clear that "doing better," a relentless drive to improve, is a principle which Coltrane applies to all aspects of life: it explains both his commitment to personal artistic development and his recognition of the role that social commentary and activism play within the jazz world. Evidence that Coltrane understands the goals of his artistic projects in the context of both his own body of work and the works produced by others is even clearer in his declaration that "I want to progress, but I don't want to go so far out that I can't see what others are doing" (Coltrane and DeMicheal 102). This attention to what others are doing is often explained by reference to the 'dialogicality' of jazz – the extent to which, as an artistic practice, jazz represents a conversation among jazz musicians. One of the goals of jazz, then, is to respond not just to the music created by others but to the others themselves (a practice difficult to make sense of through a theoretical lens like *écriture*). This imperative of response is a central point in Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s development of a distinctly African-American literary theory[39]: responding to and revising other contributions to the art ('signifyin(g)') is an artistic practice which is aesthetically valuable in African-American cultural traditions, and recognition of this contextually-grounded 'call and response' practice is lost when the work in question is assessed in isolation.

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[38] Within this cultural context that free jazz performers cite, it is very clear that improvisation is not reducible to contemporaneous composition – music made up on the spot out of a bag of tricks and favourite riffs. To see improvisation this way is to hold an impoverished conception of the dialogic exploration of community and identity (about which I shall have more to say in chapter four) that has arisen out of 'call and response' traditions within Afrological music-making.

[39] See my discussion of Gatesian theory in chapter one.

So the point I made earlier in clarifying my disagreement with Foucault – that 'ownership' does not function in exactly the same way in all cultural contexts – should now be clearer. In the jazz world, we see the music industry using formalism to repress artistic meanings and aesthetic values, as opposed to Foucault's worry about authors using their authority to repress meanings. Here formalism enables precisely the sort of social control that I think Foucault would (or should) find the most objectionable. As we saw in the first section's discussion of jazz journalism, formalism has been used as a cover for socially-institutionalized racism in the past. This history, in my view, gives us strong *prima facie* grounds to reject anti-intentionalism in this context. A further reason to reject its application to jazz lies in its status as a non-organic imposition upon a different cultural tradition: it misrepresents, or erases, the goals of the artistic practice, thus repressing meanings and values derivable from musical works developed within this tradition.

The corrective measure that I think we need to employ in this case is the distinction I proposed earlier: a limitation of scope for Foucault's anti-intentionalist-inspired call for proliferation of meanings. Where the work is referencing Eurological traditions of artistic practice and the work's goal is clearly to question the nature of artworks themselves, anti-intentionalism's repressive potential is arguably benign and it can clearly be a fruitful theoretical tool. Where the work is coming out of a tradition to which anti-intentionalism is alien and the goal of the work is bound up in the context of the artist and his or her social relations, its application needs to be carefully examined to ensure that it does not close off the very proliferation that Foucault and I both ardently desire.[40] This worry is particularly acute within theorizing about jazz because, as Ajay Heble observes in his discussion of Fred

[40] This is not to say that formalism should never be used as a tool in this context, only that it should be a self-conscious and fully contextualized formalism (of the kind that Ajay Heble employs to discuss Charlie Parker's contributions to bebop).

Wei-han Ho in *Landing on the Wrong Note*, jazz is not just outside of the Eurocentric tradition; it is, in many instances and incarnations, *opposed to* that tradition (15).

Thus, in response to Foucault and Beckett, I wish to assert that in at least some cases, yes, it does too matter who is speaking. And because it matters, any theoretical analysis which begins with an *a priori* commitment to avoiding any part of context in favour of an exclusionary conception of 'the work' cannot be trusted to reveal the full range and nuance of the practices and projects they claim to make visible.

Choosing metaphysics

What I want to do in this section is to develop the issue of theory choice more fully through a general argument that choices are made and justified within the context of a prior commitment to values. This section will foreshadow the more specific argument in chapter three, that the musical theory we choose determines how we answer ontological questions about what a musical work is. The point I am concerned to explore, and endorse, is Donna Haraway's contention, in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, that: "Facts are theory-laden; theories are value-laden; values are history-laden" (77). That is, the reason why we should worry about bias-driven judgements in jazz journalism and implicit traces of unrecognized bias in scholarship is because values drive theory choice, and theories at least partially determine ontologies. A theory might be chosen not because its organizing principle really does make visible more connections and relations between posited entities, but because it reflects the biases of a dominant stream of thought. Should this possibility arise, we might then be in the position of theorizing the avant-garde only to the extent that it coheres with the familiar. In such a case, the notion that a given theory makes more

connections visible becomes nothing more than an article of faith.[41] This is the worry that I articulated in the first section of this chapter, about jazz journalism's continued commitment to formalist analysis (see, in particular, footnote 10): it may have been the most appropriate critical tool for evaluation of Charlie Parker's contributions to jazz but, when applied to Coltrane's project, it concealed rather than revealed. Dogmatic allegiance to formalist views was what made possible Tynan's "anti-jazz" denunciations which served only to obscure the ways in which Coltrane and Dolphy were, in their own time, advancing jazz just as Parker had (DeMicheal, "John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics," 110).

For my purposes, the immediate question to ask is whether any general analysis of theory choice can bring out what is at stake in aesthetics and, in particular, whether it can illuminate any of the tentative conclusions I reached in the first chapter's discussion of Coltrane's merits under Adornian formalist and Gatesian contextualist theories. What I want to do is examine theory choice through critiques of science drawn from feminist standpoint epistemology, in order to bring out the role of value commitments in theorizing. Unlike the sciences, where theorizing is focused on forward-looking prediction, aesthetics is concerned with appraisal (either backward-looking or contemporaneous). As such, it does not need to be standardized, and can even be enhanced by a pluralistic approach to theories in the sense that working with multiple theories can reveal range and nuance in practices which would not be visible if critical examination were to limit itself to a single theoretical tool. Thus both the different aims of theorizing and the extent to which distinct theories can be accommodated speak against the possibility of easy transference from the scientific to

[41] By this I mean that any theory which is not subjected to critical demands to continually justify its application may become disconnected from the very art-making it is supposed to be analyzing. When this happens, theory ceases to illuminate practices, and degenerates into 'theory', the reproduction of ideologically consistent discourse. It then becomes possible for people with academic interests in feminism and decolonization (for instance) to say, with straight faces, 'I don't do theory' as if it were some distinct and autonomous discursive domain beyond what we live.

the aesthetic domain. And let me be clear here; it is not my intention to endorse a translation of scientific claims into aesthetic ones. Instead, I want to endorse the position taken by Donna Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women.* Haraway is concerned to criticize traditional philosophy of science on the grounds of its commitment to a largely fictitious central distinction: in her words, philosophy of science "exploits the rupture between subject and object to justify the double ideology of firm scientific objectivity and mere personal subjectivity" (8).[42] While she wants to acknowledge 'the real', she is concerned to foreground the role of subjectivity and of social construction in scientific knowledge.

It is useful here, I think, to first insert a brief account of the careful work done by a contemporary of Haraway's, Sally Haslanger, on the ways in which notions of social construction can be reconciled with a commitment to (mind-)independent reality. Haslanger's "Ontology and Social Construction" makes sense of attempts like Haraway's to identify social influences on thought and theorizing without having to deny the existence of a 'real world' (96, fn.5). Acknowledging that social factors play a role in formulation and application of theory-grounded distinctions is, Haslanger argues, compatible with claims that the distinction is about 'real' facts or states of being (105). While it ought to be clear that what is real and our beliefs about what is real are not the same thing, this in no way forecloses the possibility that our beliefs can get things right (Haslanger 114). This observation is a consequence of acknowledging human fallibility: that we can be wrong about the conclusions we draw from data implies concomitantly that we are equally capable of drawing correct conclusions, that there is a middle ground between claims of infallibility and those of cognitive incompetence.

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[42] She makes specific reference to mid-twentieth century work in primatology by Clarence Ray Carpenter and Robert M. Yerkes, Solly Zuckerman, Thelma Rowell, Sherwood Washburn, Adrienne Zihlman and Nancy Tanner. For a more self-conscious discussion of objectivity and subjectivity, however, and how they pertain to theory choice in the sciences, it is more illuminating to look at Imre Lakatos' 1970 critique in "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes" of Thomas Kuhn's work, and Kuhn's response to Lakatos in "Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice" (1977).

Haslanger's reconciliation project depends on distinguishing between two conceptions of reality: 'objective reality' and 'independent reality'. 'Objective reality' is defined as the view that "things determine, in and of themselves, ... how they are known" (Haslanger 118) and implicates only the 'rationality' of the knowers (Haslanger 115). But, as Haslanger notes, "the whole point of speaking of an *independent* reality is to emphasize that there is no necessary connection between what's real and what human beings know" (117). Because it's clear that social factors do play a role in our organizing of knowledge (in, for example, the distinctions we are capable of making, and choose to make, in a given time or context) and in the language we use to talk about things, 'objective reality' is clearly not a fruitful, defensible definition. But, as noted above in the discussion of fallibility, the recognition that reality and beliefs about it are not identical does not preclude (and in fact reinforces) a commitment to 'independent reality'. All social construction demands of us is the same sort of careful attention to the non-identity of beliefs and reality which is built into the notion of independent reality (100). Where Haslanger is most clearly in sympathy with Haraway's project is in the assertion that "by masking our own contribution to what counts as real we mask the problematic political motivations for such discriminations and often cast them as natural or inevitable" (Haslanger 116).

Haraway's project is ultimately to argue not just the value-ladenness but the history-ladenness (the sociological appeal) of the theories amongst which we choose. The examination of science in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* begins with analysis of how knowledge is produced and legitimized in scientific discourses, using case studies in primatology.[43] The second part of

[43] As Haraway points outs, the interesting thing about primatology (from the perspective of her critique of science) is the way in which twentieth century studies of primate behaviour and cultural organization have been used (or assumed) as a basis for speculating about early human behaviours and cultural strategies (11-12). Specifically, the acceptance by scientific observers of a 'natural' hierarchy of dominant males over male competitors, females, and offspring has contributed to, and been nourished by, a view of naturally unequal social relations ("the dominance principle") as being the 'given' with which all of our attempts at cultural organization must contend. This discussion, in chapters 1 and 2, is perhaps her clearest and most-developed exposé of an 'objectivity' arising from theoretical bias, not from 'neutral' observation.

Haraway's examination picks up the issue of legitimization in greater, more critical detail in its exploration of how the telling of (acceptable) scientific stories – most crucially, those about what 'nature' and 'experience' *really are* – cashes out as a power struggle for control of a domain's rhetoric. Finally, she engages the question of a synthesis of progressive politics, postmodernism, and science, speculating about how reimagining 'natural' bodies can lead us to liberation. She depicts nature as a "coyote" or trickster figure,[44] an object of engagement which defies stable, non-biased representation, and argues from this depiction that how we, as shapers of and participants in human culture(s), construct our conceptions of nature is crucial to the process of cultural liberation (Haraway 2).[45] Haraway contends that examination of how we represent nature always reveals some residue of political and epistemological value commitments: when speaking, for instance, of the pronouns we use in referring to nature, Haraway observes that "grammar is politics by other means" (3). What we owe it to ourselves and each other to do, she thinks, is to step away from fetishization of science[46] both in order to critically question scientific methodologies, assumptions, etc., and in order to accept our responsibility for 'science' as something we create (Haraway 8).

For Haraway, the point of intersection between scientific discourses and feminist struggles that this nature-culture split[47] allows (where natural-scientific knowledge functions

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[44] It is interesting to note the similarity between Haraway's characterization of the world as a "coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse" (209) and the story that Henry Louis Gates Jr. tells us in *The Signifying Monkey* about Esu Elegbara, the trickster in Yoruba mythology whose transmission of messages (from the gods of interpretation and indeterminacy of meaning) is ambiguous, unreliable, and therefore, suspect – but is also the only line of communication available.

[45] In essence, *pace* Adorno, Haraway's position is that the things which can be used to control us can also be used to set ourselves free.

[46] Fetishization of science, as she presents the notion, can take the form of either worship or rejection but in all cases understands science as having an existence and epistemological merit distinct from, and superior to, more obviously subjective, therefore contestable, cultural products such as artworks.

[47] This distinction between 'nature' and 'culture' is not unique to Haraway; it is taken up by many feminist theorists, notably by Gayle Rubin in her account of the 'sex/gender system's transformation of biological sexuality into cultural sexual/social practices as it is developed in "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," and by Judith Butler in the deconstruction of sex/gender/desire in *Gender Trouble.*

as a form of covert social control, 8) raises the question of whether feminist epistemology can bridge the gap between subject and object in a way that does not require us to reject the possibility of an 'objective' standpoint (71). Thus her examination of rhetorical strategies, "the contest to set the terms of speech" (Haraway 72), explores two strategies for gaining authority: telling better scientific stories (correcting patriarchal/colonial/capitalist bias in the sciences), and telling completely different ones (stepping outside of science to speak in, perhaps, 'a different voice'). The strategic problem she wrestles with is how to contest *bad* science without discrediting *all* science. Outright discrediting of science as a possible locus for true statements about reality is dangerous and undesirable because it erodes ground we may want to argue from later, when articulating a positive, liberatory, progressive program (Haraway 78). What feminism and science have in common, for Haraway, is that they are both "contest[s] for public knowledge" (82).

In considering how best to formulate public knowledge, Haraway introduces the feminist standpoint epistemology argument advanced by Sandra Harding and Nancy Hartsock: that women (or 'women'), by virtue of their (presumably) shared historical situation can develop a theory of objectivity which is, at very least, not an obstacle to the social transformation she envisions for human societies (80). Haraway presents feminist standpoint epistemology as developing out of a Marxist premise, "that those suffering oppression have no interest in appearances passing for reality and so can show how things work" (80). The general idea is that those at the bottom of the heap have no vested interest in maintaining the social fictions of the status quo[48]: the conscientious and virtuous (i.e.,

[48] As plausible as this general idea might sound, it leaves unexamined the (possibly numerous) situations where those at the bottom do see themselves as having a vested interest in maintaining a *status quo* which exploits them. Take, for instance, the political situation in Haiti as it stood in January 2004: the poor (who are the majority of the population) had a very clear vested interest in maintaining the arguably fictitious

studiously blind) shoppers who avoid buying clothing made in 'the Third World' and instead seek out clothing that is made in Canada may well have an interest in believing that wage slavery does not exist in contemporary Canadian society, but that interest is not shared by the unskilled Chinese immigrant who sews those clothes in a Vancouver sweatshop. Haraway herself observes: "Many currents in feminism attempt to theorize grounds for trusting especially the vantage points of the subjugated; there is good reason to believe vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful" (190). But, she warns, there are two dangers in this appeal to the perspective of the less-powerful: romanticization, and appropriation (191). We need to remember that no standpoint, even those of the oppressed and the marginalized, is exempt from critical examination. We also need to remember that learning to "see from below" requires at least as much interpretive skill as techno-scientific theorizing (Haraway 191).

Notwithstanding these caveats about romanticization and appropriation, the most serious pitfall Haraway sees for feminist standpoint epistemology lies in its appeal to a 'shared historical situation'. This pitfall actually implicates two separate, yet interrelated, problems: that of essentialism and that of building bridges between different perspectives. Feminist standpoint epistemology can be criticized on the grounds that it relies on an essentialist notion of 'woman', the idea that there is some necessary condition shared by all persons we identify as 'women' which is sufficient to justify claims of shared experience. But even a cursory survey of the diversity demonstrated by the 'women' whom each of us knows individually (differences of age, race, social class, sexual orientation, gender performativity, political commitments, and so on) is enough to cast doubt on the idea that there is a single feature, let alone a natural, non-constructed 'women's experience', that can

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view that they lived in a democracy for they were the ones who would suffer most if Aristide were deposed in a coup d'état (as indeed they have).

serve as the common ground which all women occupy. Haraway is certainly not unaware of the 'problem of essentialism' posed by appeals to standpoint epistemology. She herself notes that "[t]here is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds all women" and, further, that "[t]here is not even such a [natural, unconstructed] state as 'being' female" (155). She appeals to postmodernism as a way of making sense of identity while still recognizing the "contradictory, partial, and strategic" bases of naming and grouping practices (Haraway 155). Recognizing 'woman' as a strategic identity infuses the political into a seemingly metaphysical category, she thinks, making the identity a matter of choice rather than essence.[49]

Even if we could (and would want to) identify an essential characteristic or common experience, that would give us partial liberation at best; 'women' might be able to resist gender-based domination and discrimination but we would have no way of forging solidarity with other marginalized groups. Instead, Haraway argues, we need to forge connections through the more sharable notion of struggle because only substituting the notion of 'affinity' for 'identity' will allow us to do an end-run around the naturalization which smuggles in repressive political ideologies (109, 157).[50] Struggle is a sharable notion, in her view, because the experience of being 'othered' through exclusion from the power exercised by a dominant social group can reveal to us the affinity we have with fellow members within the group being excluded (in this case, 'women'), and the affinities it might be possible to build with other groups who have experienced similar exclusion. Attempting to ground

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[49] There is, however, another, potentially more successful way of addressing this 'essentialism' problem (and its related problem of cross-'group' appeal) which can be found in the work of Cressida Heyes. Heyes offers a reading of Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' notion that I shall take up in the next chapter as a way of making sense of both the category 'women' (her explicit focus) and the category 'musical work' (my focus). Note, though, that what Heyes and Haraway have in common is a commitment to casting identities as chosen/choosable, placing them in the realm of justification, as distinct from things that are natural and therefore need not be justified.

[50] In this appeal to struggle instead of essential characteristics, there is a similarity to avant-garde jazz: it's the performance, not the object distinguishable as a 'musical work', that matters.

ourselves and our solidarities in the notion of 'identity' will not bring about progressive social transformation, but embracing the notion of 'affinity' would seem to allow for coalition-building amongst oppressed and marginalized groups without having to ignore anti-essentialist, postmodernist insights concerning instability of identity (Haraway 155).[51]

In raising this possibility, Haraway is drawing on Chela Sandoval's postmodernist model of political identity for 'women of colour', "oppositional consciousness" (155). Sandoval positions 'women of colour' as a contested category, one which never depended on an essential criterion, but was instead formed on the basis of political kinships between Chicana and African-American women who were negated within the category of 'women' by white women and negated within the categories of 'Chicano' and 'African-American' by their male counterparts (Haraway 155-6). Women of colour develop their oppositional consciousness, Sandoval claims, by virtue of being refused "stable membership in the social categories of race, sex, or class" while being subjected to the exercise of power by those who do have the privilege of such stable membership (Haraway 155). This experience of social disenfranchisement encourages the building of skills for surviving and resisting this exercise of power, and it is this set of resistant skills and strategies that Haraway is appealing to in her endorsement of 'affinity' coalitions (155).

However, in the attempt to structure "affinities instead of identities" (Haraway 113), to focus on shared struggles instead of distinguishing and differentiating features, we need to bear in mind that the interpretive effort required to structure these affinities provides a new locus of responsibility. Feminist standpoint epistemology has something to teach us in aesthetics – that how we interpret the art we are experiencing will depend in part on the value framework we bring to the experience – but, with respect to improvisation, the reverse

[51] Grounding solidarity in struggle, shared experience, rather than shared identity conditions would seem to endorse a performative account of community, an account that I examine in greater detail in chapter four.

is also true. What we can learn from identity formation in improvisation can also teach us about how identities are formed within social and political relations.[52] Interpretations are not 'natural', not 'just there' in a text or situation: "The most straightforward readings of any text are also situated arguments about fields of meaning and fields of power" (Haraway 114). Thus, to rearticulate the point of my earlier discussions in this chapter, even formalism is implicated in the web of non-natural, constructed interpretations, despite its pretensions to being a theory one can 'read off' the artwork – one of the very reasons we should subject it to critical scrutiny. A formalist view appeals to a fixed notion of identity and presents the features of the work as 'natural' or 'objective' units of meaning, rather than acknowledging that it too (formalism) is the product of value commitments existing prior to its articulation as theory. This pretence that its context is value-neutral allows formalism to appear universally applicable, much like the standpoint of perfect (scientific) objectivity.

This objectivity is problematic because it collapses into the omniscient, universal standpoint, "the one code that translates all meaning perfectly" (Haraway 176). This is the basis of Haraway's quarrel with scientific objectivity, and mine with aesthetic universalism; a disembodied objectivity tempts us to believe that we could have infinite vision, an all-encompassing perspective. By contrast, the 'situated knowledges' of feminist standpoint epistemology refer to a doctrine of *embodied* objectivity, which calls for both a sensitivity to the likelihood that complexity and difference within a situation (especially power-charged difference) may generate contradictions, and a healthy suspicion of easy resolutions to those contradictory moments (Haraway 109-11). In discussing situated knowledges, Haraway takes up the question of how to have an intersubjectivity that recognizes the "radical

[52] This issue of how identities are formed within improvisation, and the aesthetic and political significance we should therefore ascribe to improvisatory music, is the focus of my discussion in chapter four.

historical contingency" of knowledge claims and also aims at developing accounts of a 'real world' into which is built "a postmodern insistence on irreducible difference" (187).

This examination of what a sensitive, sophisticated intersubjectivity consists in is basically an analysis of how we can have pluralism without relativism. Setting up the choice as between a totalized, monolithic objectivity and an 'anything goes' relativism is a false dichotomy because, as far as Haraway is concerned, relativism is "a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally" (191). What this 'being nowhere and everywhere equally' amounts to, however, is nothing more than a denial of responsibility for the positions we take and a refusal to subject them to critical enquiry (Haraway 191). Instead of relativism, Haraway recommends that we learn to get comfortable with the conception of knowledge that standpoint epistemology offers us: knowledge that is partial, always incomplete, always constructed, and always situated in a value-laden context (191). The benefit we receive from adopting this understanding of knowledge is one of political solidarity; standpoint epistemology makes it possible "to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another" (Haraway 193).

Haraway says she is arguing for "politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (195). Partiality is sought "for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible" (Haraway 196). And while it might seem that I have strayed in this section from the topic of this chapter – how attention to practices reveals defects in theories used to explain them – in fact, my purpose in discussing situated knowledges has also been to show how practices (in this case, critical practices of feminist standpoint epistemology) can reveal biases in theories. The partiality of situated knowledges, with all of its possibilities for open dialogue, shared experience, and

solidarity, is a critical/theoretical tool which would seem to function best within a pluralist framework of aesthetic discourses and practices, a framework capable of incorporating competing and complementary theories, all subject to the critical review which is one of its central commitments. Thus, while the next two chapters will explore a more fluid identity for musical works and a performative account of improvisatory aesthetics, they will also build to chapter five's argument that we need to be pluralists in aesthetics.

3
What a Musical Work Could Be

When philosophy of music is understood as one way of doing philosophy of art, one in which music is the paradigmatic art to be theorized, it takes on something of an oppositional character. That is, philosophy of music presents itself as a challenge to dominant approaches in philosophy of art, those which theorize art-making practices and aesthetic experiences through a focus on visual representation. When it is viewed, however, as a distinct domain for philosophical investigation, like philosophy of law or philosophy of biology, we can see that philosophy of music suffers from the very defect it challenges in philosophy of art discussions more generally. This defect is the presumption, at the general level, that we can know everything philosophically valuable about the arts through examination of a single type of art-making, and at the level of music in particular, that we can know the philosophically valuable in music through examination of a single type of music-making or music theory. Conventional theorizing in philosophy of music (even today, when we presumably know better) has a disturbing tendency to take a privileged object of a dominant culture, Western 'classical' music, as its standard and to base its claims and conclusions about what music/good music is on a culturally-situated ontology that is presented, implicitly or explicitly, as a universal ontology.

In the first section of this chapter, I show how general worries about essentialism which have been critically examined within gender theory and critical race theory can be extended into philosophy of music in a way that has real implications for the lived

experience of those whose projects are devalued under essentialist views. If we continue to carve music up into discrete entities amenable to analysis in intellectual property disputes (that is, if we are going to hold on to the notion 'musical work'), then, I claim, we need a concept flexible enough to permit pluralistic, cross-cultural analysis. I argue the need for a more relaxed concept through examination of a recent intellectual property case, *Newton v. Diamond et al.*, and offer a critique drawn from anticolonial and postcolonial thought of the culturally-situated assumptions which are evident in the judgement.

In the second section, I outline some commonly-held compositional views of musical works, using Nelson Goodman's formalist/nominalist theory and Jerry Levinson's quasi-Platonic contextualist theory as representative examples. I present both of these theories as examples of theories in which claims about musical works legitimize a conflation of cultural dominance and universality, although I shall ultimately endorse elements of Goodmanian and Levinsonian views in my reformulation of the notion 'musical work' into a 'contextualized nominalism' consistent with music-making in a performative paradigm.

This reformulation is sketched in the third section, where I show what a relaxed concept of the musical work might look like by reworking Goodman's notion along the lines of recent feminist work on Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' theorizing. Because of this possibility of reformulating commonly-held views so that their theoretical focus is shifted from composition to performance, my analysis here becomes an opportunity to show how we might move from preoccupation with essences to respect for practices.

Finally, in the fourth section, I take up the question of whether a relaxed concept of the musical work is either necessary or desirable in cross-cultural or polycultural analyses.

How essentialism violates our common sense

A great deal of valuable and fruitful analysis has been conducted over the last couple of decades which has clearly demonstrated problems with essentialism in such broad areas as gender and race theory. Among the problems tackled by these analyses is essentialism's *a prioricism*, the notion that we can determine the relevant features of categories in advance of examining their potential members and subsequently classify entities as members of these categories (or not) in a rule-based fashion. Paul Gilroy's analysis of African diasporic cultures in the United States and Britain, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, mentions in passing a telling anecdote about the life of Martin Robison Delany, identified by Gilroy as one of black nationalism's originators. In 1852, the United States denied Delany the right to patent an invention that made it possible to transport locomotives over mountainous regions, and the grounds given for denying him this right were that "he was not formally a citizen of the United States" (Gilroy 21). Delany was deemed ineligible for citizenship despite the facts that he had been born in the U.S., his mother had been a free woman at his birth, and he himself possessed the status of 'free man' (Gilroy 21). He was ineligible because he was black. The fact that his racial 'identity' was sufficient to deny him his right to profit from his intellectual property, even though he satisfied what might seem to be a sufficient condition of citizenship (being born in the country), points to what I see a greater problem behind essentialism's *a prioricism*: the rules which try to predetermine conditions for membership in categories have a marked tendency to do so in ways that serve the agendas of dominant groups.

These problems, the fiction that rules laid down in advance can 'automate' classification processes and the tendency towards reinscribing privilege and oppression, are also revealed in an anecdote that Anne Fausto-Sterling uses as a way in to her discussion of

intersexuality and sexual multiplicity in "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough." Fausto-Sterling describes the problem faced by the electoral committee overseeing an 1843 election in Salisbury, Connecticut when they were asked to validate the right of one of the town's residents to vote (33). The context for their decision was a local election in which the Whigs, if Levi Suydam's vote were counted, would win by one vote. Suydam's vote was being contested because of charges that 'he' displayed more (stereotypically) female characteristics than male, so a doctor was called in to determine Suydam's sexual 'identity'. In the course of the medical examination, the doctor, William James Barry, determined that Suydam had a penis and, on grounds of that alone, pronounced the voter male – hence, the vote was valid, counted, and decisive of the election. This despite the fact that Suydam also had a vagina, menstruated regularly, and had characteristically feminine build and propensities (Fausto-Sterling 33-4).

In both of these cases, it is quite likely that the decisions would have been otherwise if classificatory decision-making had not been warped in favour of white skin and penises. Delany, as an inhabitant of the United States, would have been acknowledged as a citizen and could have exercised his patent rights. Suydam, as a mostly-'woman', would have been denied his/her voting rights. What they share, as examples, is relevant context which provides grounds for a different answer than the one given above in each case, each predetermined by the *a prioricism* and bias of essentialist approaches to racial and sexual identity. And, as I shall show in my discussion of *Newton v. Diamond et al.* later in this section, this relevant context, *a prioricism*, and bias is also evident in legal decision-making that is grounded in philosophy of music.

Precisely because the most commonly-held views on musical works are informed by a theory of notation which presents Western classical music conventions (or, in George

Lewis' terms, 'Eurological' traditions) as the standard, the most obvious challenges to them are those drawn from non-European cultural traditions. These standard views are challenged by practices which reveal the cultural boundedness and embeddedness of values and criteria presented, within the standard views, as universal. Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art*, for example, situates the arts within a general theory of symbols, presenting the diverse conventions of, for example, pictorial representation and musical notation as "nonverbal symbol systems" which act on our understanding (xi). On Goodman's theory, the symbol system governing music plays a crucial role in fixing the identity of musical works. This symbol system is, in essence, the (non-natural) language in which scores are written, the set of notational conventions that have evolved within Eurological traditions of Western classical music. Goodman's claim about the primacy of notation in identifying the musical work – it is the score, after all, that determines what counts as a compliant performance, and it is the compliant performances, as a class, that are the 'musical work' (*Languages of Art* 186) – is not, perhaps, knee-jerk Eurocentrism, but it is Eurocentrism just the same because its criterion for evaluation of musical traditions, effectiveness of musical notation, is indexed to the self-same formalist tradition that Goodman wants to privilege. One might seek to diminish the force of this charge by observing that Goodman's figured bass/free cadenza discussion (183-4) demands from us recognition that "the language of musical scores is not purely notational but divides into notational subsystems" and arguing, from there, that this notion of subsystems can encompass culturally-influenced differences in notational conventions. However, as the following example concerning James Newton's intellectual property rights seeks to demonstrate, any argument rich enough to take account of these differences in a non-biased fashion (one that does not subordinate non-Western conventions to the 'standard' of Western notation) would seem to have to deviate from what

Goodman identifies as the constitutive features of Western classical works (those that are scored in accordance with a non-natural language symbol system). The musical conventions (notational and otherwise) that have arisen in jazz are effective enough to ensure that the same piece could be performed repeatedly. Why would we say, then, that this is not sufficient to produce a musical work? And isn't this precisely what we are saying if we claim, with Goodman, that Eurological notation (as he defines it) is required to identify musical works[1] (186)? Given a characterization of Eurological conventions as "standard musical notation" (Goodman 179) and the cultural situation of "that paradigm of a musical work" (Levinson 64), we might well expect standard views (both Goodmanian formalism and Levinsonian contextualism, for instance) to prove inadequate in cross-cultural applications.

A recent U.S. court case, *Newton v. Diamond et al.*, was an intellectual property rights battle in which the judge rendering the decision was clearly guided by the kind of score-work relation that Goodman endorses. The case involved a six-and-a-half-second fragment of a performance of a flute composition ("Choir"), written and performed by African-American flautist James Newton and sampled by the Beastie Boys. The sample, looped throughout their song "Pass the Mic," was deemed by the court to consist of three sung notes, C-D^{b}-C, and a C played on the flute. At issue was the question of whether the sampled portion of "Choir" constitutes a protected element of the musical work such that the Beastie Boys'

[1] Posing this question about why we might say that a given piece is not a musical work requires some clarification. If the thing of which we speak is a performance and we are following Goodman's theory, then of course it is not a work. For Goodman, no single performance, even of a fully notated piece of Western classical music, is a work. But, in the discussion that follows, I am not using the term 'musical work' in a way that attempts to be faithful to Goodmanian theory; instead, I am following the common parlance as it is reflected in legal precedent (that "generic sound" which Judge Manella deems to be protected by copyright). I shall have more to say in the final section of this chapter about the historical situatedness of the term 'musical work' and the advisability of applying it across music-making traditions.

failure to obtain the composer's permission was an infringement of Newton's copyright.[2] Citing case law and legal analysis published in law reviews, Judge Nora Manella interpreted copyright protection (as it pertains to musical works) as covering only "the generic sound that would necessarily result from any performance of the piece" (*Newton v. Diamond* 5). Hence, in her view, the issue of infringement is fully determined by the notation contained in the score.[3] Because Newton's score did not contain notation for all of the elements present in the performance, the judge's consideration of the work mirrored Goodman's distinction between constitutive features (protected elements) and mere aesthetic features (what the court referred to as "musical subtleties"). Judge Manella conceded that these 'subtleties', such as Newton's distinctive overblowing technique,[4] may be original, and thus protected, but because they were not notated, they could be protected only under sound recording copyright (for which permission had been received), not under composition copyright. For this reason, the judge found that the piece, as scored, "cannot be protected, as it is not original as a matter of law" (*Newton v. Diamond* 8).

But, as Newton makes clear in an open letter circulated widely on jazz-related internet sites, "Choir," being "a modern approach to a spiritual," is scored in accordance with conventions used in African-American diasporic (Afrological) musics.[5] It is notated more simply than a Western classical music composition would be because of the oral tradition from which spirituals originate. Newton points out that he quite deliberately and quite consistently employs notational conventions appropriate to the cultural tradition in

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[2] Both parties stipulated that rights to copy the sound recording of the performance had been obtained from ECM Records (to whom Newton had licensed the recording). Thus the claim of copyright infringement involved the composition only.

[3] The score in this case calls for the flute to play the C above middle C, while the performer sings the same C, ascends to D-flat, then returns to C; no time signature or key signature are notated.

[4] 'Overblowing' is a technique used by players to produce the flute's upper harmonics. Newton's 'failure' to notate his particular way of achieving this effect was considered by the judge to be reason enough to dismiss it as a performative curiosity.

[5] James Newton, open letter, www.onlisareinsradar.com/archives/000034.php.

which he is composing and offers as evidence a Ravel-influenced track ("The Neser"), which appears on the same album as "Choir," the score for which is fully notated using Western classical conventions. His attention to cultural context was, he charges, ignored by the judge who uncritically made her judgement by reference to "European paradigms" (Newton, "open letter"). In an interview with Willard Jenkins, Newton expresses his belief that "this case is about people having the right to be protected by law when they speak in their own tongues."[6]

In any discussion of the Newton case, I think it is important to recognize the *a prioricism* and cultural bias of the legal decision, as well as the relevant context which might persuade us to acknowledge as original (protected) the sound fragment that is part of Newton's distinct musical work (that relevant context being Newton's own contextualism in his composing/notating practices).[7] Let me now raise a concern that is related to the right asserted by Newton to speak in his own voice: the repression/erasure that takes place at the level of cultural tradition when we enshrine a single culturally-situated aesthetic theory as the framework within which the practices of all traditions are to be judged.[8] The Afrological

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[6] James Newton, interview with Willard Jenkins, www.africana.com/DailyArticles/index_20020906.htm. This claim, that Newton's Afrological music-making practices put him outside the protection of the law, suggests that we could perhaps see him as a modern version of Martin Robison Delany. Delany was denied his citizenship, and therefore his patent rights, because of his racial identity; Newton was denied his right of ownership over his own musical composition because of his commitment to cultural authenticity in composition. In both cases, the law failed to adequately protect the rights of African-Americans: in the first, because it did not recognize African-Americans as full persons; in the second, because it did not recognize the cultural distinctiveness of an African-American music-making tradition (spirituals).

[7] The problem in this case was that, on an analysis of the scored elements only, the fragment of *Choir* cannot be differentiated from any other instance of three sung notes, C-D^{b}-C, and a C played on an instrument, therefore it is surely not original. Thus the sample in "Pass the Mic" cannot be proven to infringe on Newton's compositional rights.

[8] Given what I have said so far, my reference here to 'aesthetic theory' (rather than 'ontological theory') might seem misleading or confused. It is true that theorizing about musical works is, strictly speaking, ontology but these ontologies have aesthetic implications and complementary aesthetic theories emerge once discussion shifts – as it clearly did in the Newton judgement – from 'existence' (the shared sound structure of Newton's fragment and the Beastie Boys' sample) to 'value' (the 'originality' test which the judge found Newton fails to satisfy). I shall have more to say on the topic of ontological-aesthetic links in the next section.

traditions in which Newton's "Choir" is most appropriately located, for instance, are traditions in which artistic expression and cultural context have a quite different relationship than that manifested in Eurological traditions. Working from Eurological traditions, Judge Manella's summary judgement in the Newton case found that "a musical composition consists of rhythm, harmony, and melody," and the originality of the work is to be determined with reference to these elements only (5). While the adoption of theories which limit analysis to the formal elements of work may have liberated artistic expression within Eurological traditions – the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' having been a crucial move in the struggle to free European and American artists from the control of government censors and social moralists, as I noted in the previous chapter – in (diasporic) Afrological traditions, social values internal to the culture have not historically been used to suppress the artist's voice. Rather, in the wake of Amiri Baraka's *Blues People*, historical treatments of African-American music have acknowledged the role of the artist's voice in keeping alive social and cultural values that were suppressed as a result of the enslavement of African peoples in the 'New World'. Baraka himself calls these Afrological musics "a body of music that ... had to survive, expand, reorganize, continue, and express itself, as the fragile property of a powerless and oppressed People" (ix). Imposing on this tradition theories which privilege formal elements of artworks[9] (be it for identification of works or evaluation of merit) serves not to liberate its art but to obscure, perhaps even eradicate, its cultural heritage.[10]

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[9] My worry here is not about 'formal elements' or 'formalist' theories *per se*; it is a worry about any theory which can rip artworks out of their context and present them as amenable to stand-alone analysis.

[10] I am referring here to the Adornian claim that folk music is an inherently conservative tradition (both in the practices it licenses and in the worldview it endorses) and that, therefore, any musical products derived from it are incapable of meeting the requirement of originality that is a necessary condition of (good) art music. If one understands this point as applicable only in the context of European music, Adorno has a certain plausibility on his side: Schoenberg's music would seem to have a greater claim to originality than, say, the German folksong "Muß i' denn." However, transporting this dichotomy of folk music and art music into other cultural traditions and arguing that social liberation (the goal served by meaningful and expressive – i.e., formally coherent and original – musical compositions) cannot ever be achieved or

Lest charges that it devalues non-Eurological works and suppresses non-Eurological traditions not be considered serious enough reasons to question the compositional view of the musical work that Manella is enshrining in law, let me offer a further observation along the lines of 'multiple realizability' arguments. Consider the elements of Eurological theory. Chief among them is *notation*, which is essential for the historical tradition, and on Goodman's view, essential for fixing identity of a musical work (by being the symbol scheme that governs compliant performances). And there is the importance to the tradition of the *canon*, in this case, the Western classical music canon. Both of these elements give meaning to a work because, as Jerry Levinson notes, only locating the work relative to its socio-historical context will reveal fully its artistic and aesthetic features.[11] In this way the musical tradition legitimizes the musical works. However, Eurological traditions are not the only ones that exist. And neither notational systems nor canons are intrinsically valuable; they are mere contingent manifestations of that tradition. Given that other musical traditions (Afrological, for instance) exist and flourish, we have reason to believe that they are performatively equivalent. While features may differ from tradition to tradition (including the desiderata of musical works that, as we shall see, Levinson seeks to capture), music can be made within all of them. So why think that Western classical music is the only framework that can transmit norms which legitimize music (as 'musical works')? That is, why think, following Goodman, that only Eurological traditions can find answers to the question of

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facilitated through folk music in any tradition amounts to nothing more than cultural myopia. There are clearly social liberating and culturally progressive consequences for a musical tradition which includes spirituals like "Go Down, Moses" and protest songs like "Strange Fruit." And the benefit of this folk tradition 'conservatism' for marginalized and dispossessed people can be seen even more clearly in staged events like the 10th anniversary National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (CBC television, 7 April 2003) which presented its appeal for a sense of community identity amongst First Nations peoples through depictions and descriptions of a shared heritage and through celebrations of its progressive achievements.

[11] I have in mind here the kinds of qualities Levinson cites in "What a Musical Work Is," like "Lizst-influenced" (71). In this Levinson is applying to music Arthur Danto's observation that art and non-art cannot be distinguished from each other solely by reference to qualities that we can see (or hear) in the work; context is needed also, a theoretical backdrop that Danto calls an "artworld."

what a musical work is?[12] And why think, following Levinson, that only Eurological theory is interested in having this conversation about musical ontology? What do we gain when we draw lines and boundaries around the data from which we theorize in such a way that it traces historical boundaries of cultural privilege and dominance?

The compositional view of musical works

Having built up the problems, let me turn now to the theories for which they are problematic. Recall that the score is crucial to Nelson Goodman because, for him, the musical work is the class of performances which comply with it exactly. This notion of the musical work, a set of performances complying with the fixed, notated score, is a type of nominalism that philosopher of language Jonathan Cohen labels 'stipulative nominalism' (Cohen, "Nominalism and Transference"). What makes it nominalist is that the 'musical work' is nothing above and beyond its instances. What makes Goodman's notion stipulative in Cohen's view is that the 'rules of association' (musical notation) which connect a label to its extension are "nothing more than precepts handed down from unknown sources" (Cohen, "Nominalism and Transference"), both arbitrary and rigid. But, as I shall show later, the hidden value of Goodman's nominalist account is the way it ultimately allows performativity to come to the fore in discussions of 'the musical work'.

Because, in Goodman's view, scores encode differentiation and disjunction of works within a common system (Eurological notation),[13] "every score, as a score, has the logically

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[12] One might respond to this question by observing that the concept 'musical work' is embedded in European cultural traditions and that this cultural embeddedness is what gives Eurological theories the right to say definitively what constitutes a musical work. This is an argument which could be produced out of the analysis offered by Lydia Goehr in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*. However, as I note in footnote 1, I address this argument and the possibility of cross-cultural uses for the concept in the final section of this chapter.

[13] This governing relation of score to musical work, the class of all performances compliant with the score (Goodman 173), is ensured by the notational system, and the fact of the notational system having satisfied

prior office of identifying a work" (128). Goodman contends that identity should be such that the work is fully recoverable from either a score or a performance: given a score, one could produce a compliant performance; given a performance, one could transcribe the score (178). In any case, the preservation of the identity of a musical work is inextricably tied to the preservation of (or ability to reconstruct) the score. Assigning to the score the function of authoritative identification leads Goodman to the conclusion for which he has been so frequently ridiculed within the philosophical community: that a dull, uninspired, yet error-free, performance of a score counts as an instance of the musical work in question while a brilliant and moving performance which contains a single deviation from the score (say, a single note played 'incorrectly') does not (186). Although Goodman easily recognizes and freely admits the extent to which this conclusion violates both common practice and common sense, he sees this violation as preferable to the alternative, that performances differing by only one note can be of the same work. If we allow that the performance with a

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the five requirements of Goodman's theory of notation (178). The first two requirements are syntactic and pertain to the existence of a symbol scheme only, not the existence of a symbol system. (As Goodman defines them in *Languages of Art*, a 'symbol scheme' differs from a 'symbol system' in that 'schemes' are classes of utterances, inscriptions, or marks (characters) accompanied by rules of combination by which new characters may be formed (131) whereas 'systems' encompass both the symbols that the schemes comprise and their interpretations (40n).) Syntactic disjointness concerns identity of characters (defined as classes of inscriptions or marks (Goodman 131)) and requires that each individual mark or inscription must belong to one character only in order for that character to be distinct from all other characters (Goodman 133). In musical notation, for example, a given mark cannot be both a 'quarter note' and an 'eighth note' but must be one or the other, in order for 'quarter notes' and 'eighth notes' to qualify as characters in the notational scheme. Syntactic finite differentiation concerns identity of the marks (or inscriptions or utterances) belonging to characters and demands that it be at least theoretically possible for us to determine that a given mark is either a 'quarter note' or an 'eighth note' (Goodman 135-6). Having satisfied these two requirements, a symbol scheme becomes a symbol system when correlated with a field of reference (Goodman 143), the addition of which imposes the three semantic requirements (*if* the system is to count as notational). Semantic unambiguity requires that both the character and its inscriptions have the same compliance class (pick out the same 'object in the world') regardless of difference in time period or context such that the character 'eighth note' and its inscriptions (♪) both have a fixed, determinate meaning within the scheme of musical notation (Goodman 148). Semantic disjointness demands that no two characters have any compliant in common, that 'eighth notes' and 'quarter notes' do not share the same sonic 'time value' (Goodman 151-2). Finally, semantic finite differentiation requires that determination that the 'object' (compliance class) belongs to one character or another is theoretically possible (Goodman 152). Only if, and to the extent that, these requirements are met can the score fulfill its primary function of authoritatively identifying the work across performances (Goodman 128).

single error nevertheless counts as an instance of the work, we are, he thinks, threatening the identity of the work because "by a series of one-note errors of omission, addition, and modification, we can go all the way from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* to *Three Blind Mice*" (Goodman 187). He further argues, *reductio ad absurdum*, that allowing performative deviations in constitutive features (those prescribed by the score) risks the consequence that all performances are of the same work (Goodman 186).

If this relation of scores and performances (in which a score determines the class of compliant performances) does not hold, Goodman worries we will have no way of establishing the identity of the work across performances of it (129).[14] For this reason, he is committed to the formalist claim that the constitutive properties of a performance of a musical work are those prescribed in the score (Goodman 117). But it's worth pausing here for a moment to ask ourselves why notation is primary. Do we want to commit ourselves to a view in which instances of musicing without a score (that is, fully improvised performances) cannot create musical works? In fact, if we ask ourselves what the function of a score is, it seems reasonable to say that scores are instructions for the performance of works. Surely we don't want to privilege instructions for doing something over the thing itself?

But not all mainstream theorizing accords such a definitive role to texts. Another type of compositional view, Jerry Levinson's contextualist account of what a musical work is,

[14] Note that this problem arises only if we accept that identity of a musical work rests on a bidirectionality of score and performance class such that the score determines what counts as instances of the work and instances of the work (performances) have the power to alter the score (which is why it is so important that only correct performances qualify as instances). If we accept this bidirectionality, then allowing that a 'one-wrong-note' performance belongs in the compliance class must require the transcription of a new score. Goodman's contention that the role of the score is to identify the work (128) thus seems to commit him to one of two positions: either performances which belong in the compliance class which *is* the work must adhere fully to the score (the position he, in fact, holds) or deviant performances which are nonetheless deemed to belong to the compliance class force the emergence of a new score (the position he worries would lead us into the *Three Blind Mice* cul-de-sac).

locates the work in the notion of 'musical type' and seeks to explain the relationship of the work to its performances on the model of type-token relations. His use of this model to explain musical works is unremarkable; Levinson cites Nicholas Wolterstorff, Kendall Walton and Peter Kivy as all sharing a view of the musical work as a 'sound structure' type, of which correct performances are tokens ("What a Musical Work Is" 64, "What a Musical Work Is, Again" 216). Where Levinson's view differs is in his thesis that musical works are *more than* sound structures: as he explains in "What a Musical Work Is," they are 'indicated structures' in which a sound structure is joined with a parallel performance-means structure and embedded in a musico-historical context sufficient to individuate that work from all others. The complexity of this definition is warranted, in Levinson's opinion, by the need to incorporate three features that our critical and evaluative practices[15] identify as necessary conditions for musical works: creatability of works, fine individuation, and specified means of performance. The condition of fine individuation, that two works containing an identical sound structure are nonetheless distinct if a difference exists in any aspect of their respective musico-historical contexts, is presented as a non-exhaustive list of factors relevant to the unique history of the individual composer and those relevant to the general cultural climate into which the composition is introduced.

This ability to account for context is what I see as the great virtue of Levinson's account of the musical work (and it is this contextualism that I shall take up later in reformulating Goodman's nominalism). A 'contextualized nominalism' can individuate works by calling on such features as 'satisfaction of performer's intention', an advantage which should be apparent given the intellectual property discussion of the previous section

[15] Note that building a theory out from the practices of critics (rather than from performers, as I argue for in chapter two) allows for reinscription of critical bias of the kind that allowed jazz journalists to use formalism as a weapon against John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy, labelling them 'anti-jazz' in order to exclude them from the discourse of 1960s jazz.

and my analysis in chapter two of the violence that anti-intentionalism can do to politically oppositional artistic projects. We can continue, with Goodman, to apply a nominalist understanding to musical works – the work just is all of the performances collected under its title, rather than being some abstract object that has a spooky, metaphysically problematic relationship to the work's performances (and score, if any) – without worrying, as Goodman does, that we will have no way of distinguishing works which have identical sound structures. The way we would have of distinguishing them is Levinson's fine individuation: the creative context unique to each work, its socio-temporal situation, its performance history, etc. Thus we would never have judicial decisions which concern only "the generic sound that would necessarily result from any performance of the piece" (*Newton v. Diamond* 5). Newton's right of ownership to "Choir" would have been protected because his distinctive performance technique (the overblowing which the judge dismissed as a 'musical subtlety') and his compositional intentions (the decision to employ notational conventions appropriate to the oral tradition of spirituals) would have been recognized as making his work "original as a matter of law" (*Newton v. Diamond* 8).[16] Given Levinson's deliberately and radically broad conception of factors relevant to musico-historical context,[17] his contextualist account might seem to differ radically from Goodman's formalist view.

However, Levinson's decision to build his 'indicated structure' up out of culturally-situated (Eurological) desiderata and examples means that, potentially, the cross-cultural

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[16] Appealing to Levinson's fine individuation in order to distinguish works raises a problem for Newton's claim if we think that the "Choir" fragment in "Pass the Mic" is individuated from "Choir" because of its situation within a different context. I think, though, that we can resolve this problem by stressing the 'taking' aspect of sampling: it is more obviously akin to copying than it is to coincidental composition of an identical sound structure and therefore we should demand of samplers that they obtain permission from the holders of both performance and composition copyrights.

[17] Levinson deems relevant such things as "the whole of cultural, social, and political history" prior to the work's creation, "the whole of musical development" up to that point, musical influences (both general and those specific to the composer), musical styles (general and individual), the composer's oeuvre, and the musical activities of his or her contemporaries. See "What a Musical Work Is" in *Music, Art, & Metaphysics*, 69.

objections one could level at Goodman are also problems for him. From the start, Levinson is following in Goodman's steps in assuming that we can construct an adequate model of musical works from analysis of a single cultural perspective. He begins with the same Eurocentric constraint that Goodman builds into his theorizing: "that paradigm of a musical work, the fully notated 'classical' composition of Western culture" (Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is" 64-5).[18] And, although his contextualist approach is capable of more finely-grained differentiations between works than Goodman's nominalist view can manage,[19] Levinson accepts a distinction between those notated features of the sound structure which are constitutive and those which are contingent. In a later essay "What a Musical Work Is, Again," Levinson concedes that not everything in a score is prescribed (that is, constitutive of the work); some of the 'instructions' are more appropriately understood (where 'appropriate understanding' captures conventional musical practices) as recommendations for how to achieve the best performance of the work (242). Levinson also tries to reconcile Goodmanian claims with common sense in his analysis of when we have a true performance of the work. He, like Goodman, wants to limit 'instances' of a musical work to correct performances of the sound structure (which, in Levinson's theory is inextricably linked to the parallel performance-means structure), produced with reference to

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[18] He acknowledges that this limits the scope of all of his claims to the musical works of "Western culture" (65), thereby avoiding the error of positing a cultural particular as universal, but he fails to justify his choice of a Eurocentric frame of reference. Because Levinson says nothing about why or how European traditions are the best framework for our questions about musical works, the attention he then gives to Western classical examples, and the intuitions about works he thinks they prompt in us, implicitly permits these already-privileged European traditions to continue to dominate our theorizing.

[19] Levinson acknowledges that two musical works embodying the same sound structure have to be considered nonidentical wherever a case can be made that either an aesthetic or artistic difference between them exists. This is his condition of 'fine individuation' which states that: "Musical works must be such that composers composing in different musico-historical contexts who determine identical sound structures invariably compose distinct musical works" (68-73). However, his contextualism does more than just show us that identical sound structures need not be the equivalent of identical works; by including in the relevant context "the whole of musical development" (69), Levinson makes it possible for us to recognize as aesthetic features such qualities as a work being "Lizst-influenced" (71). Fine individuation distinguishes, and situates.

a (Eurologically-notated) score ("What a Musical Work Is" 86).[20] But, contends Levinson, instances are only "a subclass of the set of performances of a work" (86). An incorrect performance, one that deviates from the score by one wrong note, still counts as a performance, but is not an instance (86-7). This is Levinson's way of respecting Goodman's attempt to assure work preservation while also respecting our common sense intuitions that a single wrong note does not invalidate an otherwise brilliant performance (87). Of course, Levinson's way of reconciling Goodman and common sense serves to reinscribe all of the problematic (because culturally-situated) 'standard' properties of the score: the necessity of its existence, its priority over performances, and its identity-fixing role with respect to musical works.

In the end, what is objectionable from the standpoint of musical practices is that both Goodman and Levinson endorse a notion of musical works in which compositional elements like notation are primary, and performance is a secondary, derivative element. But, inadvertently, Goodman's account points us towards the possibility of answering the question of the identity of musical works without doing an injustice to musical practices (which, where possible, should surely be our preferred option). Consider the point that Goodman makes in his discussion of Van Meegeren paintings mistaken for Vermeers (99-112)[21] – that repeated attempts to discriminate between objects that we know *can be* distinguished can actually train and fine-tune our ability to discriminate (103). If we can learn to subtly discriminate between faked and authentic canvases, why can we not also

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[20] Note that it must be a consequence of both views that, because 'instructions' for drums are not scored in Goodman's sense, there can be no such thing as a musical work for drums.

[21] Van Meegeren was an early 20th century painter who produced canvases which he successfully passed off as Vermeer's work, fooling art-dealers and art-historians alike. He was able to sell these forged works undetected (until he finally confessed his forgery) because his canvases were enough like genuine Vermeers to warrant inclusion in what Goodman calls the "precedent-class for Vermeer" (111). After his confession, when the faked canvases had been subtracted from this precedent-class and a separate precedent-class had been established for Van Meegeren, distinguishing the faked paintings from the genuine became an easy task because both the basis and the need for comparison now existed.

explain as learned the ability to recognize the similarities in musical performances that would allow us to identify them as the 'same' work without a score as final arbiter? This is the possible reformulation I shall sketch in the next section: a 'family resemblance'-inspired model for a pluralistic and culturally sensitive musical work.

But first I want to step back a bit and say something about the merit I see in the compositional view of musical works, of which I take Goodman, Levinson, and Adorno all to be representative. Their attention, from the standpoint of the theorist, to the creative role of the composer results in an ontological commitment to the musical work as, somehow, a scoreable sound structure. This construction of a work with stable and reproducible formal elements suggests its own 'natural' aesthetic goal or standard, one to which the ontologically-committed within a tradition might aspire: an ever-increasing complexity and refinement of formal structures[22] (of, say, symphonies within Western classical music). Note that the aesthetic goal of European art-music practices *need* not be complexity, but once formal structures have been identified as the objects of interest, the challenge to set about building ever more intricate and innovative structures seems a fairly easily understandable motivation. So too does the contrary challenge seem easily motivated: playing with structure in order to develop the most stripped-down, minimalist work possible. So the strength of the theory is that, once you buy in, you have a coherent set of commitments which help you to identify the objects and determine how to value those objects. That is, once formal structure is

[22] What counts as complexity and refinement of formal structures is not fixed such that the terms ('complexity' and 'refinement') are intended to mean the same thing across traditions. Instead I mean for them to be understood relative to the time periods and movements in which composers are working. Beethoven and Schoenberg would obviously have different conceptions of what it meant to refine the formal structures with which they were working; my point here is just that an understanding of composition as concerned with structure leads to a view that innovation involves increasing intricacy and polish with respect to that structure – a sense that progress within the project involves exploration and playing out of all the possible structural permutations.

privileged ontologically, manipulations of the structure become the obvious basis for aesthetic evaluations.

But what if we're talking about something that isn't an object? What if we're making music in an improvised jazz tradition, and analysis of our practice as 'formal structure developed in real time' simply does not fit what we understand ourselves to be doing? If, as I have been insisting on throughout, we take seriously what the artists themselves say about their projects and practices, then we have to acknowledge that many improvisers reject the notion that all they are doing is composing musical structures on the spot. Instead of speaking of structured objects, they depict their improvisations as processes (of composition, even – thereby acknowledging that composition is itself a process). In the case of group improvisations, especially, these processes are characterized as dialogues or conversations amongst the performers (and include, perhaps, their audiences) which explore the nature of identity within community. This performative notion of identity-community relations and the role of improvisatory processes in constituting these relations is something that I will explore further in chapter four but, for now, I simply want to make the point that if we conceive of the music-making practices in question as producing something other than a constructed object (i.e., a process or negotiation), then we will obviously need a different theoretical framework in which to analyze its ontology and corresponding aesthetic values.

Sameness and difference in 'family resemblance'

We can get better answers to our question 'what is a musical work?' by reworking Goodman's theory in accordance with a Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' notion. When we consider what we would really be giving up by rejecting the Goodmanian account, it seems clear that identifying works through performance-compliance with the score is

nothing more than a way of fetishizing preservability. Indeed, as I have already observed, the attention to notation that characterizes Goodman's account is reflecting a tradition which, in recognizing certain 'methods of production', is in fact recording (notating) the performance practices we are trying to theorize. This shows us more fully the absurdity of the Newton case: the judgement that an under-notated score cannot be protected is clearly subordinating practice – from which notation is derived – to theory. One of philosophy of music's prevalent assumptions, one that comes out most clearly in Kivy's view, is that musical works are things which somehow exist apart from human beings, such that we have to go out into the world to discover them. This way of thinking about musical works is more than an unfortunate and ill-advised lure into the quagmire of essentialist theories. It is a morally indefensible way of detaching ourselves from our responsibility to make sure that our (constructed) cultural notions do not devalue, diminish, or otherwise harm people on whom these notions are imposed. In the case of James Newton, for instance, a counter suit by the Beastie Boys means that the court's Eurocentric bias could cost Newton, a university professor and avant-garde musician, the house that he and his family live in.

But of course the question we are then left with is: what ought to take the place of the commonly-held 'musical work' concept? What I propose is that we reject one part of Goodman's view and accept the other part: sever the requirement of work-score compliance from that of the class of performances. The class of performances is the part worth keeping because, as I noted earlier in discussion of Goodman, the hidden value of his account is its ability to redirect us towards the primacy of performances. If this, the class of performances, is what we retain from Goodman's nominalism, then the only place from which we can possibly derive the work is out of the performances (rather than deriving performances out of the work, as work-score compliance would have us do). We can afford

to take a more relaxed view of identity – a view more like 'family resemblance' – if we adopt an emphasis on the performance itself, the *doing*, as constitutive of a fluid 'work'[23] and de-emphasize the notions of documentation/notation and compliance of 'doings' to instructions for doing.

This is really just application of common sense, because we already know – even the least musically sophisticated of us – that there is a similarity (in sound structure) between the Rodgers and Hammerstein version of "My Favorite Things" and John Coltrane's Atlantic recording of the tune. The Broadway show tune and the Coltrane improvisation on it are *related.* Coltrane's *Olatunji* and *Live at the Village Vanguard Again!* recordings are also related, but more closely; they, like the Atlantic recording, are both Coltrane's improvisations on "My Favorite Things" so their resemblances flow beyond sound structure to contextual elements like performers' intentions. The relations between these Coltrane variations are such that I think we could say of them – the *Olatunji*, the *Vanguard*, the Atlantic, and others – equally that they are variations on *the same work* or that they are each distinct works which can be grouped together in a sub-category (John Coltrane's improvisations on "My Favorite Things") and then placed in the larger category: versions (related works) of "My Favorite Things." To say they are variations of the same work (which is my preference) is admittedly a loose way of speaking, casually reminding us of the general point that the artist matters to the work, and of the particular point that this artist chose to name all of these variations "My Favorite Things." As such, the casual, imprecise way of putting the point may not always be the best choice for fine-grained discussions of relation and identity but neither is it obviously

[23] This dependence of the work on performances is likely to raise the standard objection 'what is the status of a never-performed score?' My intuition is that a never-performed score *is* deficient – at best a potential work – that the property of 'having being performed' is indeed important to a fully-alive work. However, the possibility that it may one day be performed is enough to situate it at the horizon of the category 'musical work' in the same way that, as Wittgenstein observes, a yet-to-be-invented game can still be alluded to in discussions of what a 'game' is.

wrong. Relaxed views of identity can operate at the 'face value' level that nominalism demands (Coltrane's *Olatunji*, *Vanguard*, and Atlantic recordings are all "My Favorite Things") without falling into the trap Goodman fears – that we will have no way of distinguishing between works. It can avoid this trap precisely because of the addition of Levinson's contextualism. Provided that contextualism too is refocused away from its preoccupation with composition, this addition to a reworked nominalism allows us to distinguish Coltrane's variations from the Rodgers and Hammerstein version through differentiating works by reference to performers and performative context. Fine individuation also allows us to be more precise, if we wish, and further distinguish variations within works by reference to their performative context. This is what I mean by 'contextualized nominalism'.

A ground-breaking example of how 'family resemblance' can function as a relaxed identity notion, consistent with the reworking of Goodman's notion I have just sketched, can be found in the work of political philosopher Cressida Heyes. Heyes' attempt to navigate between essentialized identities and the anti-essentialist stance which might seem to invalidate any use of identity categories takes note of the fact about language that we need to be able to make generalizations *somehow* if we are to engage in feminist political discourses (7-9, 91) – or any other politically-inflected discourses, for that matter. Her proposal is that we appropriate Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance in order to describe the category 'women' without falling into the trap of positing a necessary condition shared by all members of the category.

Heyes begins this reworking of Wittgenstein's analysis by quoting the analogy he makes between numbers and the spinning of thread: "the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping

of many fibres" (*Philosophical Investigations* §67, quoted in Heyes 87). Similarly, she articulates a notion of the category 'women' which depends on conventional usage practices and the overlapping similarities in the way terms are used. We can see the label (women) as properly applying to persons who make claims of biology (having given birth, for example), to persons who perform the gender we suppose 'woman' represents (performed femininity), to persons who articulate the perspective of gender-based oppression (political womanhood? sisterhood?) (Heyes 88). Webs of similarities can be extended from any of these individuals to other persons similarly situated by virtue of, for example, cultural upbringing or social positioning. In this way, she argues, we can extend the conceptual category without making the essentialist demand (or assumption) that there is any one thing all women share (Heyes 91). By linking each member to another member she clearly resembles in some way, it can account for even those most privileged women (wealthy white European or American women, for example) who may not, in any way that makes sense of the term 'struggle', live lives which could be characterized as oppositional to the existing power structure of their time and place. Using resemblance as a series of iterative moves, we can map different similarities as we move from one case, to a second, to a third, without demanding that the first and the third share any common feature.

Again, we can see here the parallel that I noted in the beginning of this chapter, between the worries about essentialism that drive projects in ontologies of race and gender and the worries that have been motivating my attempt to work out a 'contextualized nominalism' view in musical ontology. Heyes makes her 'family resemblance' move for the same reason that I wish to make mine. We both question the value of any theory which forces the reduction of real life into tidy fictions. The essentialist project of defining 'women' founders because attempts to find a single property shared by all who claim that

gender identity will invariably end up either arbitrarily and repressively ruling out some who feel they have a legitimate claim to the label, or holding onto vague, empty slogans. The formalist project of defining 'the musical work' fails because it reduces the richness of performance to documentation of performance instructions. A feminist 'family resemblance' and a 'contextualized nominalism' both recognize that we can step away from obsessive cataloguing of necessary and sufficient conditions and work with less strictly policed notions.

We can do this because of the ways in which we use some words such that different objects to which we apply them share similarities to some of the other objects gathered under the same term, even though all objects do not share a common property. Heyes takes up Wittgenstein's famous use of the term 'game' to elucidate this point about unbounded categories: in this way, board-games, card-games, Olympic games, and games that have not yet been invented can all find a places within the term (96). Since we often choose to leave categories unbounded so that newly-recognized related instances can be easily incorporated, the choice to bound a category, 'women' for instance, is revealed as a political act, not an epistemological one (Heyes 102). The significance of this relinquishing of the epistemological (knowing the ontology), in favour of the political (pragmatically employing the category), is that it requires us to see our use of terms as contingent (108) and, therefore, in need of justification (97). "What matters," says Heyes, "is that you look and see whether or not you have drawn the boundary self-consciously. Sometimes the boundary is oppressive; sometimes it acts as the object of comparison" (89). Which is to say, sometimes boundaries draw lines that reinforce privilege and oppression, and sometimes those lines are more benign, simply demarcating categories so that they can be compared and contrasted. As we can see, just within this discussion, drawing a boundary between Coltrane's "My

Favorite Things" and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things" permits us to make more finely-grained differentiations between Coltrane's variations. Drawing a boundary around James Newton's "Choir" and the Beastie Boys' "Pass the Mic" (such that the fragment of the former on which the latter is built can be dismissed as an unoriginal, therefore unprotectable, generic 'move' in music) permits a mainstream band on a major recording label to exploit the work of a relatively unknown avant-garde performer.

Heyes' endorsement of the Wittgensteinian principle that meaning (of terms) is constructed through our use of these terms rather than being fixed *a priori* through appeal to a common 'essence' (92) holds promise for a similar attempt to elucidate the term 'musical work'. In the particular case of John Coltrane's successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things," Goodman's definition of musical works cannot provide any basis for thinking that his improvisations are the same work, or variations on the same work. If we think, for instance, that a work must be scored in advance of its compliant performances[24] (in order to exclude improvisations), then only the original Rodgers and Hammerstein piece counts as "My Favorite Things," and none of Coltrane's versions are 'of that work.' If we take a slightly more liberal view, Goodman's theory may be able to say, as I did earlier, that Coltrane's Atlantic recording is a version of "My Favorite Things," a related work, on the grounds that the similarity of sound-structure might generate a similar transcription (assuming the use of standard Eurological notation).[25] But, even on this liberal view of

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[24] Note that this formulation breaks down into two separate theses, both of which are held, and could be held, independently of each other: (1) in order to instance a 'musical work' a score must be composed in advance of any performance, or (2) in order to be an instance of a 'musical work' a performance must comply exactly with the score. If we think (1), Coltrane could not have improvised a work. If we think (2), Coltrane could not have performed the Rodgers and Hammerstein work. If we hold both of these theses, then, of course, we have the greater problem of explaining what Coltrane was doing at all.

[25] By 'similar' I mean the comparative transcriptions of the Broadway tune and Coltrane's Atlantic recording that have been analyzed in terms of chord changes. To anyone familiar with the jazz tradition of improvising upon standards, Coltrane's Atlantic reworking is similar enough to the Broadway standard, in terms of its chord changes and melodic structure, to be easily recognizable.

conventional musical ontology, we are left with the problem of later improvisations (those we can find on the *Vanguard* and *Olatunji* recordings, for instance). They share very little of what could be considered the original/notated sound-structure, so how could they be the same work? And yet, Coltrane clearly intended more than mere homonymy when he labelled each of these performances "My Favorite Things." If nothing else, we can hear his intention to unify all of these performances within the category of 'the same work' in the later improvisations' quotations of the Atlantic recording. So endorsing Wittgenstein here, on the family resemblance point, allows us to explain how different performances can be (variations of) the same work by pointing to overlapping similarities between them.[26] And, on the 'meaning is constructed through use' point, we can justify the claim that Coltrane meant each improvisation as a performance of "My Favorite Things" by pointing to his deliberate use of the same label for each of the performances.

We could just dismiss Coltrane's intentions, claiming that his attempts to improvise upon a work and present those improvisations as instances of the same work are misguided and wrong. But this is precisely the distortion of practice by theory which I am objecting to throughout this dissertation. And, in my view, this dismissal would also be an instance of the kind of politically-driven theorizing that feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway objects to: it *is* the product of 'political'/cultural bias (in its privileging of European art traditions) but it pretends to be an objective analysis of failure (in this case, Coltrane's; in the first section, Newton's failure) to conform to what the musical work *really* is.[27] This is why

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[26] The sorts of similarities I have in mind here are broad-ranging ones. I want to include not just quotations of sound structure but also the kinds of similarities one might identify within a framework of Levinsonian contextualism: similarities with respect to aesthetic attention to tone colour over harmonic function, influence of other musical traditions (e.g., the inspiration Coltrane drew from the Indian raga tradition), and use of performers in specific roles (e.g., Coltrane's reliance on his pianist rather than his drummer to provide a rhythmic line).

[27] Haraway; see, in particular, chapters 2 and 3 of *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*: "The Past is the Contested Zone," 21-42; and "The Biological Enterprise," 43-68.

the question of what a musical work is matters: as long as evaluative discussions take place, in courtrooms or in classrooms, concepts like 'musical work' will be used to clarify the issues under discussion. If these concepts are not adequately scrutinized for cross-cultural sensitivity, they have the potential, as Heyes noted, to function repressively (89). In exactly the same way that essential definitions of 'women' exclude, and delegitimize, members who do not express the characteristic(s) this definition privileges, so formalist definitions of the musical work rely on conditions that delegitimize deviations from an exclusionary norm.

If, on the other hand, we take up the principle of 'meaning through use' which Heyes endorses, then we can side-step the effort to fix definitions in advance of the deployment of terms. Insofar as musical works are concerned, this allows us to see that 'identity' can be constructed through performance (so that we can come to know what Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" is through experience of the different improvisations), and it frees us to move towards this 'contextualized nominalism' model of identifying musical works. Constructing identity through performance means, of course, that every new improvisation will change the boundaries of the work – that is, will give rise to a new compliance class, retaining all the previous performances and adding the new one. If the compositional paradigm that governs Eurological notions of the musical work, with its implications of a notation fixing its identity, cannot be rescued from its blindness to other traditions (as appears to be the case in the Eurocentric determination handed down in *Newton v. Diamond*), then a more sensitive framework must be adopted. A contextualized nominalism embedded in a performative paradigm, one which assesses the applicability of a term or identifying label through how it is taken up in practice, can dispense with the exclusionary investigation into

necessary conditions.[28] Within this latter paradigm, we can understand the unity which makes all Coltrane's improvisations instances of "My Favorite Things" on a Wittgensteinian view. Heyes notes that Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis points to the variety of connected, yet non-definitive ways that a term can be used (*Philosophical Investigations* §§65-7, cited in Heyes 95). This observation can be taken up in Coltrane's case to show that each of his improvisations is connected, through quotations of, and similarities to, previous improvisations,[29] that is, through resemblance, without ever establishing a definitive version to which all others must be compared. The family of improvisations which results from the tracing of these connections establishes an elastic, everchanging notion of the musical work, one in which each new performance provisionally charts the boundaries which future performances may extend – just as Heyes notes in her discussion of Wittgenstein's 'game' analysis.[30]

This recourse to resemblance of works (as a substitute for the authoritatively identifying score) does not give us a theory that is either simpler or easier to adjudicate than the culturally-insensitive essentialism we should be rejecting. But why should we think that identity of works could be simply stated? And why should we think that identity ought to be easy to judge in all cases? What a resemblance notion gives us is a conception of the musical

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[28] On a compositional view, the work is implicitly identified with the score, and must contain distinct elements in order to be meaningfully differentiated from other works. A performative paradigm, on the other hand, focuses on the practice of playing music, be it composed or improvised, thus would seem to offer more freedom to recognize different treatments of the same score (or different improvisations on the same standard) as 'the same work' by virtue of features shared by different performances.

[29] Where quotation is *not limited to* melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic identity.

[30] The advantage of this notion of 'musical work' over 'formal element'-dependent notions is that works which can qualify under the essentialist notion can also apply under the 'family resemblance' notion (the connections and similarities between their performances being even easier to chart). Thus, this proposal of mine is not a mere turning of the tables, designed to reverse inclusion/exclusion boundaries; it is a strategic attempt to draw boundaries as widely as possible without having to relinquish the pragmatically-useful term 'musical work'.

work that is rich enough to include all of the context, tradition, and reference to other performances that simultaneously locates and uniquely identifies the particular performance.

If the compositional view cannot explain things like the unity that relates performances of "My Favorite Things" without oversimplification and distortion, then at best Goodmanian commitments to work-score relation and the authoritative role of notation can encompass only some of Western classical music, that which is scored, or at least scoreable. My reworking of Goodman promises to transfer power away from the theorist and back to the artist by creating a space in which the creator can speak for himself or herself about what counts as an instance of their particular musical work (or, alternatively, whether he or she even wishes to be understood as engaged in the production of 'works'). Without the reformulation I propose, it seems that the compositional view is defensible only within a drastically limited scope, and is ultimately self-refuting elitism if extended into traditions that it, as theory, is not competent to recognize. In the rush to endorse a position on identity of musical works which freezes the practice of a tradition into a notational system (or subsystem), the music theory designed to explain music-making as notated compositions gives away too much intuition, and gets back too little, and too inadequate, a theory. When we theorize, we do more than construct evaluations; we (at least partly) construct the objects (processes) upon which our aesthetic evaluations are imposed.

Transposition errors and pluralist appropriations

In the first section, I posed a couple of questions designed to make the point that musical works exist in traditions other than the Eurological: why say that a non-Western composition is not a musical work? and why think only Eurological traditions have answers to questions of what a musical work is? In this section I want to critically examine whether a

'contexualized nominalism' with respect to musical works or, for that matter, any cross-cultural reworking of the concept, is as necessary or desirable as I have been suggesting throughout this chapter (in particular, in the conclusions I draw in the section above about the blindness and inadequacy of Eurological conceptions of the musical work).

Here I turn to the careful and comprehensive account of the "historically-based ontology" of the musical work offered by philosopher of music Lydia Goehr in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (7). Goehr's detailed analysis answers the question that I criticize Levinson for failing to ask – why are Eurological traditions the best framework for analyzing musical works? – by pointing to the emergence of the concept out of the history of European music-making. In essence, the reason why the concept privileges Eurological practices and intuitions is that, quite simply put, it is a construct of European history. "Perhaps," as she puts the point, "not all music is to be thought about in terms of works" (Goehr 31). So, on this view, the demand I am making that the concept be extended to other cultural traditions of music-making is analogous to the extension of European formalist criticism that I was so concerned to interrogate in chapter two.

Goehr herself poses the question: "why have we wanted to, and how have we been able to extend the employment of the work-concept seemingly so pervasively?" (245). The answer she gives to 'why' involves the rise of Romantic notions, and the emergence, circa 1800, of a "romantic aesthetic," identifying the artist (in this case, the composer) as a 'man [sic] of genius' who brings forth into the world his creative vision, his 'work' (Goehr 245). This aesthetic, she charges, has come to be the dominant view of music-making, and its entrenchment in contemporary thought is an instance of "conceptual imperialism" (Goehr 245). Thus, "this way of thinking leads to our alienating music from its various socio-cultural contexts and because most music in the world is not originally packaged in this way,

do we not risk losing something significant when we so interpret it?" (Goehr 249). As this argument about cross-cultural extension of the work-concept mirrors my concern, articulated in chapter two, about formalism's potential for distortion through erasure of context, it clearly behooves me to take it seriously. However, sensitivity to concerns about distortion and erasure does not necessarily constitute an argument for rejection of the concept (or theory); instead, as I observed in my analysis of formalist theorizing, it should be understood as grounds for a self-conscious and reflective scrutiny of its application in each particular case. And, indeed, both this sensitivity and some practical possibilities for avoiding the violence of conceptual imperialism are contained within Goehr's analysis.

Although Goehr claims that musicians from "non-classical" music-making traditions, when they borrow either the work-concept or associated concepts,[31] use these concepts "derivatively" (254) – by which she means that they change their understandings of their practices in order that those practices might conform to the concept(s) they are appropriating – this imperialistic adoption of foreign concepts by 'natives' (her term) need not be the only way to understand cross-cultural conceptual extensions. She acknowledges later in her discussion the possibility of what she calls "neutralization" of concepts: a process involving the shedding, over time, of commitments or assumptions resident in the concept's historical deployment (Goehr 266). Neutralization, she concedes, "might point to the fact that what was once a concept with very specific content has come almost to look as if it were generic" (Goehr 266). This could potentially make sense of continued contemporary use of

[31] An example of an associated concept would be the notion of creative independence which Coltrane implicitly evoked in his insistence that critics who damned him as 'anti-jazz' failed to bring the requisite humility to an understanding of the artistic project leading him to embrace 'free jazz'. See my discussion of this moment in the first section of chapter two.

the work-concept within, for instance, a context of outright rejection of the romantic aesthetic (Goehr 266).[32]

Goehr's acknowledgement of this possibility strikes me as particularly astute in light of her earlier discussion of what she chooses to call "open concepts"[33] which entail a rejection of essentialism and a commitment to analyzing meaning through attention to how such concepts function within the practices in which they are deployed (90-1). Thus open concepts are characterized by fluid boundaries; "they can undergo alteration in their definition without losing their identity as new examples come to appear as standard" (Goehr 93) – in much the same way as I suggested, in the previous section, that contextualized nominalism could function with respect to musical works. And because the coherent functioning of open concepts requires us to attend to their continuity, the appropriate method of analysis is precisely the contextual-historical accounting to which Goehr subjects the 'musical work' (93) – and which I would like to employ, on a more particular scale, for each individual musical work.

With this possibility of neutralization and the clear acknowledgement of the musical work-concept as an open concept both held firmly in mind, I believe that we can locate within Goehr's analysis two implicit arguments for pluralism: one based in musical practices, and the other in theory.[34] With respect to practices, Goehr observes that the variation and

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[32] Curiously, the historical movement which Goehr identifies as having had the best chance of liberating the work-concept from this romantic aesthetic is formalism (266-7). It is, I think, easy to see how this 'liberation' occurs: exclusive focus on 'the work itself' (as, for instance, in *écriture*) does force the work's creator into a background of anonymous production, and therefore renders superfluous said creator's claim to genius. However, this liberatory path branches off in precisely the opposite direction from the path I wish to pursue; it breaks with the context of creation altogether, whereas I seek an analytic/evaluative framework which demands a richer account of context.

[33] Goehr attributes the notion to Freidrich Waismann's work on empiricism but acknowledges its similarity to Wittgenstein's "unbounded" concepts which I discussed in the previous section in reference to Heyes' discussion of the political basis of the category 'women'.

[34] I should note here that when I put this suggestion to Lydia Goehr after a talk she gave at McGill University, 9 April 2005, she vehemently denied any intention in *The Imaginary Museum* to endorse a

diversity in our experience of musical works cannot be accounted for within the romantic aesthetic (56), that sometimes we experience works as self-sufficient and independent of their creators (55). She asks: "Upon what grounds could one now make a decision, first, to the effect that one aesthetic view is more adequate than another, second, that the preferred aesthetic view could be used as the basis for an account of the identity of the relevant phenomena?" (Goehr 56). With respect to theory, she urges us to "learn to accept [the] fact that competing theories, agents, and even ideologies are indispensable to a healthy, living and changing practice, and that such competition should be encouraged and not be seen as problematic" (Goehr 278). Pluralism in practices (even working only with the limited menu of options – romantic and formalist – that Goehr identifies) gives us access to a wider range of approaches to music-making than that which would be available under a single monolithic musical tradition or movement, and pluralism in theorizing makes possible a wealth of interpretive strategies for both ontological identifications and aesthetic evaluations within these various and disparate practices. Pluralism can justify cross-cultural extension of the work-concept because it licenses variations in the concept that can respect these divergent practices and theories.

A forthcoming analysis of contemporary music by cultural anthropologist Georgina Born suggests why we might want to be pluralists with respect to the concept of the musical work, as opposed to, say, taking an eliminativist approach. Her reference to "music's many simultaneous forms of existence" (Born 6) underscores Goehr's point about pluralism in musical practices, reinforcing, in particular, the fact that many types of musical products, informed by many different musical traditions, inhabit the same 'musical universe'. Given this diversity, there seems to me to be a certain pragmatic value to taking up the existing

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pluralist position. However, I do think that she creates a space for such a position, and while she may not be interested in pursuing these implications of her analysis, I am.

vocabulary of this universe (e.g. 'musical work') and using it as broadly as possibly ("generically," as Goehr would say of a neutralized concept) instead of casting about for a new term. As I noted in previous sections, talk of music in terms of works is standard in legal decision-making and academic theorizing, and is widespread in popular speech. Thus, in the absence of both good reasons to replace the terminology and suitable candidates for a substitute term, I think we should work towards neutralization rather than elimination.

This is the position also taken by postmodern legal theorist Jody Freeman in her account of the legal challenge to the (lack of) definition of family in Canadian statute law posed in *Mossop v. DSS*.[35] Freeman argues that current patchwork legislation is all based on an implicit heterosexual norm which reinforces the presumed normalcy of 'the traditional family' and therefore excludes single-parent families, extended families, unmarried people not meeting common-law criteria, and gay couples. The interveners' position was that bereavement leave legislation should either eliminate the requirement that this type of leave be restricted to family members or define family in an open-ended way (Freeman 385). But, the interveners argued, it is crucial to recognize that 'family' is not a meaningless or out-dated concept which should be eliminated; instead, it is a subjective and shifting concept such that it is deployed differently by people who are nonetheless ardently committed to identifying their domestic arrangements as families (Freeman 391). As such, the concept should be taken seriously but, in the spirit of postmodernism, we should resist the urge to subsume all variations under a single understanding (Freeman 388), even a Wittgensteinian one where connections are charted from particular case to particular case (rather than

[35] *Mossop* was a case in which a gay man was denied bereavement leave because the deceased in question was his partner's father, and so not considered a family member under the (discriminatory) legislation governing the family leave benefits offered by his government job. He filed his suit claiming discrimination based on sexual orientation and discrimination based on family status. Freeman's analysis is a reflection on her involvement in drafting an interveners' submission in this case.

identified as bound together by a common essence). Instead we should encourage construction of different definitions within a framework of mutual co-existence.[36] This, claims Freeman, is a postmodern approach to law, one that can better respect the differences between individuals than can universalist assumptions (and definitions) in law.

To bring this discussion, in conclusion, back to musical works, I want to endorse both the contextualized nominalism that I proposed in the previous section and a postmodern (constructed and variable) approach to defining the term 'musical work'. What a musical work could be, under contextualized nominalism, is a collection of performances with an ever-expanding horizon that have been gathered together under the same title by the musician(s) who performed them. What the term 'musical work' could be – under a postmodern, pluralistic approach – is a conceptually fluid descriptor capable of

[36] What Freeman is endorsing here is pluralism in law, much like the aesthetic pluralism I shall endorse in chapter five. What this means for definition is that the essentialist definition of 'family' does not get rejected, and neither does a family resemblance definition, nor a subjective one. Instead, they all co-exist as possible definitions which may be taken up and applied in a particular case. They would function, that is, as different 'possible worlds' of relevant precedents. This would clearly make application of the relevant precedent much more complicated than it is now but I think that we here need to ask of law the question that I posed about identity of musical works in the previous section: why should we expect that the relevant precedent would be easy to judge in all cases? That it would make judgements more complicated is not necessarily a reason to reject a particular course of action, especially if this added complexity in judgement process reflects the complexity of the reality being judged. And indeed, it is frequently the case that legal judgements already have to weigh the merits of competing precedents in order to decide which is more relevant. They do so by reference to the same principle I have been endorsing throughout this chapter: attention to context. In the case of whether Mossop and his partner constituted a family, the relevant legislative context (which includes a relatively recent decision to treat heterosexual common-law couples as spouses for the purposes of taxation and government benefits) would suggest that a 'family resemblance' definition is more appropriate than an essentialist definition. Likewise, in the case of Newton v. Diamond, a 'family resemblance' definition (which compared the notational convention used in "Choir" to those used in other spirituals-influenced compositions) or a 'subjective identification' one (which took at face value Newton's claim to be notating more simply in order to be faithful to the oral tradition of spirituals) would be more appropriate than the strict essentialist definition that the judge imported from Eurological exemplars. Of course, the judgement of which competing precedent is 'more appropriate' is also open to pluralistic consideration, as is already implicitly recognized in the principle of judicial discretion (the decision-making autonomy given to the judge).

encompassing the musical products of different traditions[37] in a responsible and respectful manner.

On this view, the work-concept would display differences across traditions that would reflect the different demands on music-making and the different significances attributed to the product of music-making within those traditions. So, for instance, we might accept a nominalist version of Levinson's proposal of what a musical work is – a sound/performance-means structure as indicated by its composer at its time of composition – as an helpful account[38] for some of the questions we might have about musical works, satisfying as it does desiderata of creatability, fine individuation, and performance means ("What a Musical Work Is" 64-79). But for music-making, and questions about performances and works, that suggest a different cultural vantage point than the one Levinson restricts himself to (Western classical compositions), we would need to admit of variations in that concept. It might be that Levinson's definition of a musical work offers a more adequate account of a work-concept relevant to Newton's "Choir" than Manella's definition (that would certainly seem to be the case if we take the fine individuation and performance means desiderata seriously). But conceiving of the musical work in terms that can encompass jazz improvisations requires us to think of 'work' as a process, not an object. It requires a performative account along the lines of the notion I discuss in the next chapter, a notion which stresses dialogicality instead of structure and has a set of aesthetic values that cohere with its own unique ontology. And because of the variation across traditions in how the products of music-making are understood and valued, accepting multiple, culturally-

[37] As Lydia Goehr notes (249), it is not the case that (all) musicians and audiences in all music-making contexts will find the work-concept useful or appropriate. Thus, we also need to leave open the possibility that another thing the 'musical work' could be (in some particular contexts) is meaningless.

[38] Because of the attention to performance means and context of composition, this strikes me as a much better definition than Judge Manella's definition of the musical work as a sound structure constituted by "rhythm, harmony, and melody" (*Newton v. Diamond* 5).

situated definitions of the term 'musical work' leads us inevitably into the theory pluralism and value pluralism that I endorse in chapter five.

4
Improvising Communities

My aim in this chapter is to put forth three arguments: first, that improvised jazz is best understood performatively, as a process of dialogic construction of identity within community; second (interwoven with the first), that both an ethics and a politically-informed aesthetics follow from this understanding; and third, that this dialogic model of improvisation can be extended to grass-roots, democratic community building (a performative account of community). What this performative notion of improvised jazz gives us, I think, is not just a space within which to develop an aesthetic out of the ontology I proposed in chapter three, but also a space within which the connections between ethical, political, and aesthetic values become apparent. The mutual reinforcement of an ontology and aesthetic for through-composed music within the context of its own tradition was noted, in the previous chapter, as a virtue of compositional music theory, and so it seems to me that engaging improvised music on its own terms requires a parallel account of how this quite different understanding of ontology and aesthetic values functions with respect to improvisatory musical practices. But, in thinking through this mutual reinforcement, it also becomes clear to me that, whatever dividing lines we may elsewhere wish to draw between the fields of what can be more generally construed as value theory, these fields overlap in improvised music-making. Aesthetic choices become/are ethical choices, and political ones.

Improvisation uses the principle of multiple realizability (the notion that different pathways can bring us to the same goal) not just to challenge the idea that a text must be

constructed prior to a performance in order to (at least partially) determine the coherence of that performance, but also to foreground the ways in which the improvising artist uses performance both to convey a personal perspective that is 'one among many' and to invite engagement with other perspectives. That is, it depends crucially on a process of negotiation in order to create whatever 'work' we might want to say emerges from the performance. Jazz theorist Robert O'Meally has drawn out this insight by reflecting upon the Latin root of the word 'improvisation' which, he says, means 'not provided'.[1] Thus performers and audience members need to actively engage themselves in the context of the performance (as opposed to passively positioning oneself as an observer or, if performing, as a conduit) in order to fill in any lacunae in the 'plan' that may have been sketched out beforehand.[2] This insight is echoed by video artist and sculptor Sylvia Safdie's claim that what we are seeking in art-making is composition that "works for us."[3] What this would be in improvised art-making is a creative process that invites and engages all of the process' participants, musicians and audiences alike. On this view, improvisation is an open invitation to all those present at the performance to contribute themselves to the process and, because of the

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[1] O'Meally, "Romare Bearden: The Painter as Improviser," Project on Improvisation Conference: Improvising In/Between the Arts, McGill University, Montréal QC, 4 June 2005. This interpretation is supported by the etymological analysis provided by *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition: 'improvise' is there traced back to *providere*, to see ahead.

[2] It needs to be emphasized here that scores (plans or instructions for a performance) are not fully determining of musical works and, in fact, leave many aspects of performance undetermined or under-notated. Even Nelson Goodman's insistence on the score as a notational character regulative of 'correct performances' of a work is tempered by the concession that aesthetically-crucial aspects – tempo, tone, mood – are not notational, and therefore may be played with (improvised) in a performance which is still deemed to belong in the set of performances conforming to the score (see *Languages of Art* 177-9, 184-7). What this means, obviously, is that even in those works which we might think of as most rigidly controlled by pre-existing documentation (those of Western 'classical' music), there is still considerable room for performative variation, which is to say, for individual interpretation (or filling in, as O'Meally would say). While this observation can be found in discussions by many music theorists, perhaps the most extensive argument offered for the existence of improvisation within through-composed music can be found in Bruce Ellis Benson's *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music*.

[3] Safdie, "An afternoon on improvisation in music and the visual arts," Project on Improvisation Conference: Improvising In/Between the Arts, Centre for Canadian Architecture, Montréal QC, 5 June 2005.

personal investment that being part of a performative community requires, improvisation becomes a locus in which ethical and political considerations necessarily arise in discussions of aesthetic values and evaluations.

While the 'us' of which I speak can conceivably be, and often is, construed conservatively as including only the members of a performing ensemble, I wish to draw participational boundaries more widely, so as to include the performers *and* audience members. This inclusiveness requires us to attend to connections between production and reception which make the ethical and political visible (and audible), connections which are lost if we attempt to theorize performers' perspectives and audience perspectives separately. In particular, this view of improvisation reveals the collaborative ethos which successful negotiation requires and which is, in my view, the basis of solidarity – understood as the sense that we are all building something together.

Interestingly, improvised music-making often grounds this solidarity in individual responsibility: each of us, including audience members, has to find our own way to become a participant in this particular situation that is the performance. Improvisation thus presents an *instructive* model for audiences because it shows us that scores are not directives to be followed unquestioningly (something that performers are already acutely aware of), and that first-person observations may properly occupy the place that we reserve for a text we might mistakenly think of as determining the performance.[4] Additionally, it presents a *constructive* model: through the exercise of constructing contingent meanings and assembling different

[4] This sense in which improvisation is an instructive model is part of its liberatory potential; improvisatory music-making demonstrates for us the possibility that people (musicians, in this case) can offer up their own unmediated thoughts or inspirations in a context understood to be (potentially) of aesthetic value. That is, art (music) does not need to be legitimized by being documented in advance of its performances in order to count as 'good art' or 'real art': we can have direct access to it, and we can learn from these unmediated contexts that our individual contributions of thoughts and opinions to the public sphere do, in fact, have political value. Improvisation liberates us to have, and share, the courage of our convictions even where the viewpoints we offer are not reflective of the perspective endorsed by the majority. I shall have more to say on this point in my discussion of the links between improvised music and deliberative democracy.

interpretations, we learn how to form ourselves into responsible meaning-makers (a point I take up in the final section).

How community plays out in the moment

A fascinating and instructive example of the challenges inherent in constructing identities and performing communities came out of the 2004 Guelph Jazz Festival. Experimental vocalist Sainkho Namtchylak performed with bassist William Parker and drummer Hamid Drake in an event now variously referred to in online discussions and reviews as "the Namtchylak affair,"[5] a "blowout" or "fantastic fiasco,"[6], and Sainkho's "onstage meltdown."[7] Although it was Namtchylak's behaviour that sparked the online firestorm of protests, denunciations, and scathing judgements that the artist had failed to respect her audience,[8] the aspect of this performance that interests me is how Parker and Drake responded to Namtchylak and to the tension created by the reaction of concert organizers and audience members to her performance. In fact, I think this is the finest

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[5] Matthew Sumera, *Review: 11th Annual Guelph Jazz Festival & Colloquium, Guelph ON, 8-12 September 2004*, www.onefinalnote.com/concerts/2004/guelph.

[6] Carl Wilson, *Guelph Fest's Fantastic Fiasco*, www.zoilus.com/documents/live_notes/2004/000208.shtml.

[7] Josef Woodard, *Everything's Great in Guelph - Unless You Ask Sainkho Namtchylak*, www.jazztimes.com/reviews/concert_reviews/detail.cfm?printme=true&article=10277.

[8] This 'respect for the audience' is something that those judging Namtchylak's performance unfavourably appear to uncritically accept as a duty the performer has; see posts on the topic 'To Hook Or Not To Hook?' at www.jazzhouse.org/bulletin/viewtopic.php?t=372. Positing such a duty is problematic, however. First, a performance that an audience finds unpleasant is in no way necessarily a performance in which the audience is not being respected; further argument is required from those who would conflate the two. Second, it is not at all clear that performers must respect every single audience they encounter (e.g., one that chatters, boos, snoozes, walks out, or otherwise evidences a failure to engage with the artistic project at hand). Indeed, there is a long history within avant-garde jazz of audiences (and nightclub staff) blatantly disrespecting performers, thereby arguably forfeiting their own claim to respect; John Coltrane told Frank Kofsky that one reason he had largely stopped playing in nightclubs by the mid-1960s was his growing frustration with the sound of smashed glasses and cash registers drowning out the music (*John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s* 436-7). There may be some value for performers in committing themselves to a standard of performance which is grounded in respect for some ideal, hypothetical audience but, again, that seems quite a different thing from the claim that all audiences everywhere must be respected (especially where 'respected' seems to amount to being placated or pandered to). Given the possibility of conflation of respectful performance with pleasing performance, this postulated duty poses obvious problems for art that challenges us through attention to aesthetic innovation and/or political consciousness-raising.

practical example I have witnessed of the way that conceiving of jazz improvisation as performative reveals the overlap of ethical, political, and aesthetic values.

From where I sat, in the balcony of the Chalmers United Church (the performance venue for this concert), the beginning of the performance was not particularly engaging in that it foregrounded the rather monotonous-sounding vocalizations that were Namtchylak's contribution.[9] This was my first experience of Namtchylak's singing and it didn't seem at all to be the remarkable demonstration of vocal range and potency that the festival guide's preview of the event had led me to expect. Indeed, it was for me a test of my ability to practice what I had learned as a technique for listening to improvised music (a version of the notion I discuss in the next section as 'listening trust'): to open myself to the moment and listen responsively for something in the music which might engage me. But the ability to be (or remain) genuinely and generously open to an experience is, sadly, contingent. Sometimes, no matter how engaging a performance might be for others, there is a failure of responsivity on the part of one or more of the participants, be they performers or audience members. In this instance, however, it seemed that the failure to connect with, or appreciate, Namtchylak's musical project was not mine alone; others in the audience that evening shared muttered opinions about the oddness of her performance.

Perhaps, then, it should not have been surprising when, about half an hour into the performance, a concert organizer called Namtchylak offstage and the performance ceased momentarily. But I found it a deeply disconcerting and mysterious turn of events. As it turned out, her being called offstage was predicated on a judgement that, whatever she was

[9] Sainkho Namtchylak, William Parker, and Hamid Drake, Concert, at the 11th Annual Guelph Jazz Festival and Colloquium, Guelph ON, 10 September 2004.

doing in her repetitive vocalization, it was not a contractually adequate performance.[10] In the breach of the performance, before Namtchylak returned to the stage and the music resumed, audience members seemed of two minds as to how this interruption should be resolved. As I recall it, some called for explanation and apology on the part of concert organizers and a resumption of the performance, while others encouraged Parker and Drake to keep playing without Namtchylak. Parker and Drake's decision to ignore this encouragement, to not respond to the audience until Namtchylak returned to the stage, is the moment of performance that I think most deserves to be acknowledged and interrogated. I interpret both their musical support of Namtchylak and their silence during the offstage battle over whether she would return or not as modelling a profound ethical commitment to fellow community members. In this instance, they had agreed to form a trio with Namtchylak and they were expressing their commitment to it, at least for the lifespan of the concert. Their aesthetic commitment to collaborative music-making appeared to imply an ethical commitment to remaining in community with Namtchylak, to working together as a trio.

This aesthetic commitment to collaboration understands improvisation as an act/process of solidarity-building. The identity and community being negotiated is such that those involved in the performance are no longer conceiving of each other as 'other'. I don't mean, however, to suggest that what is going on in the improvising performance is an erasure of individual personhood (more, perhaps, a temporary setting-aside of one's insistence on differentiation from others). In fact, and perhaps paradoxically, as I briefly noted in my introductory comments and as I shall discuss later in my attention to Cornel West's notion of the 'jazz freedom fighter', this solidarity derives its creative power from the individuality of its members. The identity of the jointly-constructed 'us' is built up from, and

[10] Sumera, www.onefinalnote.com/concerts/2004/guelph; Woodard, www.jazztimes.com/reviews/concert_reviews/detail.cfm?printme=true&article=10277.

out of, the contributions of all of the 'I's. Paradoxically, the differences of each party to the performance are not preserved in the moment; they return (which is to say we 'come back to ourselves') after the performance but, in the performance, it is 'us' together that matters. This may sound impossibly (impermissibly) vague but it is nonetheless a real phenomenological experience – what frequently gets referred to as the transporting power of music. And it is this power to sweep us up into the moment of performance that is, in my view, at the core of aesthetic valuations pertinent to musical improvisation.[11] The commitments one makes to sharing performative responsibility (loosely speaking, ethical), the contributions of standpoint and experience of being in community with others (both of which are political in that they involve the relation of the individual to the group), the judgements one makes about what/how to perform (aesthetic) all come together in performance, of which the sound-structure that issues forth is just one part – a crucial part, yes, but not the totality.

Given what Parker and Drake had said earlier that day in a panel titled "Voicing Off: Jazz and Social Justice," I am even more inclined to interpret their contributions to the performance as centrally involving an ethical commitment to the trio, relations which foreclose any possibility of distancing themselves from Namtchylak in order to satisfy audience expectations. That morning's discussion takes on a charged meaning in light of events at the concert later that evening: the panel was concerned with questions of justice and responsibility in improvising contexts where the aesthetic and the political may be conflated or mistakenly confused. Drake acknowledged many functions for art, one of

[11] This is essentially the point that Ingrid Monson makes in her analysis *Saying Something* (which I discuss in the later sections of this chapter). On her view, when musical improvisation moves us, it 'says something'. Using this metaphor of speech, we can understand aesthetic valuations as pertaining to the stylistic expertise with which something is 'said', the wittiness, or originality, or profundity of the 'statement' – in general, any distinctiveness in how the performance conveys messages of community, identity, and solidarity to the audience.

which is, he says, "to awaken people," a goal which is not always consistent with entertainment and, arguably, one which does not implicate any general duty to respect audiences.[12] And Parker spoke of the importance of knowing who one is as an improviser, having trust in oneself, and of the ultimate futility of censorship: in his words, "music cannot be stopped."[13] The concert then provided an opportunity for Parker and Drake to perform these professed commitments and stand in solidarity with their improvising partner – which they did.

At least one respondent to Carl Wilson's online review at www.zoilus.com has questioned whether Parker and Drake had a different, perhaps opposing, ethical or aesthetic obligation: in this case, "to wind things down – if only momentarily, perhaps to confer with Namtchylak and try to get on the same page – when they realized the performance was a bust."[14] And, according to a response to the same review by someone who was a volunteer within the festival organization, it was rumoured (falsely, he claims) that Namtchylak was called offstage in a move to rescue Parker and Drake from an untenable performing situation.[15] These two posited 'rescue obligations' have different objects of concern: the first privileges audience expectations and burdens Parker and Drake with the weight of satisfying them, while the second allegedly privileges Parker and Drake's entitlement to a problem-free collaboration (but implicitly denies the wealth of experience each brings to the stage, and their competence to negotiate their way out of bad situations). Where these rescue

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[12] Panel discussion, "Voicing Off: Jazz and Social Justice" at the 11th Annual Guelph Jazz Festival and Colloquium, Guelph ON, 10 September 2004. For discussion of the 'duty' to respect audiences, see footnote 8 of this chapter.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Posted by Randall, http://www.zoilus.com/documents/live_notes/2004/000208.shtml, 23 September 2004.
[15] Posted by Luke Bowden, http://www.zoilus.com/documents/live_notes/2004/000208.shtml, 15 September 2004.

obligations function similarly is that they both minimize, if not erase, obligations that performers might feel towards each other.

These opinions share a second similarity: they oppose themselves to a principle that Carl Wilson defends as "an artist's right to perform poorly."[16] As Wilson correctly notes, improvisation of the kind I have been discussing here requires openness to risk, to shocking or unpleasant experiences, and to the possibility that the performance will be judged a failure. However, as Wilson also suggests and Matthew Sumera makes clear,[17] judgements about improvisations can only be made in retrospect; one cannot decide partway through a performance that it has failed to meet its objective because, until it's over, there is just no way of knowing where the performance might be trying to take us. Given this aesthetic claim/commitment, Randall's suggestion that Parker and Drake had an obligation (aesthetic or ethical) to 'wind things down' makes little sense; Parker and Drake could not have been in a position to 'realize' that the performance was a failure until it had fully emerged, that is, until it was over. If we are truly committed to respecting improvisation as a method of art-making, we must take it on its own terms, and one of those terms would seem to be the necessity of deferring judgement until the performance can be assessed in its entirety. Indeed, I think one could say that the notion of listening trust I take up in the next section is simply another way of stating this point about open-minded deferral of judgement.

So what does this mean for audience members who sat in the church praying to be rescued? Those who entered into the performance with expectations that did not get met, or were perhaps even violated, may well have been disappointed, even (understandably, on some views) outraged. But to go into an improvised performance with full-fledged expectations against which the performance is measured for success or failure seems to be

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[16] Mark Miller, quoted in Wilson, http://www.zoilus.com/documents/live_notes/2004/000208.shtml.
[17] Sumera, www.onefinalnote.com/concerts/2004/guelph/.

itself a failure – to grasp the very nature of the process (of exploring community and identity). And to complain about inadequacies in the performance, as it is in the process of being constructed, (that is, before all of the elements to be assessed are even brought into being) seems a far greater violation than the dashed expectations of those whose taking up of a participatory role is disingenuous at best.

This is not to suggest that we can never pass judgements on improvised performances, that we can never say one performance has succeeded and another has failed. Of course we can – when the performance in question is over and we can analyze and debate the skill[18] with which this joint construction of identity has been performed. Assessments like this, about whether a particular performance 'really worked' or 'took off', are common practice for the on-stage performers. What we as audience members need to take note of, if we are going to enter into performances responsibly and in good faith, is that our after-the-fact judgements must also evaluate our own contributions. For me, the concert I have been interrogating was a (partial) failure – not on Namtchylak's part, certainly not on Parker and Drake's part, nor even especially on the part of the concert organizer(s) whose censorship impulse was so mistakenly acted upon and so clumsily executed. The failure is this case was mine, and that of other audience members who simply could not, or would not, open themselves to the aesthetic possibilities the performance was trying to offer us.[19]

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[18] "Skill' here is a vague – and therefore potentially loaded – term. I employ its vagueness deliberately to open up space for the many ways in which we could understand a performance to be effective (virtuosity in playing of instruments, creativity or wittiness of parody/commentary, striking originality in the attempt at community-formation, etc.). It is, therefore, a contestable term, meaning different things depending on the values one thinks the performance should, and does, produce, and in any assessment of the skillfulness of performance, these underlying values *must* be articulated. See, for example, Carl Wilson's comments in the following footnote: Wilson's analysis of the Namtchylak, Parker, and Drake performance assesses their performative excellence based on the originality of the contrast in musical contributions.

[19] Mark Miller's review for The Globe and Mail mentions, for instance, "the tremendous rhythmic undertow" that Parker and Drake generated in response to what he characterized as Namtchylak's "tuneless wail." Carl Wilson's response to Miller (www.zoilus.com/documents/live_notes/2004/000208.shtml) described Parker and Drake's playing as "one of the best sets I've ever heard them do" and asserted that the

How community is theorized

In considering jazz improvisation as a process of dialogic construction, I am working from, and deeply indebted to, the contribution to jazz and improvisation literature made by Ingrid Monson's book *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction.* Monson's analysis of how jazz improvisation produces musical meaning through interaction of sound, social setting, and cultural identity introduces the notion of 'saying something': the transporting effect that audiences experience when successful improvisation takes place (1-2). Giving audiences this access to meaningful insight through music demonstrates, in her words, "the collaborative and communicative quality of improvisation" (Monson 2). Any individual player's intent which is made manifest through collaborative improvisation is part of a negotiated consensus, and remains open to revision through the interpretations of both the other players and the audience members, through what we, the others, think that individual means to say and the value we place on his or her projects. In this way, the musical 'dialogue' constructs a space for community out of the negotiation of identity-indexed insights, and invites everyone who chooses to engage with the project to help perform that community.

But, obviously, the 'something said' needs to be both articulated and interpreted (understood) if it is going to be the transporting or illuminating experience that is successful improvisation on Monson's view. This points us to how an improvisatory ontology and aesthetics reinforce each other: if the 'musical work' can be identified in jazz as a fluid and

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contrast between their playing and her three-note drone was, aesthetically, "a supremely interesting combination," a performance that he is prepared to defend as worthwhile. And he characterized the performance Namtchylak gave upon her return to the stage as a "furious, virtuosic, and encyclopedic" outstripping anything he ever expected. Clearly, Wilson's experience of the performance was a great success. This verdict of his is at least partially endorsed by two respondents to his site, Nilan Perera (posted 20 September 2004) and Rob Clutton (posted 16 September 2004), who both committed themselves to really listening, and managed to find value in Namtchylak's performance.

revisable network of connections drawn between performances that the performers themselves intend to unite (the 'contextualized nominalism' I proposed in chapter three), and if the reason for wanting these fluid boundaries is to accommodate future contributions to a dialogic negotiation, then the aesthetically interesting aspects of performance include how well the performers reveal interconnections (or, put in Gatesian terms, how skilfully they 'signify'), how creatively they interrogate performative boundaries or limits (with respect to the musical work, or the instrument, or any part of the performative context), and how resonant their sharing of insights is for their fellow performers and their audiences. To a great extent, then, the after-the-fact ability of audiences to offer aesthetic evaluations is going to depend (as I asserted in the previous section) on their ability and willingness to adopt the openness to improvisatory situation that performers call on in order to build both the performative community and the performed work. That is, in order to position oneself such that aesthetic evaluations are possible, one has to enter into the performance community. This forming of community through performance is why the distinct and important contributions of audiences need to be included in theorizing improvisation.

In thinking through some of the ways in which community is theorized, I am also working from, and indebted to, Ajay Heble's book *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice.* Heble's investigation into whether jazz can be properly understood as a model of resistant cultural practices takes note of the shifting, changing, complex layers of performance practices and suggests that the fluidity of these practices requires equally fluid interpretive frameworks (17). And the communicative possibilities of collaborative improvising raise for Heble an interpretive problem in such musics: whether musical meaning is a function of intent or effect (220). In examining this intent-effect question, within the bounds of Monson's hypothesis that improvisation is a communicative practice, I

am also working from discussions by improvising performers, from a cluster of perspectives I have heard expressed by those who improvise. While these perspectives can hardly be representative of all those who situate themselves within improvising communities, I believe they make valuable contributions to any consideration of what musical improvisation could be trying to achieve within the more general domain of music-making.

It is, however, important to be aware that not all of these people who have so generously shared their thoughts are jazz performers, and at least one of them, Matana Roberts, has expressed discomfort with the label of 'improviser'.[20] Thus my discussion of performers' perspectives might be read as perpetuating a standard conflation of jazz and improvisation, treating them as largely interchangeable terms and treating improvisatory practices arising out of Afrological and Eurological traditions as if they shared common sources and purposes. In light of my discussion in chapters one and two, it should be obvious that such a conflation is problematic if we mix analysis of improvisation in jazz culture with improvisation in European art musics in ways that involve the uncritical use of, say, classical music theory to explain jazz practices. I want to make clear, however, that I think the problem could also run the other way, such that jazz traditions would be imposed on aleatory musics in ways which distort or obscure the artistic projects under examination (although I think violence in this direction is less likely to occur simply because of the relative relationships to cultural power had by jazz and European art musics). I am not mixing cultural traditions here but, if I were, I would think it necessary to make clear that a cross-tradition 'reading' is taking place. Instead, I am here employing 'improvisation' as a

[20] At a roundtable talk organized for the New Perspectives on Improvisation conference, she indicated that her notion of improvisation is part of a larger, connected notion of creativity, and that any labelling or categorizing diminishes that creativity (Roberts, Roundtable, Project on Improvisation Conference: New Perspectives on Improvisation, Montréal QC, 26 May 2004).

general term which names a particular socio-aesthetic practice, with jazz as the most vibrant and influential example of this practice within the wider context of North American culture.

The question of intent-effect interplay within the process of 'saying something' in improvisation is one which spoken-word artist Anne Waldman seems to understand as discrete stages: 'intent' is what one brings to the performing situation and 'effect' is what happens after the performance begins.[21] However, this positing of discrete stages becomes problematic when transposed to a collective performance where we can reasonably expect that effects created by the intent of one performer will inspire or shape the intent of fellow members of the performing ensemble. Here, in collaborative performance, intent-effect relations become interplay in a strong sense and would seem to require an explanation closer to the 'listening trust' idea offered by Julie Smith, director of education for the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, in a joint conference presentation with scholar and performer of experimental music Ellen Waterman.[22] As Smith presents it, listening trust involves an implicit agreement between players, and with the audience – that they will listen, and be listened to – and is therefore a participatory model with broader implications for social organization and reform, an aesthetic practice which clearly incorporates political values. At minimum, this notion, translated from a discourse about musical aesthetics into a discussion of political commitments, would seem to be endorsing a radical democracy, one which takes seriously a commitment to social equality and to giving a hearing to every voice. I shall have more to say in the next section about the shared concerns of deliberative democracy theory and improvisatory aesthetics, and will there take up the question of how listening trust can be translated into a political commitment.

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[21] Waldman, Master class/Discussion, Festival Voix d'Amériques 2004, Montréal QC, 16 February 2004.
[22] Smith and Waterman, "The Listening Trust: the Discursive Politics of George Lewis's Dream Team," Project on Improvisation Conference: New Perspectives on Improvisation, Montréal QC, 28 May 2004.

Trust is a concept referenced by many improvisers in speaking of their musical practices; violinist Malcolm Goldstein talks about it primarily in terms of improvisation as a way of learning to trust oneself but, in acknowledging improvisation as an egalitarian practice, he also seems to me to be gesturing towards this Smith/Waterman notion.[23] In a roundtable organized for the New Perspectives on Improvisation conference, accordionist Pauline Oliveros also spoke of active (participatory) listening as a way to reach a core of receptivity within oneself.[24] She described 'playing with strangers' as a strategy she employs in order to absorb and explore differences; in her view, the openness individual musicians have to exploration of difference is conveyed to the listener in the music – again, a strong egalitarian view, and one that does not need to homogenize all differences into sameness in order to see relations. The implications that listening trust has for social organization lie in an understanding of improvisation as a performative context in which players and listeners engage the 'possibles'.[25] This expanding and expounding of possibilities which lie beyond current social actualities is something that saxophonist Matana Roberts also takes up in her characterization of improvisation as a social tool. She endorses a view of music that is about "the artist's third eye," the chance to expand a community's perspective, to teach others how to see.[26] On these views, the attempt to open up new collective social possibilities through musical improvisation appears to be most successful when the 'voices' the musicians bring to the performing context are most individualistic.

Christian Wolff, a European musician in the post-Cagean tradition, makes this point also in his essay "On Political Texts and New Music" when he discusses those of his musical

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[23] Goldstein, Lecture at McGill University, Montréal QC, 3 February 2003.
[24] Oliveros, Roundtable, Project on Improvisation Conference: New Perspectives on Improvisation, Montréal QC, 26 May 2004.
[25] Smith and Waterman, "The Listening Trust."
[26] Roberts, Lecture at Sala Rosa, Montréal QC, 25 January 2003.

compositions which promote deliberate compositional indeterminacy in order to prioritize performers' interactions. He explains that these compositions are not meant to direct a performance that is "one homogenous mass of voice: you are meant to hear individualized voices and the drama of the voices' helping one another to carry the meaning on" (Wolff 205). Wolff sees the possibility that experimental musics can advance progressive politics through this collaboration of individual voices precisely because it represents what he calls "the breaking up of a sharp division between audience and performers" (208). In listening to each other, the performers appropriate for themselves the role traditionally accorded to the audience, but do so in a way that transforms that listening role from a passive, unidirectional reception, into a dynamic engagement (the listening required by Smith and Waterman's 'listening trust') which they model for their audience. This link Wolff makes between collaborative performative practices and egalitarian political projects is an observation echoed by Anne Waldman: if we accept dialogicality as a model for improvisation, then we see solidarity as the political point. This solidarity is constructed in improvised music-making through the sharing of perspectives, each individual voice contributing to the community of opinions and insights. And, consequently, our aesthetic evaluations are grounded, at least in part, on how effectively, how ingeniously, how powerfully, we think this solidarity has been constructed.

In the context of analyzing intent-effect relations, the connection that many theorizers of improvisation want to make between experimental performance and political resistance to an authoritative status quo[27] might seem to suggest that intent and effect have to be fairly closely linked in order for the performance to reach the level of having 'said

[27] This sense in which experimentalism implies political resistance is basically the liberatory potential that I asserted in footnote 4 of this chapter: as noted there, this claim will be argued more fully in the final section.

something'. The use of a language metaphor, a central part of Monson's analysis, is also popular with musicians (Coltrane, for instance) as well as commentators and other theorists – jazz is a musical language, improvisation is musical conversation, good improvisation is 'saying something'. This makes it possible for us to understand Monson's notion of 'saying something' as 'the successful conveying of an idea' (73). But what does it really mean for an idea to be successfully conveyed? Here, I want to consider a relaxed view of intent-effect relations, while still remaining consistent with my earlier claim that 'saying something' needs to be both articulated and understood.

Essentially, what I want to suggest is that success can rest on causing *any* non-mistaken insight; that is, success rests on generating any of the contingent meanings that allow one to participate in community.[28] My motivation in presenting a more relaxed intent-effect link is to draw the boundaries of the community widely enough to include all of the people (performers, audience members, and critics who have access to the performance) who might have experienced this feeling of being transported that Monson writes about (1-2). I want to be clear here about what would be needed in order to say, broadly speaking, that the intent to convey a message has been successful: the point of a relaxed link is to encourage interpretation as a way of participating in the performance, so any performance which gives rise to interpretations that are negotiated among those who participated can

[28] This identification of successful interpretation with narratives that allow one to participate in community is, I think, the best way to open up the possible range of meanings beyond that attributed to a work/performance by its creator(s) without the worry of outright distortion. Interpretations not comprehensible within a community-relative discourse may be error or fantasy, or they may equally be something like an idea 'ahead of its time' (a notion sometimes invoked to describe artworks like Melville's *Moby Dick*, now thought to be a classic of American literature but poorly received by the reading public at its time of publication). We simply cannot know whether the future introduction of a new interpretation is going to reveal some fruitful aspects of art objects or practices about which our current aesthetic evaluations say nothing. This is yet another consideration in favour of the fluid definition of art 'objects' that I propose in chapter three with respect to musical works; new interpretations may well affect not just aesthetic evaluations, but ontologies also (as was the case with "Fountain," the exemplar of Duchamp's ready-mades).

count as successful – for those participants. This allows a more active (although, in a sense, after-the-fact) role for audience members and critics. As I argued in chapter two's discussion of Foucault, contingent meanings (e.g., interpretations of performances) should be proliferated, subject only to the restriction that *prima facie* consideration is given to any statements about the work that the artist/author/musician cares to make. This does not mean that the artist exercises complete control over the interpretations which are advanced, only that anything we know about performative intentions should be part of the background against which the interpretation's merits are judged. The kinds of artistic statements I am thinking of here are, for example, titles (say, Coltrane announcing that he and his ensemble are going to play "My Favorite Things") or motivations to perform (say, Paul Robeson's resistant Peace Arch concert in protest against the US government's withholding permission for him to cross the border for a performance in Vancouver). These statements should constrain interpretation-generation only insofar as they rule out those interpretations which distort or contradict obvious intents; all interpretations which are not distortions should be considered, and interpretive merit should be judged in accordance with the fruitfulness of insight a given candidate offers to other community members and the plausibility they accord it. So, to take up an example that I discussed in chapter one – the question of what meaning we might draw out of Coltrane's improvisations on "My Favorite Things" – I would argue that the constraint on any interpretations we should consider is a rejection of the idea that they endorse the conservative message of the original Broadway tune (that we should escape to memories of good things to console us in bad times, instead of confronting the bad directly). At minimum, we should acknowledge the deliberate disruption of the tune-lyrics link of the original version, and conclude from this that Coltrane's reworkings intend a critique of the original.

The question about who counts as being inside or outside the community which negotiates these interpretations, and why, is one that I would like to address through comments that Coltrane made to Frank Kofsky in the context of discussing the responsibilities of writers and critics. Coltrane says that writers and critics have a power "to be part of it all," and the way to be part of this 'all' is to fully understand the musical project one seeks to interpret (quoted in Kofsky, *Black Nationalism* 242). Although Coltrane does not specify the 'all' that he references, his comments (about general attitudes towards musical trends and projects) can, I think, be reworked to account for this question of community membership. Specifically, I think we can extract two qualities that could be attributed to those who contribute to performed community. First, one must be engaged – in the sense of the 'listening trust' notion I discussed earlier and the openness to dialogic contributions which it asks of us. Second, an ideal community member would be 'informed' (whether musician or audience) in the sense that he or she would be either 'schooled in' or 'educated about' the traditions and discourse conventions relevant to the performance.[29] The demand of engagement strikes me as a necessary condition for membership (hence my formulation of it as a 'must'), because the notion of membership in a community without being engaged (committed) seems to me a merely formal, or empty, relation (much like someone who holds a given citizenship and makes no effort to participate in that nation's political life). The shift in language – from 'must' to 'it would be nice to have' – in the second demand (for informed members) is an intentional strategy, signalling both the value of contextual knowledge and my desire to draw the boundaries of community as inclusively

[29] The distinction I am making here between being 'schooled' and being 'educated' is not an exclusive one; it is designed to account for two very different ways in which one might learn about musical practices in jazz – and the range between them. At one end of the spectrum, one might receive extensive formal training as a musician or music theorist (being educated) or, at the other end, one might (with, perhaps, some knowledge of how to play an instrument) join a community of musicians and learn the history, terminology and standard musical practices through just trying them out for oneself (if performing), or actively listening (if participating as an audience member), as one encounters them (being schooled).

as possible. So while failure to be engaged would place one outside the community being performed, failure to be informed of the relevant 'backstory' of that community (performance) would not rule out one's claim to membership but may well have implications for one's value as a community member. This is so because lack of relevant information would have an impact on one's creative resources, including one's ability to generate (and, possibly, comprehend) the contingent meanings that the particular improvisation privileges.

In expressing different perspectives and/or constructing different identities through their performances, performers can model for audiences an alternative to mute acceptance of received wisdom, this alternative being a negotiated conversation about possibilities. What the audience sees and hears within the performance, even where it is not entirely clear or coherent, can serve to demonstrate a radically open and pluralistic model for living: a commitment to experimentalism and negotiation in social organization, to trying new ideas and structures and seeing how they work, how much sense we can make of them. These performances also convey and model ethical commitments to one's fellow community members and to ideals of community. In these ways at least, performers' intentions to 'say something' can be connected to the effects the performance has upon the audience even if the full texture of the intent is not received.

While these resistant or liberatory insights are not the only elements that interpretations might involve – interpretations may, for instance, concern themselves with purely musicological elements – it is this parallel of aesthetic and political values which constitutes the uniqueness of improvisatory music. As I have been observing throughout, improvised music is a different kind of art from through-composed music, and valuable for that difference – specifically, valuable for its ability to express political and ethical values through its performative context, rather than relying on arrangement of formal elements to

express values. Improvisations are not just about 'talking back to power'; they are also about *being heard* by all those engaged with the performance, being *listened to*, and being at least partially understood.[30] One more thing needs to be said, however, about the ethical value of improvisations, and this point is best brought out in connection with the notion of 'listening trust' that I discussed earlier. To return to the concert I discussed earlier, we might ask whether ascription of pure motives to all of the performers is required to justify application of the listening trust principle.[31] My answer is no. Improvisation's community-building function imposes upon us a moral obligation to remain open to those performative communities with which we choose to engage. And we have these obligations regardless of any beliefs we may hold about bad faith motivations of other members of the community. This is so, in my view, because one member acting in bad faith (spitefulness, say, or self-interest) does not poison the entire community – unless we permit him or her to do so by refusing to stay engaged. Again, the ethical example I want to endorse is Parker and Drake's commitment to staying in the community they had chosen, for the performance's duration. My insistence on this strong ethical obligation will become clearer in the next section where I take up the case for improvisation as a metaphor and model for geopolitical community-building.

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[30] It's worth remembering Gatesian theory here: as I noted in the concluding discussion of chapter one, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan's clarification of 'signifying' notes that a successful instance of the speaker's intent to signify only occurs when a hearer identifies the communication *as* one which signifies.

[31] This issue of pure motives is linked to the issue of respect for audiences that I raised in footnote 8. Many of the posters on this topic expressed the opinion that if Namtchylak was dissatisfied with her treatment by concert organizers and was taking it out on the audience, then the decision to call her offstage was justified, even appropriate. Essentially, her (presumed) impure motives justified a refusal to engage with the performance. Again, see 'To Hook Or Not To Hook?', www.jazzhouse.org/bulletin/viewtopic.php?t=372.

Making up community on a different stage[32]

Embracing a dialogical model of music-making is most obviously about power-sharing, about the right of all those who are bound up in a given situation to articulate how that situation appears from each of their perspectives. This right, the responsibility that comes with it, and its revolutionary possibilities – indeed, the very mindset I wish to endorse as a model for political action – are most eloquently articulated in Cornel West's essay "Malcolm X and Black Rage." West says:

> To be a jazz freedom fighter is to attempt to galvanize and energize world-weary people into forms of organization with accountable leadership that promote critical exchange and broad reflection. The interplay of individuality and unity is not one of uniformity and unanimity imposed from above but rather of conflict among diverse groupings that reach a dynamic consensus subject to questioning and criticism. ...[I]ndividuality is promoted in order to sustain and increase the *creative* tension with the group – a tension that yields higher levels of performance to achieve the aim of the collective project. (italics in original, 150-1)

West takes up jazz as a metaphor for "a mode of being in the world" which he understands to be characterized by "protean, fluid, and flexible dispositions towards reality" (150). This metaphor stresses jazz's fluid, ever-changing engagements with the world and privileges the creativity that multi-perspectival dialogue can inspire. In his attention to "dynamic consensus" which is achieved through negotiation of diverse perspectives rather than through an imposed unanimity, West is working with a specific notion of jazz, one which foregrounds improvisatory practices within the jazz tradition.

The most interesting aspect of West's view of jazz is his acknowledgement of the sophisticated relationships of identity and community. Rather than assuming an easy (simplistic) opposition between individuals and groups, West examines the dynamics of actual practices and finds in them an example of the mutual interdependence of individual

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[32] An earlier version of the discussion in this section is forthcoming as "Making It Up as We Go Along" in *Parceling the Globe: Globalization, Global Behavior, and Peace*, eds. Danielle Poe and Eddy Souffrant.

identity and community cohesion. This interdependence of identity and community (perhaps best grasped as a claim that the fullest expression of individual identity requires, as the ground from which it flowers, the existence of community[33]) demands a genuine engagement with the performance, and attention to the diverse possibilities for 'what one might say' onstage. This demand for genuine engagement also draws attention to what we might call 'principles of improvisation': respect for individuality and difference of viewpoint; open invitation to contribute one's voice to the performance; and acceptance of the provisional and constructed character of all working alliances. These principles are of particular interest for their ability to promote responsible and respectful community-building. However, as the previous section should make clear, the basic idea of a link between musical practice and political position is not West's insight alone; for instance, both theorists of, and musicians within, the 'free jazz' movement of the 1960s have responded to the question of what it means to be the figure that West labels the 'jazz freedom fighter'.

Historian and jazz writer Frank Kofsky, for instance, has examined the musical experimentation of John Coltrane in the context of understanding free jazz as a 'protonationalist' avant-garde movement which foreshadows the emergence of the black nationalism represented by Malcolm X (*John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution* 417). As I noted in chapter two, Kofsky takes pains in his interviews with Coltrane to situate the man's musical commitments within an overarching commitment to a spiritualism that Kofsky terms 'cosmic mysticism' (435-6, 418). In his reflections on these interviews, Kofsky asserts a similarity at the level of values between Coltrane and Malcolm X: he cites such things as their self-imposed standards of excellence; commitments to critical reflection on their own beliefs and to using that knowledge to help others; and avoidance of hypocrisy, conventional

[33] This, of course, is Aristotle's insight, articulated in his discussion of man as "a political animal" (see Book I, chapter 2 of *The Politics*, 1253a5-30).

wisdom, and other easy answers (431-2). Coltrane contemporary and fellow saxophonist, Archie Shepp, is more specific about the progressive content of jazz ideals: he declared in a 1966 *Down Beat* panel discussion that, at the level of political values, jazz "is antiwar; it is opposed to Vietnam; it is for Cuba; it is for the liberation of all people" (quoted in Kofsky 464).

But, because political values presuppose political agents, I want to take Shepp's comment about the ideals to which jazz is committed one step further and sketch a set of principles, an 'ethos of improvisation', available to be articulated and practised by political agents (broadly construed) in geo-political situations. This proposal – to make improvisatory musical practices say something about how to build better communities – is not as much of a stretch as it might first seem. Drawing on her own experience as a musician, and on extensive interviews with other musicians active in the New York jazz scene in the 1990s, music theorist Ingrid Monson draws attention in *Saying Something* to the simultaneous occurrence of the development of "emotional bonds through musical risk, vulnerability, and trust" and the constructed performance (9). Implicitly, Monson's analysis of "the activity of music making as something that creates community" (13) reveals community as a performative notion, a conception which is not reducible to shared geography or essentialized social identities (in terms, say, of race, gender, class). In essence, a performative notion of community reminds us that 'community' is not something we have, but something we do – together. From this understanding of community as performed, Monson develops a fundamental principle of improvisation: egalitarianism in decision-making and in responsibility (81). There is no single composing authority in a jazz ensemble committed to improvised music-making and no player is expected, or permitted, to be the mere instrument of the band leader's will, thus all "performance participants" are also "compositional

participants" (Monson 81). The necessity of contributions from each of the performers justifies the egalitarian apportionment of control and responsibility.

On Monson's view, what musicians do when they improvise is introduce fragments of ideas which get 'assembled' through negotiation (78). Because there is no unifying perspective imposed on these negotiations (such as, for instance, the performance instructions provided by a score), performers may play their way into problematic musical structures which then need to be resolved in the moment. Monson argues that these 'mistakes' are aesthetic values and cites by way of explanation an observation made by drummer Ralph Peterson Jr.: "a lot of times those are the most musical moments, because the desire to compensate for the ... mistake ... often leads to a special moment in music where everybody begins to come to the support" of the idea that is being worked out (quoted in Monson 176).[34] Successful improvisations, then, are those which build tensions through a process of inventive performance strategies and soundings offered up by individual performers in order that these contributions might be considered and contested by the others in the group. The group has the responsibility of listening, and the freedom to reinterpret individual offerings, so that they might creatively resolve the 'problem situation' in such a way that, ideally, a rich, coherent musical experience issues forth from the collaboration (where a 'coherent' experience is understood as one in which the problem has

[34] The parallel between Peterson's view of the aesthetics of 'problem situations' and Wolff's compositional aim of bringing out the drama of voices helping to support each other should be obvious. It might also seem that this is a point at which the Afrological tradition in which Peterson works meets the Eurological tradition underpinning Wolff's work, hence tempting us once again into a conflation of two distinct improvising traditions. This, I think, would be a hasty generalization; the aesthetics of collective resolution might indeed have the same significance for both musicians but that commonality could be the result of cultural hybridity/ border-crossing (as in, for instance, a jazz musician with conservatory training) at the individual level, rather than convergence of traditions. Wolff himself denies that European improvised music in the post-Cagean tradition owes anything to jazz and its Afrological traditions, according to recent comments by Georgina Born at the Project on Improvisation Conference: Improvising In/Between the Arts (McGill University, 5 June 2005). However, Born also noted that George Lewis reassures her that Wolff oscillates on this point, so it seems that steadfast separation of the two traditions may be as problematic a distortion as unquestioning conflation.

been resolved – collectively – so that, in retrospect, all of the elements of the performance seem to fit together organically, even necessarily).

For the sake of clarity, I want to recast the overlapping principles put forth by West, Kofsky, and Monson before taking up the task of applying them to an example. Monson's fundamental principle of egalitarianism is easily reconcilable, under a general demand for one's best efforts, with West's expectation that all members of the group will contribute their voices, and with Kofsky's commitments to performative excellence and using one's knowledge to help others. Similarly, West's respect for differences and Kofsky's ruling out of easy answers can be brought together as a recognition that the circumstances in which we improvise invite both complexity and a mixing of viewpoints, which carries the potential for both conflict and creativity. Finally, we can derive from West's observation, and from Kofsky's commitment to critical reflection, an appreciation of the perpetually open (to scrutiny *and* revision) character of improvisation. Applying these principles in any analysis of how they lend themselves to community building means that we need to interrogate the generosity and openness with which one commits oneself to the project at hand, the extent of one's appreciation for complexity of circumstance and standpoint, and the willingness to remain continually open to re-evaluating one's interpretations and judgements.

So, why extend improvising from the club stage to the world stage, from music to politics? On the face of it, this would seem to be an unbelievably bad idea, naive at the very least, if not outright dangerous. But, regardless of whether adequate forethought has taken place in the planning stages, the indisputable fact remains that situations can and do require ongoing negotiations. One thinks, for instance, of the problems of gang violence and small-arms proliferation that US- and UN-led multinational forces have faced in Haiti since the expulsion of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. Here we see the necessity

for rethinking strategies 'on the ground' and, despite conventional political rhetoric about not negotiating with terrorists, we also see the need to remain open to talks with anyone in a position to contribute (positively or negatively) to the community. So my goal in this analysis is not to attack planning *per se*, but to present two virtues of improvisation: one, it provides a creative resolution strategy where and when it becomes apparent that the advance planning needs to be supplemented or replaced; and two, internalizing what I am calling here 'principles of improvisation' can make us more sensitive and responsive (thus, more competent) political agents.

What I think we gain from this extension of principles of improvised music into politics is practical insight: improvisation as a model has something to tell us that we can't learn from mainstream political theory literature. Specifically, it can tell us how to go about building the community required for the negotiating processes recommended within "the deliberative paradigm" of democracy.[35] The goal of this negotiation is typically consensus across a broadly inclusive population within which we expect the active participation of all members[36] – much like the collective resolution produced by equally-valued performing partners in Monson's analysis. In its demand that everyone participates actively, this particular model of political organization (a 'direct' democracy) is already implicitly referencing more sensitive and responsive political agents than is required by the more hierarchical 'representative democracy' (which requires of the many only that they participate in elections to choose those few who will make the decisions that are subsequently presented as the product of the popular will). We can see Monson's radical egalitarianism in Steven Wheatley's definition: "the deliberative model conceives of democracy as a free association

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[35] Keith Spence, "Notes on Deliberative Democracy and Practical Reason," http://www.psa.ac.uk/cps/1999/spence.pdf.
[36] *Ibid.*

of equal citizens who engage in a rational discussion on political issues, presenting options and seeking a consensus on what is to be done" (508).

As Wheatley notes, one potential problem for this model of consensus building is that, at least in the influential model of deliberation offered by Jürgen Habermas, the negotiators are idealized actors, reflecting "the liberal ideal of the autonomous self" (518). Wheatley understands this idealization as problematic primarily because its emphasis on the free offering of options and trading of reasons and arguments understates the non-negotiability of those core beliefs which each of us holds as part of our social (group) and personal identity (518). Exactly why this idealization is problematic is made clearer in Spence's contrastive analysis of the Habermasian view (which he labels the 'civic mode' of the deliberative paradigm) with the conception offered by Charles Taylor (the 'cultural mode'). Spence observes that Habermasian discourse ethics is Kantian in its commitment to universal norms[37]; that is, each norm is expected to satisfy *everyone's* interests. This raises a host of homogenization worries of the sort that I have been concerned with throughout my analysis of aesthetic theories: in particular, the civic mode offers no practical guidelines for dealing with pluralist societies, situations where widespread normative consensus simply might not be possible and where the positing of universal norms is as likely to achieve repression as consensus. Taylor, on the other hand, acknowledges the plurality of goods and offers an account of deliberative democracy which recognizes that, as Spence puts it, there is "no canonical way of belonging in a thoroughly multicultural society."[38] Like Habermas, Taylor sees a functional public sphere as crucial in legitimating the institutions of democratic government but, unlike Habermas, Taylor sees this public sphere as more than a space in which consensus can be developed (a process we can call 'the unity function'): it is also a

[37] *Ibid.* The reference here is of course to the universalizability of Kant's Categorical Imperative.
[38] *Ibid.*

space within which unresolved, even unresolvable, issues can be articulated ('the recognition function'). This attention to the need for discourse that produces recognition, as well as discourse that produces unity, is why Spence sees Taylor's cultural mode of deliberative democracy as better than the civic mode Habermas offers us; Taylor's account is more flexible, richer, and therefore a more plausible notion of deliberation.[39]

The attention Taylor gives to recognition is significant for the parallel I want to draw between principles governing improvisation and possibilities for the development of radically inclusive democratic communities. Working from his view is the clearest way of showing the relevance to political community-building of the performative understanding of improvisation – dialogic construction of identity within community – that I argued for in the preceding sections of this chapter. Like theorists of improvisation, Taylor also understands identity as "fundamentally dialogical" (32). In this, his view of identity is reminiscent of Aristotle's identification of society as the necessary condition of individual identity although Taylor stresses the sense in which this relation is an ongoing 'conversation' (33), a continuously performed process of definition. Because he sees identity as negotiated through dialogue (Taylor 34), recognition from others is crucial to the process of identity-formation, and is also important in affirming the dignity of all members of the process by which community is performed. The deliberation which takes place in the public sphere *is* performed community and the consensus which is the ideal result of this performance requires that all contributions be acknowledged (recognized). Thus, part of the substantive liberalism that Taylor endorses[40] is the value of every voice being heard, and much like

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[39] *Ibid.*

[40] This substantive liberalism is 'substantive' precisely because it has content – the demand for inclusion of all voices – rather than the 'procedural' liberalism which, according to Taylor, encapsulates only "the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life" (57). The distinction between a procedural view and a substantive one is tracked by editor Amy Gutmann's distinction between

Christian Wolff, Taylor understands this as an empirical necessity – every voice must, in fact, be heard – not just an abstract ideal (62-3).

This demand for the inclusion of every voice is one way of responding to observations of a lack of parity between the musical example of improvisation and the political example of fragmented community. A challenge that is central to political disputes but almost never raised in musical critiques is the question of who is entitled to be part of the performance, who is entitled to be heard. That is part of what makes the disruption of the Namtchylak-Parker-Drake concert so interesting; here was a rare instance of a performer's right to be onstage being challenged. In this rarity, we can see musical performances as an inversion of political negotiations: in music, we typically begin with a presumption that all of the players have a legitimate right to be there whereas, in politics, questions about legitimacy of the participants represent the first obstacle to be overcome in order for negotiations to begin. Taylor's response is to argue for the equal right of recognition for all in the political sphere – for acceptance in political negotiations of a norm that already holds sway (for the most part) in improvised music.

But, we might ask, are there any limits to this presumption of equality? Must we allow into negotiating processes even those whose interests are best served by subverting or destroying negotiations? Here is the point at which we can connect Taylor's account of deliberative democracy with the practical insights that improvisation offers. First, as I noted at the end of the last section, there is a strong ethical obligation imposed on us by the notion of listening trust; even those negotiating participants whom we suspect of bad faith or impure motives must be allowed to have their say, and must be listened to. A pluralistic (or multicultural) view of political community, with its emphasis on recognition, takes this

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views that we need to tolerate (a process of inclusiveness) and those that we should respect (an assessment of merit with respect to the content of the view).

listening trust obligation seriously and realizes that we cannot be parsimonious in doling out seats at the negotiating table. Instead, we need to commit ourselves, in the moment, to listening closely even to that which sounds unpleasant or incomprehensible and then, later, once the entire contribution can be assessed, to making a concerted effort to find (recognize) the values the participant is trying to articulate.

Second, in addition to the theoretical principle of listening trust, there is a longstanding norm in jazz communities of 'sitting in'. This has been part of a tradition of practical training (schooling), a practice of apprenticeship and guest appearance that both soprano sax player Steve Lacy and alto sax player Charles McPherson talk about as a way of picking up knowledge, and passing it on.[41] Educator Charlie Beale describes the norms of sitting in and apprenticeships as learning processes that favour practical training over theory and privilege dialogicality.[42] For Beale, the significant focus of jazz education is not musical vocabulary but conventions for interacting within musical ensembles (learning the norms that teach us how to negotiate). And Marc Chaloin's essay on Albert Ayler identifies the point of sitting in as establishing one's musical worth within the boundaries of a set of unspoken rules: "the proper code of behavior [is] introducing oneself and asking for permission to sit in."[43] Chaloin identifies 'sitting in' as representing the openness to each other of musicians within the jazz community, part of the "values on which rested the very construct of jazz identity." The basic practical insight here is that new strategies for creative consensus-building depend on the generosity and openness of the participants: those players who are already 'onstage' (e.g., the military, paramilitary, gang, and political factions in Haiti)

[41] Steve Lacy, lecture, "Projet Steve Lacy" (McGill University, Montréal QC, 30 January 2004); Charles McPherson, interview with Rhonda Hamilton for WBGO (88.3 FM), Newark NJ, www.wbgo.org/library/interviews/cmcpherson.asp.
[42] Charlie Beale, "Jazz Education: past and future," www.abrsmorg/?page=exams/jazz/item.html&id=11 [adapted from Beale's "Jazz Education," in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*].
[43] Marc Chaloin, "Albert Ayler in Europe: 1959-62," www.revenantrecords.com/ayler/chaloin.html.

can find their way out of stalemates by internalizing the jazz norm of inviting qualified people to sit in and contribute what they can. 'Qualified people' here would be anyone who can reasonably be expected to contribute something to the outcome (e.g., advisers from other member-states of the Caribbean Community, neighbouring nations, the United Nations).

To illustrate this claim about the additional insight that principles of improvisation offer us, I want to turn now to a recent attempt to disarm groups on all sides of the current problem of arms-proliferation in Haiti and talk about how I see these norms of 'listening trust' and 'sitting in' working to negotiate the clash of political interests. This particular attempt involves Brazil's sponsorship of a 'peace game' proposal in which the Haitian soccer team would play an exhibition game against the world-renowned Brazilian team on the understanding that prospective audience members could trade in guns for tickets. The analysis I offer here is not intended to claim that this game, which took place in summer 2004, achieved any success in the overall process of disarmament, but to depict an (apparent) instance of creativity and openness to negotiation within that process. One purpose of deliberation that Wheatley identifies is the recognition of similarities and differences, the capacity to chart what space is shared (519). But, as Spence notes, in order to build consensus, we need to reason from shared premises[44] – and this means we need to develop shared premises, which is something that the peace game tried to do in a fairly creative way.

Weapons proliferation and political instability are not new problems in Haiti and attempts at things like buy-back programs have been tried before (with some success, apparently, during the 1994 restoration mission authorized by Bill Clinton). This chronic problem is back on the front burner now because of continuing polarization and mounting

[44] *Ibid.*

violence between pro- and anti-Aristide gangs, and because of the lack of evident effort that either US or UN forces have put into realizing the disarmament aims of UN Security Council Resolutions 1529 and 1542. In the weeks leading up to the forced departure of President Aristide on 29 February 2004, various spokesmen for rebel military and paramilitary groups tied promises to disarm to demands for his removal. One spokesman, Winter Étienne of the (anti-Aristide) Artibonite Resistance Front (formerly, the pro-Aristide Cannibal Army), also indicated his group would form a political party if Aristide were removed from the presidency, a party with "a right-wing economic program and a left-wing social program" – which, ironically, is exactly what Aristide seemed to be committed to in his attempt to reconcile imposed neo-liberal restructuring policies with his own social justice platform (Knox). Aristide left, as we all know, but the guns stayed. More recently (August 2004), armed gangs of former soldiers raised the stakes by demanding ten years' back pay from the Haitian Army, which had been disbanded by Aristide in 1994 when he returned to power after the first coup (*Haïti Progrès*). The need for immediate disarmament of former soldiers and paramilitaries was clear from the time that American military forces moved in for their three-month post-coup deployment, on 1 March 2004 (United Nations S/Res 1529 (2004)). However it was not until United Nations troops were organized to replace the US-led contingent that the UN Security Council drafted a resolution which included a mandate to assist in "comprehensive and sustainable disarmament" (United Nations S/Res 1542 (2004)).

In June 2004, Brazil took command of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and started trying to pick up the pieces of this problem situation. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, eager to demonstrate his country's ability to play a leadership role in the region, picked up a suggestion, made by Haiti's interim Prime Minister

Gerard Latortue, that Brazil's famous soccer team play a "peace game" against the Haitian team in a guns-for-tickets exchange (Downie) – an invitation, and response, that resemble the 'sitting in' norm I identified earlier. Authorities immediately raised security concerns, prompting the Brazilian president to propose going ahead with the game, but without the gun-exchange element (Downie). In picking up and negotiating Latortue's idea fragment, Lula was, as Monson's quotation of Peterson suggests, improvising his group's way out of a problem situation, and he was displaying characteristics we might associate with the principles of improvisation I have been talking about. He was displaying sensitivity to a situation by using a shared cultural love of soccer generally, and the Brazilian team in particular, to win Haitian hearts and minds, basically engaging in activity which could, if we want to use jazz terminology, be described as improvising on a well-loved motif, or standard. He was quick to take up, in an egalitarian way, his part in negotiation of a creative way out of the situational tension, contributing his own energy, influence, and credibility. And, he responded to demands for revision of the original idea both in his adaptation of Latortue's idea (dropping the guns-tickets exchange) and in ways that stressed the value of openness and accessibility, declaring, among other things, that television screens needed to be installed across the city of Port-au-Prince to allow for widespread viewing. In playing on the Haitians' love of the Brazilian team, Lula's contribution was arguably a creative step towards the UN mission's goal of promoting peace and reducing polarization and violence in Haiti. It promoted a perception among Haitians (the population of Port-au-Prince, at least) of a shared context with Brazilians: Yves Jean-Bart, president of the Haitian Football Association, explains "the Brazilian players are black and they're from the masses. Ronaldo [the Brazilian team's biggest star] washed cars in the street when he was a boy" (Kamber).

The game was an unsurprising 6-0 win for Brazil and, in mainstream circles, it went largely uncontested as a symbol of friendship.

However, 'largely uncontested' is not at all the same thing as being universally accepted: an article in the 2 September issue of *Workers World* newspaper about protests in support of Fanmi Lavalas (the popular political party formed by Aristide) by "thousands of people from the poorest neighborhoods" of Port-au-Prince mentions, in particular, that demonstrators denounced the peace game on the grounds that it was US-staged propaganda (Dunkel). Latortue, on the other hand, has expressed satisfaction with the overall situation that resulted from the peace game, announcing to the press afterwards that he had begun negotiating with ex-military groups. In the final analysis, though, any success of the peace game as a creative move towards disarmament talks can only be partial as long as the voices of Fanmi Lavalas are shut out of the discourse.[45] And this is ultimately why I make no claims about this idea being, or leading to, a successful improvisation of community: as long as any voice is being marginalized, the creative strategies employed may open up some interesting performative moments but cannot count as successful community building. In

[45] The question of why Lavalas is being shut out of Haitian political processes and discourse in this crucial moment at which a largely-illegitimate interim government (illegitimate because it was appointed and installed under the auspices of the American government, who played a key role in removing Latortue's predecessor, the democratically-elected Aristide) is trying to organize elections scheduled for October 2005 is a difficult question to answer because so much of what counts as explanation (and evidence) in this context depends on one's loyalties to class and faction. Given the bleak and distasteful historical tradition of ruthless exploitation and suppression of the poor (largely-black) majority at the hands of the moneyed (and often lighter-skinned) *élite*, it's hard to ignore the conclusion that Lavalas, a populist political party which emerged out of the pro-democracy protests that ended the Duvalier regime, has incurred the enmity of those who see themselves as Haiti's 'rightful leaders' and is therefore being persecuted. However, those sympathetic to the Duvalierists, the army, and the current regime justify the marginalization of Lavalas (which means 'cleansing flood' in Kreyol) by alleging that the party harbours extremists and criminals, in particular, groups (gangs) of heavily-armed young men called *chimeres* who, it is claimed, were armed by Aristide as extralegal protection against the possibility of resurgence of the former Haitian Army, responsible for removing him from power in the first coup (in 1991). These gangs, based in the *katye popilè* (so-called slums) of Haiti's cities, are difficult to categorize under a single label; some do indeed seem to be motivated purely by criminal interests, thus a parasitic burden on the already-struggling urban poor. Other groups, however, see themselves, and are seen by the people in their neighbourhoods, as fighting a war of resistance against the *élites* and the UN forces, whom they see as an occupying army. As Stan Goff, the self-dubbed 'Feral Scholar' observes, applying a single label to these divergently motivated groups "is a cheap political tactic for denying the political content of any rebellion" (17).

particular, the close associations between Latortue, supporters of the former Duvalier regime, and the armed ex-military groups (made up of former soldiers and shady paramilitary figures, some of whom have previously been tried and convicted *in absentia* for their roles in massacres and other human rights abuses: Louis-Jodel Chamblain, for instance) provide strong grounds to conclude that the marginalization of Lavalas supporters is part of a larger campaign to create a hostile environment for democracy activists and supporters.[46] Clearly, that hostile environment has to change if community building is going to take place. And, equally clearly, this change can only happen if those who currently control the public sphere discourse can be convinced to give up at least some of their power.

Although I share the uneasiness of those who want to rule out self-interestedness as a basis of deliberative participation (see, for instance, Wheatley 527), an appeal to self-interest (coupled with the ongoing popular resistance to a reimposition of Duvalier-style rule by the *élite*) seems to be the only way to move Haiti's social organization to more democratic ground. These moves to greater democracy are blocked by the few *élite* families who control most of the wealth in the country. But the overall amount of wealth generated is currently limited due to the ongoing political instability (which discourages foreign investment, otherwise attracted by low labour costs and proximity to American markets); greater democracy could well be achieved (bought, essentially) through the promise of greater overall wealth, more evenly distributed. A more stable and democratic society would actually result in a net gain for these wealthy few because a reduction in poverty-related outbursts of violence means savings in protection costs (e.g., a reduced need for

[46] Documentation and further elaboration of this hostility towards grassroots democratic organization can be found in reports and interviews such as the collectively-authored *Report on Pax Christi USA Human Rights Mission to Haiti*, www.paxchristusa.org; Thomas Griffin's *Haiti: Human Rights Investigation, November 11-21, 2004*, www.law.miami.edu/news/cshr.pdf; and "A Clandestine Interview from Haiti: Resistance in the Slums of Port-au-Prince," in *The Black Commentator*, http://blackcommentator.org, 14 October 2004.

bodyguards). As unpalatable as it is to make an appeal on the grounds of greater material benefits rather than considerations of justice, the point is to get these actors into the public sphere and get them participating in the deliberative discourse. Only in this way, do we have any hope that they will be exposed to the norms of sitting in and listening trust that, practically speaking, can facilitate the performance of the recognition and unity functions which Taylor's cultural deliberative democracy endorses.

This brings us back to Monson's fundamental principle of egalitarianism, violated in the case of Haiti's social dysfunction, which speaks to the necessity of including every voice. But, in any assessment of the openness of a negotiating process, it is important to keep in mind that not every voice need be raised in support of the idea being negotiated, and also that at least some performers construe 'contribution' very broadly. In an artists' workshop at the 2004 Guelph Jazz Colloquium, improvising vocalist Yoon Sun Choi discussed four possible types of responses a performer might offer to a fruitful idea fragment: harmonizing (support), matching (endorsement), challenging (critique), and contrasting (opposition).[47] Regardless of the type of response chosen, the contribution to the negotiation counts as fulfilling the demand for everyone's best effort provided only that it is a freely-given contribution to the continued flourishing of performed community. If Lavalas had *chosen* silence, this could have counted as their contribution, but any apparent success at peace-making in Haiti will remain under a question mark as long as their silence is imposed on them.

It should be apparent at this point that my attention to improvisation as a strategy for peace and constructive dialogue takes up improvisation largely as metaphor. Extending improvisatory practices from music-making to international relations is a metaphorical

[47] Yoon Sun Choi, "Workshop: Improvising Women Singing," 11th Annual Guelph Jazz Colloquium, University of Guelph, Guelph ON, 9 September 2004.

extension, but I am also committed to a more literal extension: I endorse taking the ethical point of view that I have articulated here as 'principles of improvisation' and imposing it as a behavioural constraint on our actions in war-making, peace-keeping, and nation-building.[48] Given situations where a willingness to negotiate shows us a way out of problems in which we might find ourselves, I would like to highlight two ways in which improvisatory practices and principles of improvisation can be put into practice in a political context: first, we can affirm that we always have available to us the option of rejecting the preconceived instructions of a score or script, and second, we can commit ourselves to the practice of conversing as equals. Improvisation is necessarily and integrally resistant to the perceived authority we attach to planning and tradition and thus serves as a model for countering hegemony in all forms.[49] In departing from composed scores, it stresses the principle that there is no one right way to do things. For this reason, improvisation can be a liberatory political model at least to the extent of showing that scores (understood here as performance

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[48] Had these principles governed the behaviour of the international community in its concerns about the Aristide government and the political opposition he faced prior to the coup, I think it is quite likely that the demand for their best efforts, alone, would have recommended a different set of actions. The decision of the Americans to install as Prime Minister a retired UN technocrat whose previous job was co-hosting a local morning television show in Miami seems to me analogous to an audience member with little knowledge of a musical instrument stepping onto the stage with Namtchylak, Parker, and Drake in order to 'defuse the tension'. A good part of the appeal of these principles, for me, is that the level of responsibility they place on us for our actions and for our interpretations of the world bears a similarity to the Sartrean notion of responsibility. Sartre's existentialism presents each individual as a consciousness characterized by a radical freedom to choose our projects, large and small. We are responsible for both the 'self' we contribute to our situations and for the 'situation' itself, insofar as the situation takes on meaning only in light of the projects chosen by consciousness (707-11). My principles of improvisation take this recognition one step further, combining awareness of our own contingency with an appeal to our better selves. Nothing in Sartre's writings constrains us to choosing positive projects that enhance human flourishing, whereas Kofsky's reading of the principles, at least, builds in a prima facie obligation to craft our contributions with a view towards creation instead of destruction, and Monson's egalitarian commitment encourages an inclusive and substantive democracy in its call for the contribution of views from all standpoints.

[49] As I noted in the beginning of this chapter, the liberatory potential of improvised music is not an accident; the overarching values of improvisation are resistant to the cult of a single authorial or compositional authority. Thus, while it is a matter of historical fact that improvisation has opposed itself to many social issues from racial discrimination to war, its abstract value commitments do preclude some messages and programs. It would, for instance, be inconsistent with endorsement of a neo-fascist worldview.

instructions from those who hold power) need not be followed to their bitter end, that creative community-building strategies may be substituted in place of a (partially) determining text. The best chance we have of coming up with accountable and non-exploitative forms of social organization is a negotiated conversation about possibilities in which everybody affected has both opportunity and motivation to participate.

In short, internalization of these 'principles of improvisation' can make us better, more capable actors. Improvisation can serve to demonstrate a radically open and pluralist model for living: a commitment to experimentalism and negotiation in social organization, to trying new ideas and structures and seeing how they work. This openness has two results: at the individual level, it promotes empowerment of individuals by reinforcing the necessity and value of their unique contributions; and at the collective level, it builds solidarity among those who contribute their views to the building of this shared community. It is precisely this empowerment and solidarity that Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, founder of the Peasant Movement of Papay, seeks to nurture among poor rural populations in Haiti (Nijhuis). These people and the grassroots organizations who support their interests are, he thinks, the key to genuine change (e.g., disarmament) in Haiti.

Although Stan Goff's analysis of what he calls 'the Haitian Intifada' can hardly be considered an optimistic blueprint for solidarity-building in Haiti, he does make some observations of the current situation which point to a possible way out – should the so-called ruling class finally come to the realization that peace will only be possible through a reconciliation of their interests with those of 'the masses'. This is a big 'if' and, if recorded history is any predictor, this option will only be considered when all others have been exhausted but, should that time come, the problem of how to reintegrate the *chimeres* into a law-abiding society becomes solvable. Goff notes that the main reason why the Haitian

police and UN forces are unable to eliminate the popular resistance is its lack of vertical structure, leadership, and organizational cohesion. Each gang is isolated from the others which, as Goff correctly observes, "forecloses the possibility of coordinated and universal action" (17) – both *by* the *chimeres*, and *against* them. As I noted earlier, these gangs are made up of disaffected young men; men unable to find productive employment in a country with an 80% unemployment rate, and therefore utterly unmotivated to participate productively in society. But these men, and their fellow *katye popilè* inhabitants have come to the cities from the countryside (most of them, originally, in a futile quest for work) and therein lies the possibility I am teasing out of Goff's analysis. The gangs are isolated from each other but the individual members of the gangs are not isolated from family networks within the countryside, members of small villages who "survive through the traditions of collective effort, disciplined solidarity, and a powerful sense of real community" (Goff 18).[50]

Much like the professional jazz musicians from whom I have developed the principles of improvisation that I have presented here, they share knowledge of traditions, a political vocabulary, and a desire (if not yet a full-fledged commitment) to see improvement in their individual living conditions. These are people well-accustomed to, and (as is attested to by the 'salvage art' of, for instance, metal-working using discarded oil drums) very skilled in, building things out of little more than scraps (Monsonian fragments, if you like) and considerable ingenuity. Where the principles of improvisation that I have been talking about can best fit in to this situation is, I think, in being adopted by those who, like audience members (and like Lula, foreign political actors), would insert themselves into the situation.

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[50] Goff's analysis predicts that the 'peasants', rather than defusing the explosiveness of the 'slum'-based resistance through reassertion of rural traditions like *konbit* (collective labour projects such as harvesting and barn-building) as I am so optimistically suggesting, will instead be radicalized (indeed he suggests that this is precisely what is currently happening) into joining the intifada, and will use their traditions of solidarity to transform the rebellion into a full-scale revolution.

Improvisation's expectation that difference will be encountered, its commitment to egalitarianism, and its willingness to question and revise existing ideas all mark an improvisatory attitude as an improvement over the paternalism that characterizes the interventions of today's 'caretaking' nations. If, and to the extent that, the people most directly affected by political chaos are given the opportunity to build solutions on an improvisatory model like the one I describe here – and are aided by actors committed to respect for difference, egalitarianism, and ongoing critique – I believe we will see fewer failed states and fewer blind alleys in nation-(re)building. In acknowledging all contributions as necessary for the life of a performed community, improvising agents (learn to) see other players not as obstacles, but as negotiating partners, people who can help in the process of 'making up community as we go along'.

5
Cultural Space for Everyone

My first and second chapters examined the extent to which theoretical commitments can lead us astray in our critical evaluations of practices when our theories present themselves misleadingly as value-neutral frames. The third extended this problematization of theory into a discussion of the violence done to music-makers as a result of, for instance, imposing upon improvised jazz a Eurological notion of 'the musical work' and how to value it. But chapter three went beyond that criticism in order to construct a parallel notion of musical works that is consistent with jazz practices and musical traditions, and contributions to both made by the free jazz movement of the 1960s (the 'contextualized nominalism' view that I develop out of 'family resemblance' theorizing). Chapter four continued this positive project by taking up a performative notion of community and identity, and arguing that this performativity is the source of aesthetic (and ethical and political) values unique to improvisatory music, before moving into an analysis of what applying principles of improvisation could bring to geopolitical conflict resolution. In constructing both an ontology and an aesthetic which speak of improvisation on its own terms, my aim was to prove that it is both possible and more plausible to engage these musical practices without recourse to a translated Eurological music theory, itself a framework designed for a different set of musical practices (those which privilege formal structure over community building). Having established the plausibility of a framework different from that standardly applied by conventional theorists (Adorno, Goodman, Levinson, et al.), I now want to bring into focus

the commitment to pluralism that has informed my analysis in these previous discussions. I am not proposing, in this dissertation, that insights developed out of improvisatory music should replace those drawn from through-composed music. Instead, I am claiming that these two frameworks (and more) do co-exist, should co-exist, and are best understood within the context of a more general commitment to pluralism in aesthetics.

The point of this chapter is to argue the importance of a pluralist approach to aesthetics on the grounds that this approach is most appropriate to a multicultural society, and thus to a pluralist politics which resists demands that diverse identities and perspectives assimilate themselves to dominant power relations. The political ground from which I argue is Charles Taylor's multicultural conception of deliberative democracy (a view he refers to as 'substantive liberalism'[1]) which stresses the crucial role that inclusive negotiations within the public sphere have to play in legitimizing governmental policy, developing a unifying social identity, and, most importantly, recognizing the existence and value of individual differences. Taking difference seriously involves denying the primacy – if not the merits, in a limited context – of universalist aesthetic theories (those espoused by, or attributed to, Hume and Kant, for instance). The argument for pluralism, and against an assumed universalism, builds on the previous chapters and uses Pierre Bourdieu's sociological analysis on the relation between class positioning and aesthetic value commitments to show that we cannot assume consensus concerning aesthetic valuations of artworks. From this analysis of divergences within a relatively homogenous society, I turn to Georgina Born's gloss on Bruno Latour's recent work to show how a more acceptable universalism (one that arrives at consensus as an endpoint rather than assuming it as a starting point) depends on negotiating a plurality of viewpoints. Because this reworked universalism is constructed out of a variety

[1] See footnote 40 in chapter four for the distinction Taylor makes between his 'substantive' version and 'procedural liberalism'.

of views, it leads us to the question of cultural hybridity and diversity, how best to accommodate identities, societies, and cultural objects and processes that draw on more than one discernible cultural influence. This analysis is developed in part through the metaphor of soup joumou, a Haitian soup of great cultural significance which blends available ingredients into a French-derived pumpkin-soup base. To further elaborate on what it would mean to have a pluralistic framework in aesthetic evaluation of polycultural artistic processes and products, I return to a distinction I made use of in chapter two: the distinction between *teloi* of avant-garde works, distinguishing those which call ontologies into question (type-i works) from those which reveal the perspectival basis of value judgements (type-ii works). And, once again, but this time in more general terms than chapter four's analysis, I draw out the political consequences of these aesthetic investigations by extending an aesthetics which refuses assimilation to a political context which manifests the same resistance.

Conceptions of universalism

Since aesthetics was first conceived of as a sub-discipline within philosophy, it has been identified with assessments of beauty. The account of education in music and poetry that Plato offers in his *Republic*, for instance, asserts a necessary connection between these arts and "the love of the fine and beautiful" (403c). And for 18th century German philosopher A.G. Baumgarten, coiner of the term 'aesthetics', the object of study for this sub-discipline is responses to 'the beautiful' (and 'the sublime') in art and nature (Guyer and Wood xiv). Baumgarten's Enlightenment contemporaries, notably David Hume and Immanuel Kant, situated their thoughts on aesthetics within a tradition which presupposes a single universal rationality. From Cartesian rationalism to Lockean empiricism, and

throughout the entire period we know as the Enlightenment, runs the assumption that all healthy and well-cultivated human minds function in the same manner, thus, for both Hume and Kant, it made sense to theorize beauty as a universally-recognizable quality, something that all appropriately situated people can perceive and agree on. But, for both of them, beauty judgements are in fact ambiguous; they are subjective judgements that, when experienced by the judger, are accompanied by the expectation that others will concur – that is, *as if* the judgement were an objective assessment of a universally-recognized quality.

The position Hume outlines in "Of the Standard of Taste" grounds his analysis in "the influence of plain reason; which, in all these cases, maintains similar sentiments in all men" (¶3).[2] But Hume gives prominence to the empirical fact of divergence in aesthetic evaluations which is, he notes, "obvious to the most careless enquirer" (¶2). Beauty, for Hume, is like colour, both subjectively perceived and a matter for intersubjective agreement (¶12).[3] While he thinks it "natural" for us to accept a single standard to which our judgements should aspire (¶6), he also questions the possibility of finding such a standard, given the diversity of individual preferences, and variations in cultural and temporal norms (¶28). Here, in this scepticism about how a single standard can be fashioned out of the great diversity of aesthetic preferences, is where I see unacknowledged possibilities for aesthetic pluralism. Hume notes that each artwork, "in order to produce its due effect on the mind," needs to be approached on its own terms, and that anyone who would offer criticism of its aesthetic merits must endeavour as much as possible to place himself or herself in the situation of the artwork's intended audience (¶21). This requirement that one must respect

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[2] The paragraph numbering used in this discussion was added by Julie C. Van Camp (1997) to the version of Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" available at www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r15.html.

[3] As to how this intersubjective agreement is to be achieved, Hume says "the best way of ascertaining [a delicacy of taste] is to appeal to those models and principles, which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages" (¶17).

the artwork and its context, when considered in conjunction with the diversity in "different humours of particular men ... [and] the particular manners and opinions of our age and country" (¶28), leads Hume to the unsatisfying (for him) conclusion that no single standard is available to us.[4] If the richness of artistic creation and the diversity of aesthetic preferences cannot be reconciled under a single standard (without deliberately excluding those which confound the standard), then we would seem to have a choice between a tolerant and open-minded pluralism and a defeatist acknowledgement that judgements are either impossible or private. Hume persists, however, in believing that reasoned argument might somehow distract us from the impasse he identifies.[5] He, like Kant, dismisses the notion that agreement on matters of taste is merely empirical.[6] Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* defends the position that there are *a priori* principles grounding our aesthetic judgements. To deny this, he says, requires one to endorse the position that our judgements agree not because they are governed by an *a priori* principle but only "because the subjects are contingently organized in the same way" (remark II, §57). This, Kant claims, is problematic because it would fold judgements of the beautiful into the agreeable (which is a personal and non-universally applicable response) and, in so doing, "all beauty in the world would be denied" (§58).

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[4] "[N]otwithstanding all our endeavors to fix a standard of taste and reconcile the discordant apprehensions of men, there still remain two sources of variation which ... will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame" (¶28). These are, as I note above the varying aesthetic preferences of individuals and the preferences of geographically- and temporally-situated societies. "But," continues Hume, "where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is entirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one preference above the other; in that case a certain degree of diversity in judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments" (¶28).

[5] "[M]en can do no more than in other disputable questions, which are submitted to the understanding: They must produce the best arguments [and] they must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals to this standard" (¶25).

[6] Hume's account of this philosophical position (which he rejects because, as he notes in ¶8, although it accords with one view of 'common sense', it does not accord with the universality assumed in everyday critical practices) is: "Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty ... every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others" (¶7).

In section IV of the introduction to this *Critique*, Kant explains his view that judgements of the beautiful (aesthetic judgements) are a special type – reflective,[7] as opposed to the determinative judgements which give us scientific knowledge – and they pertain to judgements of particulars (empirical experiences of beauty) which we seek to subsume under a universal (the *a priori* principle governing taste). In section VII, however, he tells us that these judgements are not of the objects themselves; aesthetic judgements are of "the subjective aspect in a representation," that is, of the pleasure which the free play of imagination and understanding derive from the mental representation of a form judged to be purposive.[8] This pleasure, because it involves faculties we are all deemed to possess, is considered to have universal validity, hence objects which invoke such pleasure are called beautiful (as opposed to merely agreeable). His analysis (specifically, the "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment") begins with an account of the judgements we make of 'the beautiful' (§1-22): what the specific properties of these judgements are and how we distinguish them from judgements of 'the agreeable' and 'the good' (both of which *are* judgements of objects themselves). After offering a similar account of the sublime (§23-29), he returns to judgements of the beautiful and the question of what gives them the universal validity he ascribes to them (§30-42). Here we learn that one doesn't take the judgements of others into account when forming one's own judgements of beauty (taste), but one does project one's judgements onto others (§32). We also learn more about the relation of the empirical to the *a priori* in these judgements: the pleasure associated with beauty is an

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[7] As Kant understands them, these judgements belong to the faculty of cognition and relate it to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (see Preface to the first edition, 5:169). This is the basis for his emphasizing the 'subjective aspect' (the pleasure) of the idea one forms (through cognition) of the object in question.

[8] To be judged as purposive, an object does not need actually to have been designed with a purpose in mind (indeed, for Kant, this would make its value a practical matter, hence not an object appropriate to aesthetic experience); instead purposiveness is the impression we have of a form so perfectly coherent that it seems to be how it is *necessarily* (rather than giving the sense that it could have been otherwise) – the perfection and harmony we see in nature, for instance.

empirical judgement (we have to experience the artwork), but the judgement of beauty itself is an *a priori* judgement (§37). This explanation is followed by a close analysis of the fine arts (§43-54) in which the different kinds of arts are assessed relative to each other, before turning his attention away from aesthetic questions into an analysis of teleological judgement.

The specifics of Kant's account of the beautiful help us to see not just a particular moment in Enlightenment aesthetic theorizing, but also its significance for so many subsequent movements in European thinking on the arts. From the first, it is clear that judgement of the beautiful is an exercise in abstraction. These judgements are made based on the pleasure provided to the judger by a mental representation of the art object, developed through the play of understanding and imagination.[9] Moreover, this process of judgement is paramount; the play of cognitive faculties (and the pleasure resulting from it) is more important to assessments of beauty than even the richness or originality of the ideas an artwork might inspire.[10] And it is indeed beauty which Kant understands to be the sole preoccupation of aesthetics: "Beauty (whether it be beauty of nature or of art) can in general be called the expression of aesthetic ideas" (§51). His rather narrow definition of beauty is that "which should properly concern merely form" (§13) and, in his view, it is form that pure aesthetic judgements (judgements of taste) attend to (§14).[11] And when he turns to a more particularized discussion of music, we see this narrow definition becoming even more obviously restrictive and culturally-situated. "[T]he aesthetic ideas of a coherent whole" are

[9] "In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we ... relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure" (§1). "Now the judgment of taste, however, determines the object, independently of concepts, with regard to satisfaction and the predicate of beauty" (§9).

[10] "[T]he power of judgment counts for more ... in the judging of art as beautiful art. To be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty as is the suitability of the imagination in its freedom to the lawfulness of the understanding" (§50).

[11] "Yet in all beautiful art what is essential consists in the form, which is purposive for observation and judging" (§52).

expressed through "the form of the composition" which Kant understands as harmony and melody (§53). "On this mathematical form ... alone depends the satisfaction that the mere reflection ... connects with this play of [sensations] as a condition of its beauty valid for everyone" (§53).

However, it is crucially important to underline here that Kant's theory is not one of art, but one of aesthetic experience, of response to the beautiful. Despite his references to the fine arts, Kant is really more concerned with the beauty of sunsets than the beauty of symphonies. As Noël Carroll notes in his analysis of mass art, fragments of Kant's aesthetic theory have been appropriated as a theory of art, often by theorizers who seek to valorize avant-garde art (89-109). This "mistaken transformation" has resulted in philosophies of art like Theodor Adorno's and Clive Bell's which are predisposed to formalist analysis (Carroll 91). Among the fragments they take from Kant are the expectation that our judgements will receive universal assent (Carroll 91-2), the disinterested state of mind in which we make them (92), and the independence of the artwork from any moral or practical considerations (92-5). These fragments, pieced together as a theory of art, form the ground for the elitist notions of music as formal structure and the fine arts as edification for the refined mind at leisure which Adorno and other European-influenced theorizers (e.g. Goodman, Levinson) continue to privilege two centuries later, notions which deliberately devalue 'mere' enjoyment and the concrete pleasures of performances.

As we have seen in chapter one's discussion of Adorno, genuine art music is assessed based on the coherence of its formal structure, which is thought to bear on its capacity as an autonomous object to challenge social realities. But if only form is properly aesthetic, then how can avant-garde jazz be understood in its entirety? If its experimentalism involves anything other than this narrowly-construed form, it will not be recognized. If it plays with

form in ways that challenge the coherence of the whole, it will not be recognized as a musical work. And if the experimentalism does not, in the mind of the judger, merit an ascription of beauty (that is, if the judger cannot sufficiently grasp the work such that a representation of it provides him or her with the pleasure afforded by a play of faculties), it will not be judged to be an aesthetic or artistic project. As I noted in chapter two's discussion of jazz journalism, an exclusionary commitment to formalism as the single aesthetic theory through which to view artworks results in an impoverished understanding of improvisations in the avant-garde movement of free jazz.

Far from being an accident, the requirement of abstract disinterest is in fact a crucial desideratum, plucked out of Kant and given central status in Kantian-derived theories.[12] Both Adorno and Bell take up this view of the judger of art: he or she is one who contemplates an object in a detached and leisurely manner. Adorno's ideal listener does not seek out music for entertainment or sociality; as he puts the point, "[a] fully concentrated and conscious experience of art is possible only to those whose lives do not put such a strain on them," those whose lifestyle and education have trained them to approach art with a kind of scientific dispassion ("On Popular Music" 38). Aesthetic appreciation is, for Adorno, always of serious music and is always characterized by an analytical attention to formal structure ("Music" 18-21). About the aesthetic attitude which he thinks paintings characterized by 'significant form' inspire in us, Bell says: "Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exultation ... we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life" (*Art* 68).

This idealized attitude of detached consideration fuels the quintessentially European notion of art (cashed out as either form or beauty) for its own sake, seen, for instance, in the

[12] "[I]f the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake," Kant asserts (§2).

19th century movement in painting which celebrated the idea of *l'art pour l'art* (and preserved, ironically, in movie company MGM's motto *ars gratia artis*). It treats art as an isolated cultural product, abstracting the objects out of the context that would make visible their possible moral and political ramifications. In fact, Kant seems not to be misappropriated here; he is adamant that the beautiful be severed from both the moral and the useful (§15) because both of these latter concepts connect our feelings of approbation directly to the object, albeit in different ways.[13] His definition of aesthetic judgement – "to say that [something] is beautiful and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object" (§2) – when (mis)applied to music, favours the abstract idea of formal structure to the exclusion of the actual experience of performances (the experience of being transported by music that I discussed in chapter four), exactly the tendency I criticized in my second and third chapters when I took up the question of how Eurological theorizing distorted music-making in jazz improvisation. Endorsing a disjunction of aesthetic judgements from musical experiences cannot be an adequate definition in a performative account of music (e.g., improvised music) because, without the performance, there is nothing for the judgements to be 'about'.[14] Even

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[13] Both, he thinks, presuppose a relation of the object to some end or purpose: the moral relates to an internal end (perfection), and the useful to an external one (§15).

[14] Even if we allow that judgements could be about representations of performances, we are still placing ourselves at one remove from the musical experience, judging what we do with the music rather than what it does to us. Kant says "judgment of taste is merely contemplative, i.e., a judgment that, indifferent with regard to the existence of an object, merely connects its constitution together with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure" (§5), which, for him, is a feeling derived from reflection upon the form (harmony and melody). This contemplation inserts an idea between the experience of the music and the aesthetic judgement of it. This idea, or representation, is of the music's formal structure and presupposes the object status of music, a view more consistent with through-composed notions of what music is than it is with the understanding of jazz improvisations as performative processes that I took up in chapter four. To say that presupposing object status is more consistent, however, is not to say that this disjunction of experience and judgement is unproblematic in through-composed music-making; my point is simply that, once again, in applying formalist analysis to improvisation, we can see a divergence in theory and practice with respect to ontological assumptions. Whatever criticisms one may want to make of how Western art music is treated under formalist theories, one must at least acknowledge that where we have music-making as process, not object, theories which presuppose that they are dealing with objects may not be the best fit.

the genealogical link between Kant and Foucault is revealed in this isolation of artworks from their creative contexts: Foucault's endorsement of *écriture*'s central principle, the erasure of the author, is prefigured in Kant's demand that "the purposiveness in the product of beautiful art, although it is certainly intentional, must nevertheless not seem intentional" (§45).[15] To say that artworks "must seem to be unintentional and to happen on their own; otherwise it is not beautiful art" (§51) is an erasure of intent, artist, and context. To say, in addition, that beautiful art "must not be a matter of remuneration, a labor whose magnitude can be judged, enforced, or paid for" (§51) is an erasure of material conditions of art-making, and obscures a whole set of moral and political questions of the sort that are raised in copyright cases like *Newton v. Diamond et al.* (discussed in chapter three).

As problematic as the requirement of the judger's disinterest and the artwork's independence from moral and practical concerns are for (non-European) art-making, the more serious issue, in my view, is formalist perpetuation of the Kantian assertion of a universal validity for aesthetic judgements. Kant's claim that the disinterested satisfaction one feels in response to the beautiful "must contain a ground of satisfaction for everyone" and "has the similarity with logical judgment that its validity for everyone can be presupposed" (§6) doesn't take account of variations such as might result from cultural upbringing and influence. Although Kant admits that judgements relating to sense perception may differ from subject to subject in ways that affect what we find agreeable, e.g.

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[15] Although one can see this link between Kant and Foucault, significant differences separate them. Most obviously, as I discussed in chapter two, Foucault uses his proposed erasure of the author to call for radical proliferation of meanings which might be attributed to the artwork. Kant, on the other hand, detaches aesthetically valued objects (not necessarily artworks) from context to draw our attention to the single appropriate relationship out of which aesthetic judgements should be formed: a disinterested spectator contemplating the form of an object and deriving pleasure from the way his or her imagination engages the idea (representation) shaped by cognition. Because he thinks our minds are structured in the same way, Kant cannot make room in this description for multiple meanings; the relationship is structured such that we recognize beauty or not, and (as Hume asserts) agreement amongst judgers can be arrived at through informed discussion of the work's features.

preferences with respect to colours or tones of musical instruments (§14, §39), the contention that our judgements can have universal validity because the cognitive structures of our minds function in the same way is unquestioned.[16] This expectation of universal validity derives its plausibility from the emphasis that aesthetic theorizing places on formal elements of artworks. We can expect that we will all make the same judgement, it is asserted, because we are all narrowly focusing on the same things – the line and colour of paintings, certain aspects of the sound structure of musical works, the linguistic play of poetry. Variations in judgement that might arise because of different cultural situations of judgers or different assessments of the moral or practical implications of artworks are simply ignored by formalist theories. In this way, such theories manage to avoid engaging with the possibility that convergence of aesthetic judgements is due to the judgers being contingently organized in the same way (the empirical explanation of taste).

In my view, the position endorsed by Hume and Kant at the beginning of this section – that to provide an empirical ground for aesthetic judgements (instead of an *a priori* one) undercuts beauty or violates critical practice – is unacceptably limiting for two reasons: it restricts the concept of beauty (to that which is universal because it is dependent only upon the work's formal features), and it restricts the scope of aesthetics. Taking up just the point about limitations on the concept of beauty, for now (I shall return to the issue of the limited scope for aesthetics in section three, Polyculturalism and pluralism), we might grant that different cultures could have different notions of beauty which filtered all the way through to assessment of formal elements, but still hold to the idea that, within a given

[16] "In all human beings, the subjective conditions of this faculty ... are the same, which must be true, since otherwise human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself," claims Kant (§38). On this point, he would seem to have a certain plausibility on his side – we clearly can communicate ideas and knowledge – but if our cognitive faculties are as much the same as he thinks, whence arises disagreement? In my view, Kant is not justified in assuming any greater uniformity in cognitive faculties than can be shown to exist in sense perception.

society, a homogenous standard of the beautiful can be defended. This is one possible way of reconciling universal standards to an empirical basis: by restricting 'universal' so that it ranges only over all the members of the society under investigation. But, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu shows in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, beauty judgements vary depending upon the social stratum one occupies, or believes to be attainable.[17] Bourdieu takes up Kant not as an authority in whose thinking a philosophy of art might be grounded, but as a foil for sociological criticism of the notion of a single (universal) sense of taste. His analysis is intended to be read as a rebuttal of Kant's view, offering a detailed empirical argument that consensus in aesthetic judgements is, in fact, attributable to subjects being (contingently) similarly situated and that whether one sees a given object as beautiful depends on one's social positioning. Taste, claims Bourdieu, "functions as a sort of social orientation, a 'sense of one's place', guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position" (466).

Bourdieu interrogates the hidden criteria behind practices identified as aesthetic, those which reveal the different social identities of, for example, farmers and retail employees, or populations in large urban centres and those residing in 'the provinces' (102-5) and argues that cultural goods, e.g. artworks and artistic practices, are externalizations of class (113).[18] Observing that "social identity is defined and asserted through difference" (172), he likens taste in art to taste in food, asserting that class differences are revealed in working class preferences for practical, realistic art and heavy, filling foods versus more

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[17] Bourdieu's analysis is based on a 1963 survey (interview and ethnographic observation) of French residents, men and women, of Paris, Lille, and an unnamed 'small provincial town'. See his Appendix 1, "Some Reflections on Method" for details.

[18] One example Bourdieu offers is that of library-visiting and stamp-collecting practices of those members of the petite bourgeoisie who aspire to rise into the bourgeoisie proper (123), thus requiring them to educate themselves about cultural habits and artifacts common to a group to which they hope to belong.

middle class preferences for the stylish art of contemporary galleries and lighter foods like fresh fruit and vegetables (Bourdieu 177). Taste, Bourdieu tells us, is *amor fati*, the forced choice which we nonetheless take up as our own, "a virtue made of necessity" (177-8).[19] We can see this valorization of contingent circumstances even within classes; within the dominant class, for instance, Bourdieu identifies an ongoing struggle over what counts more in determining class identities: economic capital, cultural capital (including 'taste' and education), or social capital (family background) (125).[20] He also identifies two possibilities for the 'dominated classes': "loyalty to self and the group," expressed in the working classes' fierce commitment to the realism that they know they like, and "the individual effort to assimilate the dominant ideal," expressed in the petite bourgeoisie's dedication to educating themselves into a position of being able to 'pass' as legitimate bearers of taste (Bourdieu 384).

As Bourdieu notes in his discussion of the social significance of 'don't know' responses to political opinion polls, the belief that everyone – theoretically – has the capacity to make judgements, be they aesthetic or political, obscures the social processes which actively prevent development of that capacity in the less-advantaged classes (398).[21] Naturalizing this capacity (as formalism does when it tells us that we can stand before an object in a state of disinterestedness and assess all of its aesthetic merit) depicts those who

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[19] In his choice of Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati* as the most appropriate way to describe how taste functions in relation to social identity, we can see that Bourdieu is not simply attacking Kant on the question of how one would judge from a position of disinterestedness; he is denying that disinterestedness plays any role in judgements of taste. We make our judgements, he thinks, in accordance with our beliefs about what should be valued by 'people like us'. Thus, what is seen as beautiful photography, or good furnishing and decorating of one's home, or the proper hospitality to offer a houseguest depends on whether one identifies oneself with the working class, the rising petit bourgeoisie, the wealthy *élite*, etc.

[20] So teachers, whom Bourdieu labels a dominated fraction of the dominant class (because rich in cultural capital and relatively poor in economic capital), are more likely to patronize avant-garde theatre and museum or gallery exhibits (273) than industrialists, for whom "the theatre is an occasion for conspicuous spending," not an opportunity (as it presumably is with the teachers) to demonstrate their legitimacy as arbiters of taste (270).

[21] "Technical competence is to social competence what the capacity to speak is to the right to speak, simultaneously a precondition and an effect" (Bourdieu 409).

cannot, or choose not to,[22] exercise such capacities as defective, blaming the 'victim' rather than exposing repressive and exclusionary social forces (Bourdieu 405-62). Both of these findings – that differences in aesthetic judgements track class and that the least-advantaged segments of society have a marked tendency to refrain from offering their judgements – give us reason to believe that aesthetics is not a politically-neutral discursive domain. Neither the judgements we make about art objects and artistic processes nor the theories we propose about the formulating of these judgements are apolitical. In fact, the formalism endorsed by Bell, in particular, is political in its assertion that artworks are politically neutral. In taking this view, Bell is foreclosing any possibility that art can be a site of political resistance. Adorno, on the other hand, wants to leave this possibility open, but wants to do so in a specific and limited way – artworks can have political significance but only through their relations of formal elements. This too is politically exclusionary; it rules out aesthetic attention to politically significant narrative content, for instance. What this should lead us to conclude about the universalism of formalist theories is that it is a 'consensus' of a small segment of society that is imposed upon all.[23]

Cultural hybridity and the myth of purity

But there is another way of conceiving universalism, one that avoids the problems of bias and repression that I identified in the previous section. In a recent article, "On Musical

[22] "[C]ontrary to the naïve belief in formal equality ... the working-class view is realistic in seeing no choice, for the most deprived, other than simple abdication" (Bourdieu 417).

[23] Bourdieu observes in his Postscript to *Distinction* (titled "Towards a 'Vulgar' Critique of 'Pure' Critiques") that "[n]othing in the content of [Kant's] typically professorial aesthetic could stand in the way of its being recognized as universal by its sole ordinary readers, the professors of philosophy, who were too concerned with hunting down historicism and sociologism to see the historical and social coincidence which, here as in so many cases, is the basis of their illusion of universality" (493). Kant's typical readers, being similarly-situated intellectuals, would see nothing in his analysis which excludes them, thus would not question its universality. Bourdieu's analysis, however, shows us the limited range of this assumption by showing us that acceptance of form as the aesthetically significant quality of artworks is class-specific.

Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," cultural anthropologist Georgina Born points to this possibility for negotiating consensus in aesthetics through her engagement with Bruno Latour's argument for a rethinking of 'the common world'.[24] Latour critically analyzes the passing of "these strange times we call 'modernity'" in which the natural world was the single objective backdrop upon which the play of diverse cultures took place – in philosophical terminology, nature was substance; culture, mere appearance.[25] He argues that the West's complacent belief that it is entitled to declare (and police) the unified world has broken down into a "war of the worlds" in the face of widespread contemporary rejection of two opposed political phenomena, globalization and fragmentation (phenomena that have been theorized elsewhere under the label 'Jihad versus McWorld'[26]) which he glosses as, respectively, "the crisis of unity" and "the crisis of multiplicity".[27] The crisis of unity calls into question the common world of nature-science-reason, while the crisis of multiplicity rejects the cultural relativist-multiculturalist view that cultural diversity should (can) be tolerated because nothing 'real' is at stake in acknowledging many appearances. Now, says Latour, the West must "take seriously the diversity of worlds" and come to terms with the view that "[t]he common world is not behind us and ready made, like nature, but ahead of us, an immense task which we will need to accomplish one step at a time," through negotiation with other cultures[28] – which, he notes, are other, but no longer 'other' (in the sense of the Orientalism which Said criticized, or the marginalized 'subaltern' which postcolonial studies resists).[29]

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[24] Bruno Latour, "War of the worlds - What about peace?" http://www.btgjapan.org/catalysts/bruno.html.
[25] *Ibid.*, 2-3.
[26] See Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).
[27] Latour, 4.
[28] *Ibid.*, 5.
[29] The distinction I am drawing here is between a multiculturalism characterized by a healthy respect for difference – in perspective, identities, and values – and the romanticized, paternalistic view (that I discuss

Rejecting both modern arrogance and postmodern guilt, Latour articulates the demand that Western cultures face today: "Just as no one had asked the modernists to take themselves for universal pacifiers, no one asks them today to take themselves for universal culprits. Only one thing is asked of them now: that they cease to consider universality as their own already established territory and that they finally agree to negotiate for it".[30] Positing an imaginary negotiating table, he argues for constructivism as an egalitarian principle through which all conceptions – of gods, worlds, sciences, selves – must be 'produced', that is, negotiated.[31] Negotiations begin, he tells us, "with the question of the right ways to build" and, he notes, it is a pitfall inherent in all negotiations that they might fail.[32] However, negotiations that have broken down, no matter how acrimoniously, can always be re-established and, at least in principle, this is a methodology less likely to incite resentment and rebellion than a totalizing imperialism.[33] This, suggests Born, is how we might respectably retain a notion of universalism: by self-consciously construing it as a

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in footnote 23 of chapter two) of non-Western cultures as subordinate 'others' who allegedly benefit from Western colonizing and development activities.

[30] Latour, 7.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*, 8-9.

[33] This imperialism that the West must relinquish has many fronts, Latour thinks. It is cultural, religious, economic (4), and is grounded in the claim that Western cultures make to being 'modern' and therefore universal. However in this age of crises (of unity and multiplicity, globalization and fragmentation) that Latour identifies (4), societies with values not recognized within/as modernity have demanded equal recognition – as producers of science, as sites of religious knowledge and psychological truth, and as political actors (9-11). These challenges have brought us into a postmodern world but, observes Latour, we have "replaced arrogance with guilt, ... without engaging in any more negotiations than before" (11). That this move can be made without bringing us any closer to a willingness to negotiate shows the extent to which those who have power (or perceive themselves as having power) are reluctant to give it up. It is equally obvious, however, that the challenges of those who demand equal recognition are not going to go away. This is a struggle that goes far beyond the spiraling violence of terrorism and securitization; one sees manifestations of it in so-called Third World societies who demand the right to define for themselves what constitutes 'development' within their territory rather than having foreign notions imposed by benevolent outsiders, and in demands within universities for courses that include previously-marginalized texts, thinkers, and knowledges. We could, of course, refuse to listen to Latour and refuse to negotiate an endpoint universalism, preferring our own notion which encodes our unquestioned dominance. But that will be/is already being exposed for the dogma it is. The payoff we get from adopting a negotiating attitude is the credibility that comes with being willing to talk as equals – in stark contrast to positioning ourselves as emperor and demanding attention for our new (once modern, but now postmodern) clothes.

possible endpoint of our negotiations (which, it must be said, might turn out to be unachievable), rather than assuming it as a natural starting point. This negotiation of a consensus which depends upon the inclusion of every voice and carries with it always the risk of failure is, of course, much like the understanding of improvisation that I discussed in chapter four.

If we take constructed universalism seriously in aesthetics, the negotiated conversation about aesthetic values begins with questions about what values are produced within a given system or tradition of art-making, and how they are produced.[34] Once the diversity of views about these values is laid out on Latour's hypothesized negotiating table, the difficult work begins of helping others to see the values that are always blindingly self-evident to the one who is already accepting of the artistic framework under discussion. Two virtues seem to me to reside in this process: first, one gains from exposure to different points of view which, however initially alien, can be made familiar through the patient work of negotiating explanations and exemplifications, and second, one gains a clearer grasp of one's own aesthetic commitments through this explanation-exemplification work – an instance of the familiar becoming better understood through a process of making it strange (or perhaps more accurately, attempting to see it as strange).[35]

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[34] And obviously, questions about ontologies of art begin with context-specific accounts of what *they* are, and how *they* are produced.

[35] This process of exchanging points of view is one I see as a negotiation in which each person holds a set of aesthetic commitments which he or she may choose to modify (or not) based on consideration of what others say about what they value and why. The kind of thing I have in mind is a learning process whereby someone with a distinct preference for, say, representational painting learns what others value about abstract (non-representational) works and perhaps even develops an appreciation for analysis that attends to arrangement of formal elements (although perhaps not an exclusive appreciation, if the preference for representation is retained). This differs from Bourdieu's notion of exchanging one's aesthetic preferences because his understanding of taste is, as we have seen, indexed to class. Thus the only exchange he really acknowledges as possible is tied to class trajectory: one relinquishes the aesthetic preferences of one's working-class background if one aspires to rising into the *petit bourgeoisie* (110-2, 359-60). In this case, one takes on new tastes as if they were a new identity (with all the attendant insecurities; for instance, being 'tripped up' in a casual discussion of musical tastes). This way of thinking through changes in taste, however, raises the potential objection to Bourdieu that he is engaging in 'class essentialism' and

Any consensus that is achieved through a process like this – any process that is not, as Latour says of modernism, "generously offering to let the others in, on the condition that they leave at the door all that is dear to them" (6) – will have to combine elements of multiple views in the construction it produces. That is, what is produced will be a hybrid.[36] But hybridity is not always an unproblematic move away from modernism's univocal concepts, as we can see if we shift our attention momentarily from a general discussion of hybridity in aesthetic theory to a more specific examination of hybridity in music. In their introduction to *Western Music and Its Others*, editors Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh raise a number of questions about the notion of hybridity, among them the possibility that what they term the "will to hybridity" can be seen merely as colonialism's new face (19). On this view, hybridity is a way for Western artists to co-opt non-Western musics, using them as resources from which to tease 'innovations' that will entertain Western audiences (Born and Hesmondhalgh 8). This musical colonialism centrally involves appropriating and re-presenting the 'other' music in a way that incorporates it in order to transcend it (Born and Hesmondhalgh 15), thus reinscribing the Western synthesis as the one true universal. Another problem they identify with respect to hybridity lies in the very notion of cultural borrowing which, they note, relies upon overly-determined identifications of particular musical styles with social groups or cultures (Born and Hesmondhalgh 22). This musico-

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undermines the point that I want to emphasize: that modifications and changes to one's aesthetic preferences, and reasons for having those preferences, can come about as a result of encountering and discussing different preferences held by others. (One might think of this as an instance of the informal, group-based learning that I defined in footnote 29 of chapter four as 'schooling'.)

[36] A hybrid differs from a plurality of views in that the hybrid has within itself discernable elements of all of the views included in the negotiation process whereas a plurality of views can be acknowledged without demanding that a synthesis be formed out of them. A negotiation that successfully forms a coherent view in which the participants all recognize parts of the views each of them brought into the process would bring about a hybrid. A negotiation that did not produce a coherent view but instead agreed to take note of the diversity would bring about a plurality of views. (These two possibilities differ – obviously, I would hope – from the totalizing universalism of one view being imposed on all of the 'negotiating' participants, and from a homogenization which also produces a single coherent view as an outcome but does not allow us to discern, and trace back to their originators, elements of the views brought into the process.)

cultural essentialism is especially problematic when we consider the question of whether non-hybrid music is even possible (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2, 16).

As John Corbett, one of the volume's contributors, observes: "The move to disentangle 'authentic' ethnic music from its hybridized new-music forms can be seen as a reassertion of the peculiar Western power to define (and preserve) 'pure' expressions of cultural ethnicity as opposed to their 'tainted' counterparts" (163). Here questions of colonialism and musical 'purity' come together to designate as pure, or authentic, those musical 'offerings' which do not presume to engage elements from outside 'their' (non-Western) cultures. To be ethnic – 'other' in the bad old Orientalist sense – is to be pure, and to be pure is to be worthy of valorization, whereas experimenting with new forms, cultural hybrids, invariably results in contamination. The message this musical colonialism sends to creators of 'ethnic' musics is that they maintain their credibility only insofar as they remain resources for the West: they may sing back-up vocals when Paul Simon decides to go to Graceland (Born and Hesmondhalgh 23, 26), but if they make the trip themselves, they risk dismissal as inauthentic.[37]

This understanding of hybridity, a blending or mixing that remains in the service of existing power relations, is clearly the negative view. There is, however, a more positive way of understanding the dynamics of hybrid musical forms, one that Simon Frith discusses in his essay for *Western Music.* Frith observes that hybridity has emerged as a possible response to the domination of world markets by Western musical products. It is, he claims, "the struggle to create a new, local culture" and to maintain one's localized identity in the face of

[37] The point here is that the South African musicians who contributed their efforts and talents to *Graceland* were cast in a subsidiary role; the album would not have been possible without them but overall credit for it was taken by Simon. He, being a Western musician, was free to travel to exotic locations and use their local talent to enrich his recording project's claim to authenticity but they did not have the same freedom – either with respect to economic clout or the ability to experiment with blending other, foreign sounds (had they come to the United States and taken up pop influences, they would have risked dismissal as sell-outs or imitators).

homogenizing globalization that allows us to see hybridity's liberatory potential (Frith 310). In fact, claims Frith, referencing Stuart Hall's term "the aesthetics of creolization" (315), "hybridity is a new name for a familiar process: local musics are rarely culturally pure" (311). When it comes to determining whether we ought to judge a particular instance of cultural hybridity optimistically or pessimistically, Born and Hesmondhalgh tells us that we need to focus on "the differences attendant on who is doing the hybridity, from which position and with what intention and result" (19).[38]

One way of drawing out this relation of hybridity and identity is through metaphorical elaboration of the example of a pumpkin-based Haitian soup called joumou. Joumou is a traditional dish that is central to identity at both the community and national levels; prepared early in the morning on New Year's Day (also the day of Indépendance d'Haïti), it is drunk with family and offered to visitors throughout the day, often children of neighbours who come to pass on New Year's wishes from their families (Yurnet-Thomas). The sharing of soup joumou signifies celebration of and rededication to the ideals of freedom, hope, solidarity, and Haitian identity. The cultural hybridity of joumou can be seen in one of its origin stories: pumpkin soup was a status symbol of the *élite* of the French

[38] This focus that Born and Hesmondhalgh recommend (which would allow us to distinguish positive hybridity from negative hybridity) is, as I understand it, a critical questioning of whether the blending/hybridization in question is an (acceptable) appropriation or an (unacceptable) exploitation. One might think that there is little point in making such a distinction – perhaps taking the position that all appropriation is unacceptable – but this seems to me problematic. If no appropriations are permissible, then transformation at the level of personal identity (e.g. performed gender identity, or the adoption of national identity that occurs when one acclimatizes to a new country) is suspect, as is creolization, multiculturalism, and a host of other borrowings that many of us take to enrich artforms and cultures making use of the practice. If appropriation in itself is always bad, then (to take the example of the previous paragraph) the South African musicians who recorded *Graceland* with Paul Simon are as guilty of a *faux pas* as he is. And yet, when Born and Hesmondhalgh assess the negative aspects of this collaboration, it is not the blending of cultures that attracts their critical scrutiny but the financial and creative ownership that Simon took of the music which was clearly a group collaboration (Feld, quoted in Born and Hesmondhalgh 26). It seems to me most sensible to take the position that exploitation is unacceptable but borrowing (appropriation) done openly and respectfully (with any rewards given for it being shared) is acceptable. Taking this position then confers upon us the responsibility to ask, in *all* cases, the difficult and complex questions that Born and Hesmondhalgh put to us about attendant differences, position, intention, and result.

colonizers, the plantation owners, and after the revolution, the soup of the colonizers was drunk by the former slaves as a celebration of their freedom and their new social organization (Charles). Traditionally one meat (often beef) and chunks of vegetables are added to the pumpkin base, everyone creating (or reworking) their own version according to taste and, of course, availability of ingredients. For instance, one Miami chef, Wilkinson Sejour, substitutes blue crab, shrimp, lobster, and conch for the traditional beef to symbolize, he says, "how far Haitians have moved into the mainstream" of Floridian society (Charles). The owner of another Miami restaurant explicitly likens joumou to Haiti: "What makes soup joumou is not just the pumpkin, but the different spices, different vegetables, a mixture of things," says Ronald Rigaud. "When you consider what is a nation, it is this blend of different people, different backgrounds, different views, different vision with a common goal: Haiti" (Rigaud, quoted in Charles). The metaphorical strength of this deliberately non-definitive soup which is so integral to celebrations of Haitian identity is that it represents one possible subversive response to colonization. That is, one way to subvert imposed universalism is to dilute the (supposed) purity of cultural symbols, to create a hybrid out of a symbol of dominance in order to make space for diversity.[39]

So does cultural hybridity result in a melting pot, a homogenous stew in which all products float without provenance or distinction? Or does it provide a way to fashion identity for oneself out the many influences and ideas one finds in one's culture without

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[39] This is the phenomenon that Frith identifies with respect to the weaving of hybrid musics out of local music-making traditions and imported commodities, and it is also an instance of complete reworking of symbolic significance. Pumpkin soup represented the purity and unchallenged power of the French élite in the colony of Saint Domingue; joumou represents the ideal of solidarity of *all* Haitians – in the words of the motto emblazoned on the Haitian flag, *l'union* [qui] *fait la force*. In joumou, one can still taste the pumpkin, but one also tastes the meat, peppers, spices, and vegetables: flavours are not diluted to the point that one ceases to distinguish them (that would be the homogenization that I contrasted with hybridity in footnote 35 above). The dilution of a symbol of dominance into a hybrid is like the respectful negotiation that Latour urges us to replace the monolith of Western universalism with: each ingredient affects the final taste of the mixture. The previously-dominant elements are still valued, just not to the exclusion of all others.

having to resort to regressive appeals to a fictitious and unattainable cultural purity? While we need always to remain alert to the possibility of existing social privileges reinscribing themselves in new, more socially acceptable vocabularies (hybridity as the new face of musical colonialism, for instance), the latter view – identity fashioned out of a patchwork of influences – raises the alternative possibility of a more honest conception of authenticity, as Born and Hesmondhalgh note (30). Rather than appealing to a mythic past (and cultural essentialism) for a pure identity, we can, following Latour, turn instead to negotiating hybrid identity out of the many elements made available to us in the polycultural contexts of our lives. This is the path that Donna Haraway advocates in her endorsement of the postmodern, chimerical notion of 'cyborg' identity which would allow us to continually negotiate existence in a world that is both natural and constructed, and irreducible to either – as opposed to dreaming of a return to Eden so that we can make everything come out right (non-patriarchal, non-imperialist) next time (150-1).[40] Hybridity can be cashed out as a way of acknowledging that we are where we are and that our only options consist in where and how we go on from here.

As a characteristic or descriptor of artistic projects, hybridity can illuminate the commitments of some of the artists I have already discussed, in particular, those of Alison Saar and John Coltrane. As I noted in chapter two (footnote 27), bell hooks' account of Saar's work stresses a connection between her goals and the fusion of traditions in her work. hooks describes Saar's work as an invitation to explore the mysteries of the soul through examination of the disruptive and destructive powers of desire (14-6). This examination is unflinching: as hooks puts it, "[v]alue is found in the nature of searching" (hooks 18). And this search into the truth of the self posits identity "as locally constructed, formed by both

[40] See my discussion of Haraway's project in the final section of chapter two.

choice and context" (hooks 13) which Saar expresses from an oppositional perspective that combines valorization of folk art practices with Western classical traditions (hooks 14). Likewise, the analysis of Coltrane's project that I offered in chapter one stresses his melding of musical traditions in order to reach the universal source, or ground, that he believed existed for all musics. We can understand this as creating a hybridity out of which a negotiated (endpoint) universalism might be fashioned: if each of 'us' is part of the construction, 'we' are visible to ourselves, and the ways in which others complement us are visible also.[41] What Saar and Coltrane's projects share, in addition to the practice of cultural borrowing, is an attitude towards these borrowings that distinguishes them from the musical colonialism Born and Hesmondhalgh worry about (Born and Hesmondhalgh 15). Saar and Coltrane are not seeking to subsume foreign 'exotic' elements or to represent them in order to transcend them; they are instead choosing to fashion themselves and their art in ways that acknowledge these elements as present in their identity constructions. As Born and Hesmondhalgh and hooks all note how we ought to assess acts of borrowing depends on the use (respectful or exploitative) that the artist makes of them (Born and Hesmondhalgh 19; hooks 11).

This brings us back to the issue of hybridity in aesthetic theory, through the connection of identity to aesthetics. Saar and Coltrane model hybrid identities, and in not exploiting or exoticizing the borrowings they take up, they do so in a positive way (the appropriation that I want to acknowledge as acceptable). Although I have some qualms about fully endorsing Bourdieu's view – seeing the potential there for an essentialism grounded in social class – I think his general point is well-taken: one's taste, or sense of the

[41] This is the point that I have been stressing throughout my discussion of negotiation, that what gets constructed out of it ought not to be a homogenization of elements but should instead permit us to discern the different contributions that all have made to the final product.

beautiful, is partially informed by one's sense of identity.[42] If we accept that our aesthetic judgements are indexed to our locations/identities and we acknowledge the hybridity of identity in our increasingly multicultural societies, then we can see the need to continually interrogate and negotiate these judgements in order to remain true to our hybrid selves and maintain our membership in our pluralistic societies.

What I also want to suggest here is that we can see in Saar and Coltrane's projects the aesthetic value of exploration, the search for different, non-definitive ways to find beauty. Rather than narrowing the range of things to which beauty judgements can attach (as is the case with the formalism derived from Kantian aesthetic theory), Saar and Coltrane expand the range of elements and influences brought into their respective projects and invite us to seek for ourselves the values their work might offer. In this exploration of different conceptions of beauty/aesthetic value, they are, I believe, pointing towards the pluralism that I shall argue for in the next section.

Polyculturalism[43] and pluralism

Although at various points throughout his critique Kant represents the universality of aesthetic judgements as necessary (e.g. §31), in §8 he concedes that this universal 'validity' is merely an expectation each of us has – that when we pronounce our judgements as to the

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[42] This is a point that I think one can also draw from my discussion in chapter four of improvisation's unique aesthetic values; the play of identities in a group setting shows, I argued, the aesthetic value of collaboration.

[43] The references I have made thus far to societies characterized by a mix of cultures and/or ethnicities have followed habitual Canadian usage in employing the term 'multiculturalism' and its variants as if it were unproblematic. It needs to be noted, however, that this term has been criticized on the grounds that it essentializes cultures, treating them as fixed and discrete (Kelley). On Kelley's view, polyculturalism is the preferred term because it is thought to more accurately convey the blending and fluidity of cultures that go into identity constructions. I'm not convinced that these prefixes really are to be semantically distinguished in this way but I use polyculturalism in this section in order to 'make strange' the concept, thereby distinguishing the rich blending of diversity that I want to reference here from the versions with which it is often conflated: trite and essentialized notions of differences existing side by side without significant inter-relations.

merits of an artwork others will surely agree with us – and that this expectation is often frustrated. If this is all he means when he speaks of the necessity of universal agreement (suggested in both §8 and §22), then his claims about taste would seem to be psychologically and empirically supportable: as I noted in chapter four's discussion of responses to the Namtchylak-Parker-Drake concert, most of the people who passed judgement did seem to expect that others would grasp and share their point of view. While the expectation that others will share our judgements might be widespread and understandable, it nevertheless attaches, as we saw in that discussion, to a variety of judgements. I want to argue here that in order to make space for healthy and fruitful critical debates about the aesthetic merits of artworks and artistic traditions, we need to focus more on the diversity of judgements than on the expectation of agreement. That is, theorizing and evaluating artworks is best served by joining Hume's observation of the need for both our best arguments and our respect for different opinions (¶25) with Latour's call for inclusive and democratic negotiation. This gives us a space in aesthetics which looks very much like Taylor's 'multicultural' model of deliberative democracy: a discursive space in which recognition of differences is given as high a priority as the potential for developing consensus. Agreement on which is the best way to view a particular artwork is, in my view, a secondary step, less important and less interesting than taking account of all the different ways in which it can be viewed.

If, however, universalism is to be rejected in order to make space for debate about aesthetic values and theories, then it becomes equally important to reject relativism. What I am most concerned to reject is the idea, drawn from James Rachels' analysis of cultural relativism, that all judgements of good or bad, right or wrong, are mere matters of opinion, equally valid and lacking any standard by which they could be made commensurable (16). If everyone's opinion counts equally, simply by virtue of it being an expressed opinion, then we

have no aesthetic debate, only a collection of emotivist statements. In order to have debate, we need to have some basis on which to assess opinions as informed or not, perceptive or not, illuminating or not, etc. I think, *pace* the relativist, that there are standards by which judgements can be assessed, but these standards are plural, not universal, and empirical, not *a priori.* Judgements of artworks need to be assessed with attention to the context of the work (including its creator) and the context of the judger. Good judgements are those which illuminate something of interest about the work, the practice of art more generally, and/or the relation of art to human existence.[44]

We need either a universal standard against which we hold up judgements about particular artworks or a plurality of standards whose applicability can be debated in terms of which provide the better 'fit' with the artwork under examination. The first option is problematic because, as I argued in the first section of this chapter, 'universality' is not really all that universal. The only way to get universal judgements to work is to exclude from the category 'artwork' all those products and processes which fail to meet *a priori* criteria (e.g., the Kantian-derived demand for objects displaying purposive form that prompt a play of cognitive faculties which stimulates abstract intellectual pleasure) and to exclude from the category of competent judgers all those whose interest in, demands of, or relation to the object don't conform to *a priori* conceptions of the aesthetic subject. This exclusionism is, in part, the problem I addressed in my discussion of Bourdieu's sociological critique of Kant: the judgement of what objects are beautiful, or what properties make an object beautiful, is not a function of identical cognitive structures shared by all human beings but is instead a

[44] As I argued in chapter four (in the section titled "How community is theorized"), these interpretations and assessments of works/performances should be submitted to the consideration of the members of the performed community: the artists, audience members, and critics. The extent to which they see explanatory value in the interpretation or assessment determines whether it is 'of interest'.

function of shared social situation. That is, judgements of beauty *are* empirical, and failure to acknowledge this results in an overly restrictive account of what beauty is.

But this exclusionism is also, in part, the problem that I deferred to this section: that of an overly restrictive scope for aesthetics. The narrow view of aesthetics articulated by Kant and Hume limits what counts as aesthetic to the beautiful, and this narrowness has, for the most part, flowed through into current views of aesthetics, both in terms of the value(s) recognized in art and the theories used to explain and evaluate art. Such a restriction is fundamentally problematic because even if we could somehow overcome or account for the range of subjective variation in judgements of beauty, we are still left with the question of how much art-making can be recognized within a beauty-centric understanding of art and the aesthetic. Much of what has traditionally counted within the 'fine arts' – visual, plastic, literary, musical – can perhaps be fairly easily glossed as beautiful but there is at least one type of artistic project which might be obscured to the point that it is unrecognized: the avant-garde or experimental. One commonly-observed response to newness or experimentalism – whether in art, politics, institutional restructuring, or elsewhere – is rejection. The new is shocking, uncomfortable, destabilizing, and therefore ugly. This is exactly the response that many listeners had to the free jazz that Coltrane and others began to play in the early 1960s. And, suggests hooks in her analysis, this is how critics have evaluated Saar's postmodern salvage art (12-3, 20-1).

In these two cases, we can see the artistic projects in question as both experimental and working with hybridity but the link between experimentality and hybridity is not a necessary one. Hybrid projects may often be experimental but experimentality can certainly

also take place without crossing or mixing cultures,[45] as shown in chapter two's discussion of Duchamp's ready-mades. Attention to experimentalism within and across cultural traditions is what Gilles Deleuze is highlighting when he says that a great writer is always like a foreigner in his or her literary language, even where that language is one's native tongue (109). The great writer is always trying to figure out what more (or less, in the case of minimalist/anti-literature projects) it is possible to say, in exactly the same way that the musical composer or improviser seeks innovation in musical structure and the sculptor working in salvage art seeks new ways of putting found materials together. The extent to which we see, in all traditions and all artistic media, the concern to question and push past the limits established by previous projects tells us quite clearly, I think, that beauty is not all there is to aesthetics.[46]

This returns us to an issue first raised in chapter one (footnotes 18 and 19), the issue of beauty's relation to other values. There I briefly indicated the possibility of conflict between three distinct value commitments professed by Coltrane in separate interviews: beauty, originality, and commentary (signifying) on the contributions of other jazz musicians. It should be clear from what I have just said that beauty and originality can be recognized as distinct aesthetic motivations. One could, for example, dedicate oneself to making experimental music because of a commitment to producing a unique, original sound. The

[45] My discussion of hybridity to this point has assumed a blending or mixture of cultures and cultural influences of the kind that one would expect to see in a multicultural or, at minimum, bicultural nation. Thus my reference here to the absence of culture-crossing might seem to oppose a 'pure' culture to hybrids. But I think it plausible to question, especially in today's increasingly global world, whether a monoculture can even (ever) be said to exist, thus making of all of us hybrid identities. Even in the Duchamp case, we can argue that the 'ready made' project was influenced by French and American artistic influences. The Duchamp case can best be distinguished from the Saar and Coltrane projects I have been discussing not through categorization as 'pure' and 'hybrid', but through the two *teloi* for avant-garde art that I introduce in chapter two and return to in this section.

[46] It may be the case that an artist is exploring new forms or expressions of beauty and in this case experimentality and beauty are not at odds with each other. However, I want to open up the possibility that not all projects aim at beauty; we may be distorting some avant-garde projects by insisting that they are pursuing some conception of beauty, or distorting conceptions of beauty by trying to fit all projects under the rubric of a single value.

music one produces might sound beautiful – to the musician, to some of the audience members – or not; its beauty, if it were deemed to have any, would be incidental if the sole commitment were to originality as an aesthetic value.[47] And, of course, the same could be said in reverse: if beauty is the paramount value around which the project is organized, then music which sounded beautiful (bracketing the question of for whom) would be a successful outcome. If it happened to also be startlingly original, that might be an added benefit but, again, would be incidental.

Similarly, beauty and commentary can be seen as distinct values which might, or might not, coincide in a given musical project. Perhaps the most obviously inconsistent value commitments would be originality and commentary (although, perhaps paradoxically, this combination is the one most often alluded to by jazz musicians – Coltrane is not the only one who is both concerned with developing his own unique sound and simultaneously paying tribute to the traditions within which his musicianship develops; signifying, in general and in relation to jazz, is often glossed as 'repetition with a difference'). How, if one seeks to connect one's project to somebody else's, or to an entire tradition, could one possibly come up with a unique musical contribution? One might, following Lewis Porter, observe that the blending of many sources upon which one is commenting can result in a synthesis that sounds like none of them, something that seems entirely original (216). But the possibility that two values might not obviously contradict each other does nothing to threaten their conceptual distinctness. All of these – the desire to create something beautiful, to create something new and never before experienced, to create something that makes clear its links

[47] It may be however that originality in and of itself is not the goal. Merely creating something new might not be laudable even under an Adornian valuation of art so we need to consider that 'originality' could be functioning as a specialized term, separating the beauty of avant-garde projects from more populist conceptions of beauty. If this were to be the case, beauty and originality would not be distinct values within a pluralist framework, but would instead be distinct conceptions of a pluralistic notion (multiple senses of beauty). Either way, my point about the need for pluralism holds.

to a larger tradition – are motivations that we do in fact frequently ascribe to artists and, where we see any of these values in an artwork, those of us who take aesthetics seriously can find reason to valorize the artist and/or the project. Given that any of these values can reasonably be seen to ground an argument for aesthetic merit and given that they are not, in all cases, reducible to a single meta-value, this gives us a compelling *prima facie* reason to subscribe to value pluralism in aesthetics.[48] Further reason to be value pluralists is provided by a polycultural context in which diverse art-making traditions can be blended into hybrid projects and objects.

But it is not just value pluralism that I want to endorse; I think that if we are going to accept value pluralism, then we ought also to entertain theory pluralism. So, to return to the question I began with, whether Coltrane's project is better revealed through Gatesian or

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[48] I do not intend here to point to beauty as if it were a perceptible property of artistic products and processes; my use of the term 'value' is meant to encompass both the personal commitments of the artist (the standard to which he or she holds the performance) and the overall judgements of the whole performance that the artists, audience, and critics (the performative community of which I spoke in chapter four) negotiate. I am also not claiming that these values will always be distinguished from each other. As I said above, I think these different terms are not always reducible to a single meta-value, but I also want to acknowledge that, in some cases, they might form a unitary judgement of the performance: one might, for instance, claim that a performance is formally unique in a way that comments on other performances within its tradition(s) and is, for these reasons, beautiful. Equally, however, one might not. Eric Porter's book *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* contains a version of a quotation from Coltrane's 1962 interview with Don DeMicheal that is more extensive than the one I offer in the final section of chapter one (Coltrane's mention of "the main thing a musician would like to do" as providing a picture of the wonderful (favorite) things that musician sees in the world) and Porter's version begins with Coltrane saying: "It's more than beauty that I feel in music..." (196). In the same discussion, Porter also analyzes Amiri Baraka's essay "The Changing Same" and Archie Shepp's 1965 *Down Beat* interview "An Artist Speaks Bluntly" as both offering a view of jazz that aims primarily as expressing black cultural identity. He quotes Shepp: "My music is functional. I play about the death of me by you" (203). It is, I hope, obvious that this conception of jazz does *not* rule out the possibility that the music might be judged beautiful; my point here is not that there is no beauty in this music but that beauty, for the artist, is not the point – there is another value Shepp and Baraka find in at least some avant-garde jazz of the 1960s that is potentially irreconcilable with beauty. The separability of these values is also evident in Marc Chaloin's essay on Albert Ayler: Chaloin interviews musicians who played with Ayler and their comments highlight the importance Ayler placed on his own originality and his respect and admiration for jazz history and traditions but say nothing about Ayler seeking beauty in his own music (see Chaloin's "Albert Ayler in Europe: 1959-62," www.revenantrecords.com/ayler/chaloin.html). (This, as I have acknowledged above, may just be a quirk of avant-garde discourse; perhaps 'beauty' is commonly taken to reference popular tastes such that it makes sense to these musicians to describe the beauty they find in experimental music as 'originality' instead. Or perhaps talk of beauty suggests to them the notion of beauty as a property and they are concerned to reject it in favour of valuations specific and relative to the particular performance as a whole.)

Adornian theory, under a commitment to theory pluralism, discussions of this question would not be settled definitively. Starting from the artist's standpoint, we might initiate a discussion about the merits of Coltrane's project by identifying the aesthetic values to which he appears to be committed, and then debating which theory provides the richer analysis.[49] Clearly, his commitment to experimentalism leads us towards theories like the ones Adorno and Gates offer, those which privilege originality. While in my view Gates' theory offers richer insights – because of its ability to recognize originality of contribution *and* connection to traditions on which it comments – I think that Adorno's theory also illuminates aspects of Coltrane's project. Thus, I think there is good reason to retain both theories as potential explanatory frames, rather than selecting one to the exclusion of the other.

This is why I was concerned in chapter two to outline a *telos*-based distinction between artworks. Rather than seeking to discredit broader theories of art-making like *écriture* and those which evaluate works solely on the basis of their formal features (type-i works), I was concerned to acknowledge the usefulness of such theories within a limited domain while pointing to the existence of another type of art-making, that in which works (type-ii works) comment on aspects of the artist's situation within his or her cultural context. As I noted in discussing Duchamp's project, formalist analysis is well-suited to the artistic projects of type-i works, those which call ontologies into question. This type of project speaks to the merits of the emphasis that Humean and Kantian theories place on formal

[49] Obviously, the notion of 'richer analysis' is going to vary based on one's position within a hybrid society. We are not all going to agree on which theory gives us the greatest explanatory richness because we don't all share the same perspective on the music, or on the theory. Because of this, I see the potential for ongoing negotiation that is never (and, I want to say, should never be) settled. Theory-practice fit should always be open to debate, in my view, precisely so that we can accommodate new perspectives on both of them (theories and practices). This possibility of new perspectives is the basis of my desire for a pluralist framework; I think a commitment to putting all of our aesthetic evaluations under a question mark will encourage new ways of looking at art, artistic practices, and aesthetic theorizing. This is the best way I see of ensuring that we not become complacent about what I think of as humanity's most important cultural practice.

elements, provided that we keep in mind Bourdieu's lesson about the empirical and situated nature of aesthetic evaluations. But, as I argued in chapter two, we must not fall into the trap of believing that formalist theories can adequately explain all artistic projects because that would obscure and diminish the types of projects which foreground the artist's perspective on, or relation to, his or her culture – which was exactly my criticism of the formalist bias in jazz journalism. This existence of multiple *teloi* is another reason to commit ourselves to pluralism at the level of aesthetic theories; we need different types of theories simply because there are different types of artistic practices.

But as I noted at the beginning of this section, my intention is to distinguish my endorsement of pluralism from a relativism that allows everyone their opinion but forecloses any possibility of debate over those opinions. What I do want to take from relativism, however, are the virtues that Rachels identifies in the cultural relativist position that he pronounces otherwise seriously-flawed: the reminder that not all of our preferences are based on a rational (or natural) standard that is universal, and the need to keep an open mind when those preferences are challenged (23-4). Reminding ourselves that our expectations that others will share our aesthetic judgements are just that, expectations which may not be satisfied, and that others, too, may have the same expectations with respect to opposing judgements can help us to become good pluralists. This orients us towards the willingness to negotiate that Latour urges upon us in a way that encourages us to see aesthetic discussions as open to all. Rejecting an assumed universalism, together with its unacknowledged elitism, in favour of a pluralism which negotiates such consensus as is possible and agrees to disagree where consensus is not possible can also make progress on the problem that Bourdieu identifies as the marginalization of the less-advantaged classes. A climate of discourse where many and diverse opinions are solicited and debated, and

pluralism is explicitly encouraged, has at least the potential of extending the boundaries of social competence to those who might normally feel inadequate to judge, thereby allowing them to hone their technical competence to form aesthetic judgements.

Possibilities for a political future

My endorsement of aesthetic pluralism is motivated partly by my recognition that more than one distinct method of art-making (music-making) exists such that no one theory of artistic/aesthetic value can function as a blanket explanation of the merit of these practices. In the cases I have discussed (Western classical music-making and jazz improvisation), this plurality of methods (notated composition and performed dialogicality) aim at different purposes: the articulation of musical structure in Western through-composed music, and the negotiation of voices and ideas in improvised jazz. From these different purposes we can derive a pluralism of aesthetic values. And, as I mentioned in the previous section, I think the different emphases placed on these purposes and values by different theories gives us reason to endorse pluralism in aesthetic theories.

But I am also motivated by the belief that aesthetic pluralism is a necessary condition of social justice within a polycultural society.[50] As I use the term, 'social justice' refers to a

[50] Setting up pluralism (be it theory pluralism or value pluralism) as a necessary condition presupposes a negative response to the question 'is it possible to have social justice within a society where a single universalist theory is used to explain art-making practices and the value placed on them by members of that society?'. Put simply, this negative response asserts that we can have no justice without pluralism. I think that an exception to this might well be possible in a culturally/ethnically homogenous society where a single style of artistic practice exists and is understood by all members of that society to be relevant to their own sense of identity formation. However, any such society would have to be one that is isolated from the effects of global migration of people and cultural products (both contemporary effects of globalization and historical effects of colonialism). Thus any theory which explains its understanding of the relation between the values that society's art makes possible and the formation of identity within that community as universally applicable is going to be inadequate to the social contexts I have been considering in the foregoing analysis. Setting up pluralism as a necessary condition also requires that we have the directionality of the relationship correct. One might accept the point about the need for pluralism within polycultural societies but assert instead that pluralism is a possible consequence of social justice. We can test this assertion by asking whether it is possible to have pluralism without justice. Leaving aside the issue

commitment to access *for everyone* to the opportunities to acquire the resources and skills they need in order to plan and execute their own individual conceptions of personal projects and life plans[51] (within the bounds of Mill's harm principle[52]). Committing ourselves to inclusion of all members and to encouraging individual conceptions of 'the good life' highlights the importance of visibility and respect as constituents of social justice. Taking account of –

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of plausibility, I think we have to acknowledge that it is at least possible to have a society which includes aesthetic theories that license a mix of values in art but fails to make all of its inhabitants feel fully visible and respected. All this would require is that we compartmentalize artistic practices and political life, denying the efficacy of artistic vision and values in shaping society – something that happens far too frequently already and is exactly what I have been arguing against throughout this dissertation. Pluralism without justice is possible, but objectionable.

[51] Conceptions of social justice vary across the political spectrum as a brief account of conservative, liberal, and leftist views shows. Michael Novak's free-market analysis of 'social justice' takes up right-wing economist Friedrich Hayek's criticisms of users of the term: they fail to define it, and they identify it as a virtue (which Hayek thinks must necessarily attach only to individuals, and not to governments) but then go on to talk about power instead of virtue. As Novak explains it, Hayek understands social justice to be about guaranteeing outcomes, that is, protecting people from what he sees as their voluntary actions within a free market. (Novak's proposal of a social justice "rightly understood" follows this view of social justice, and defines it in accordance with two characteristics: it is a voluntary collaboration among individuals (along the lines of a 'giving back' to the community in which one has prospered), and it is aimed at a collective good.) See www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0012/opinion/novak.html. Wikipedia discusses contemporary accounts of social justice through (liberal) Rawlsian analysis (in both *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism*) of the legitimacy of governments, assessed by whether a government provides for the welfare of its citizens. But this reference to welfare does not adequately distinguish Rawls' view from the one that Hayek attacks: the guarantee of equality of outcome for all. Indeed, Wikipedia notes that many critics of social justice understand the demand for equality of outcome to be implicit in social justice movements. The version of social justice Wikipedia attributes to local branches of "worldwide green parties" as a political platform is, I think, closer to what I mean by the term in that it defines social justice in terms of equality of opportunity "for healthy personal and social development" – which would include tackling poverty, illiteracy, and environmental degradation. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice. This last conception is similar to the definition offered by the Canadian Environmental Literacy Project (CELP): social justice is "a worldview that calls for equality of consideration for all members of a society, regardless of colour, race, socioeconomic class, gender, age, or sexual preference" (see www.celp.ca/Glossary.htm). My view resembles all of these views to a degree: I want to endorse Novak's conception of an individual commitment that each of us ought to have towards collaborating in the collective well-being of our societies, and I want to endorse Rawls' view of social justice as a test of the legitimacy of governments. Most importantly, however, I want to make clear that my definition is concerned with equality of consideration, or opportunity, not outcomes. Because I am committed to recognizing differences in individuals, and recognizing that there may be considerable diversity in their chosen projects and life plans, I can't make much sense of a non-repressive equality of outcomes. What my 'social justice' wants from governments is infrastructure that ensures the availability of basics (like food, shelter, and work) for everyone and ensures access to levels of education and health care sufficient to make possible everyone's participation in society. What my 'social justice' wants from individuals is an understanding that none of us exists in isolation from society and that all of us benefit from a healthy and responsive society, therefore, each of us bears some responsibility for ensuring its continued functionality.

[52] Mill defines this principle as a commitment to individual liberty of action insofar as said action does not cause harm to others (9). The freedom it licenses is "that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it" (Mill 12).

really seeing – the diversity of those with whom we share our society and respecting their choices concerning how to live and what to value is particularly appropriate to polycultural, or culturally mixed, societies and cultural products produced and disseminated within them. Thus aesthetic pluralism is required of us by social justice; respecting diversity in political life requires us to acknowledge the variety of artistic values and influences contributing to the identity-formation of social actors. This link is made even clearer when we consider how improvisatory practices subvert the idea of definitive versions of musical works and how rejection of definitive versions can inspire genuinely democratic negotiations in community building.

Because it requires at least some participation from (the majority of) a population (that is, because there are many voices participating in electoral and policy-setting discourses), the political future of any democratic nation demands negotiation, and a commitment to other-regarding behaviours. But in order to engage in these practices, we need to be committed already to acknowledging and respecting difference. And a commitment to respecting difference can sometimes lead us to the troubling acknowledgement of viewpoints within society which reject the notion of a political future. One might think that viewpoints which reject a political future – by which I mean an orientation towards a future within civil society, shared by others presently recognized as belonging to the same civil society – need not be taken into account on the grounds that those who choose to count themselves out, whether because of feelings of alienation or anti-social behaviours, lose the right to consideration. However, there are at least some cases in which one might reject the possibility of a political future but still retain the right to consideration by other social agents and the right to respect for his or her refusal to

participate in civil society. One such example can be drawn from the contribution to Holocaust literature made by Hungarian writer Imre Kertész.[53]

Kertész's semi-autobiographical third novel, *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, tells the story of a middle-aged Hungarian-Jewish writer who is explaining – in a letter addressed to the child he will never have – why he cannot, will not, bring a child into the world. In the course of arguing, at a party, against the thesis that 'there is no explanation for Auschwitz', Kertész's narrator, B., a Holocaust survivor, asserts that it is good, not evil, which is irrational and inexplicable (41). B. then recounts the story of his encounter with a fellow prisoner at Auschwitz, a man known only as "Teacher." Their encounter occurred during a roundup of prisoners onto railroad cars for transport between camps. Bread rations have been doled out for the trip but B., confined to a stretcher, sees that his ration has mistakenly ended up in "Teacher"s hands. As B. bitterly resigns himself to the likelihood of his impending starvation, he suddenly realizes that "Teacher" has broken rank in the roll call to sidle over and return B.'s ration to him. When "Teacher' notes the astonishment on B.'s face, he remarks indignantly. "You didn't imagine for one moment...?" (Kertész 41-2). What baffles B. about this is that "Teacher" has risked his life (for he would have been shot had he been caught by the guards) to return the extra ration which, had he kept it, would have increased his own chances of survival. This willingness of "Teacher"s to risk his life in doing something which diminished his own chance of survival is the puzzle B. poses to his

[53] Another example, arguably, is some First Nations communities in Canada but I think that as long as these communities are negotiating their land and resource claims within a defined political process, we are being hasty in assuming that they are rejecting, or will eventually reject, a shared political future. Should a particular community negotiate its claims to its satisfaction and then decide to withdraw from political participation in Canada (say, by pursuing self-government and then a community-wide withdrawal from electoral participation and self-imposed isolation from wider political discourse), then, of course, it would be in this position of being outside Canada's political community but still having a claim on our political/social consideration because of the historic injustices Canada has inflicted upon them (which are presumably the reason they want to withdraw from being in community with the rest of us).

fellow party guests and, as we learn later in the novel, the moral he draws from it becomes B.'s life-lesson.

What B. takes from the example "Teacher" provided is the possibility of a robust existential freedom, of living a genuinely resistant life regardless of the consequences to his well-being (Kertész 46, 119).[54] For B., this resistant self-conception plays out in a commitment to a mode of existence which persists stubbornly, perversely even, but contributes nothing to human society (Kertész 119), hence his refusal to become a father in a world that contains Auschwitz. This existential resistance also expresses itself in an aesthetic attitude towards his writing: B. likens his ballpoint pen to a spade with which he digs his grave, an activity which precludes his seeking literary success or, for that matter, any sense of achievement that might be seen as investment in a future (Kertész 84-5). B.'s writing is solitary and stubborn – survival, only – and it contributes nothing to the world that contains other people (Kertész 120).

While B. is ambiguously fictional (resembling the life experiences, and perhaps the opinions, of Kertész to an extent that seems to be left deliberately unclear), his worldview is supported by the addition to Holocaust literature of philosophical essays by Jean Améry, also an Auschwitz survivor. Améry's central contribution to this literature, *At The Mind's Limits*, is described by one of his commentators as a subjective exploration of the Jewish victim, an analysis from the inside of the survivor's experience through the concept of 'having lost trust in the world' (Myers, "Jean Améry"). Characterizing the liberal values of Western civilization as "temporary and hastily constructed social arrangements," Myers notes the vulnerability of

[54] Arguably, B. misunderstands, or fails to fully learn, the lesson "Teacher" offers to him. He correctly identifies as resistant "Teacher"s refusal to change his self-concept so that it conforms to the reality of Auschwitz, noting that "Teacher" "did not wish, ... was *unable*, to live without preserving this concept" (Kertész 43-4). But B. fails to note any significance in the content of "Teacher"s actions: precisely the aspect of his self-concept that was most worth preserving, more essential even than his physical survival, was the commitment to other-regarding behaviours that makes political community possible.

these values in his observation that "[i]f dignity is the right to live granted by society, then the Third Reich demonstrates how easily the grant can be revoked" ("Jean Améry").

One of Améry's essays, "Resentments," motivates this position of existential resistance which refuses any attempt to reconcile the past to a future in which one has 'moved on'. Améry presents his resentment and his choice to hold onto it as a "personal protest" (Améry 77) against a social consensus which tries to put the past in the past. Treating the forgiveness of atrocities as if it worked like the 'natural' process by which wounds to the body heal, and cease to affect bodily functioning, is, in Améry's view, immoral (72), and to participate in this collective forgiveness would make him "the accomplice of [his] torturers" (69). Refusing to let go of resentment, claims Améry, is "a form of the human condition that morally as well as historically is of a higher order than that of healthy straightness" (68). His analysis raises the issue of the moral status of Truth & Reconciliation commissions as a mechanism to promote social healing and progress. Society, as a whole, is preoccupied with its own well-being, *its* need to leave the past behind, thus the most it can offer to the victims of human rights crimes is a reformed, reconciled society in which these abuses will never (it is hoped) recur (Améry 70). Conversely, Améry seeks not to reconcile, but to confront those responsible for the atrocities committed against him with the moral truth of their actions (70), to force them out of the 'biological sphere' and into the realm of the moral (71).

In both cases, the position that B. and Améry are taking goes beyond objection to interaction with those who have wronged them. B. has returned from the German concentration camps to Hungary and is now in a position where he could limit his social world to interacting within the Jewish community of Budapest, even to Holocaust survivors, if he wished. Instead he withdraws from any participation that requires an emotional

investment on his part. Améry's denunciation of reconciliation is also not confined to a refusal of community with those who participated in the Third Reich, or even all Germans. What he is doing in his essay is articulating the withholding of forgiveness as a moral position. He is constructing what he sees as the higher ethical ground of those who choose to not let go of their resentment; they are taking the moral position while those who seek to heal past wounds exchange the moral for the biological. In refusing to let go of his resentment, and in providing support for those inclined to do the same, Améry, like B., is rejecting a political future by excluding himself from the society that moves on towards healing and negotiation of past grievances. For both of them, the past is not past and therefore they can permit themselves no future.

While this position is clearly counterproductive with respect to the idea of a shared political future, I believe it must be acknowledged as a legitimate position, and that any society confronted with such resistance has an obligation to acknowledge its legitimacy. Forcing the victimized to participate in a collective forgiveness program and move on to a future shared with their abusers simply compounds the wrong done to them.[55] This is at least a partial explanation of a phenomenon I discussed in chapter four, the refusal on the part of some *Fanmi Lavalas* supporters to engage in the post-Aristide social reconstruction of Haiti. And this is the root of the problem that Lula was trying to address with the 'peace game' proposal: how to promote trust and cooperation among factions with longstanding and serious grievances against each other and very little shared context within which trust

[55] It may be the case, however, that an initial resistance to reconciliation alters over time and one becomes ready to participate in forgiveness, then political community. A Holocaust survivor contemplating the German political community of today might make the personal judgement that re-entry would not put him or her in community with former tormentors and would, therefore, be acceptable – perhaps even appropriate. If, however, that person remains unwilling, then I think that Germany has to respect both the position of refusal and the reasons for it – much as I think Canada would have to respect the hypothetical decision (see this chapter's footnote 53) of the First Nations community whose historical sufferings make them unwilling to expend hope and good-faith efforts on the society responsible for that suffering.

might be rebuilt. However, while I do think we need to respect the right of refusal of those whose lives and trust have been too badly damaged for them to be willing to re-enter the domain of the political, I don't think that this respect in any way absolves us from the responsibility to keep trying, to keep reaching out to those who might be less scarred or, perhaps, open to changing their position over time. The legitimacy of existential resistance for some does not extinguish the political future of others, nor should it be confused with political resistance – which is, by the very nature of being political, open to the negotiating processes I have been endorsing in both this chapter and the previous one.

Like existential resistance, political resistance rejects the status quo (and/or the direction in which it seems to be inevitably heading) but, unlike existential resistance, it does not promote an opting-out of social life, choosing instead to demand a reform of the terms under which social life is conducted. In a pluralistic context, this demand for reform – most particularly, the specifics of the direction that reform will take – must be subjected to the negotiations that Latour urges, beginning, of course, with his proposed starting point: the question of how best to build an alternative to the status quo (8). This path, political resistance, is what is urged by critics of the preoccupation with security ('securitization') that we see in Western liberal-democratic nations in the wake of the attacks on New York's World Trade Center, Bali's nightclubs, and mass transportation systems in Madrid and London. Noting that the question is not *whether* we defend ourselves but *how*, political philosopher Giorgio Agamben argues for a change in political paradigm, a focus on preventing security threats rather than crushing them ("Security and Terror" ¶6). "It is," Agamben asserts, "the task of democratic politics to prevent the development of conditions which lead to hatred, terror, and destruction" ("Security and Terror" ¶6). This prevention seems to me to direct us towards actively avoiding the conditions under which alienation

from larger society can take place. That means creating our public life as an open space, welcoming of differences, rather than forcing us all into a single mode of being that will be experienced by some as repressive. And it means we must learn to become comfortable with what Kanishka Jayasuriya identifies as "the conflict and debate that are raw material of politics" instead of seeing all disagreement as an attack on the conditions of possibility of our political life.[56]

Elsewhere, in *State of Exception*, his recently published analysis of suspensions of law within democratic polities, Agamben concludes that "[t]he only truly political action ... is that which severs the nexus between violence and law" (88).[57] What I take him to mean by this statement is that social (political) life ought not to be reduced, as it has been in traditional conceptions of politics, to public policy, that is, to government legislation. Law and violence are standardly conceived of as bound together by virtue of the government claiming a monopoly on both of them. Within a given territory, only the government and its licensed representatives (judges) may make law and, according to sociologist Max Weber, the government also claims a monopoly on violence – understood as its right to define and delegate legitimate uses of physical force within that legal jurisdiction (e.g. an individual's right to self-defence). A genuinely democratic politics, as conceived by Agamben and Jayasuriya, is not reducible to the sphere of governmental action.[58] Instead, I would argue, political life is something we need to build in a way that encourages us all to participate – just

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[56] Kanishka Jayasuriya, "9/11 and the New 'Anti-politics' of 'Security'," http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/jayasuriya.htm.

[57] Agamben conceives of his analysis in *State of Exception* as providing the ground for an answer to the question of what it means to act politically, which is, he says, "the question that never ceases to reverberate in the history of Western politics" (2).

[58] I don't mean to suggest here that government is expendable and neither, on my reading, do Agamben and Jayasuriya. The point is that political community includes *more than* formal political institutions; it also includes the voluntary association and informal negotiation that, in a responsive democracy, feeds the public policy agenda. This notion of political community as wider than, and supportive of, government is also to be found in the respective deliberative democracy views espoused by Habermas and Taylor.

as improvised musical performances encourage us to break down the hierarchy that separates musicians from audiences in order to create a community that includes everyone who takes their responsibility to participate seriously.

This richer notion of political life – the inclusion of many, and diverse, perspectives in the debates which will ultimately drive public policy and determine the structuring (or restructuring) of formal institutions – implicitly depends upon the social justice I endorsed earlier in this section. In order to perform one's membership in a nation's broader political community, one must have the ability to work collaboratively with other members, the sense of belonging necessary to motivate one's efforts towards collective ends, and the other-regarding habits of thought, speech and behaviour that equality of consideration demands. That is, performing one's membership in political community requires skills and commitments similar to those I spoke of in chapter four's discussion of membership in an improvising community, which requires engagement in the process and some knowledge of the context, traditions, and discourse conventions relevant to said process. For this participation to be meaningful and substantive (as opposed to a token 'public input' which masks the real negotiations of the powers-that-be), we need to ensure a minimum level of social and material well-being; people who, for example, spend all of their time and energy hunting for food, or have seen their communities damaged by, say, armed conflicts that have severely diminished the trust required for collective action, are handicapped, as political actors, by inadequate social conditions. This is one pragmatic benefit of a worldwide commitment to social justice; in addition to considerations of abstract justice, it allows individual political actors to develop genuinely democratic communities – which will presumably be easier to negotiate with in international contexts, given that their citizens have committed themselves to norms of engagement and consideration for others.

And to return to an earlier discussion in this chapter, I think we can see a connection between social justice and aesthetic pluralism if we return to the point Bourdieu makes about the relationship between technical and social competences in marginalized classes' assessment of the propriety of making aesthetic or political judgements. Bourdieu understands technical competence as the capacity to form judgements and social competence as the (perceived) right to express those judgements, and he characterizes technical competence as both a precondition and effect of social competence (409). So before people can feel secure about the judgements they make, they need some sense that they are capable. And in order to become capable, they need to be confident. Within a social justice-driven commitment to universal public education in a society, I think aesthetic pluralism can be used effectively to develop these competences. If aesthetic judgements are presented as evaluations (preferences) for which one can cite reasons and about which one can negotiate with others such that a multiplicity of judgements can exist and all be acknowledged as legitimate, then the aesthetic can become a domain in which people can practice their judgement-forming and judgement-defending capacities before transferring them to the political domain. The aesthetic strikes me as a good 'training ground' for the political for a couple of reasons: first, aesthetic evaluations are, for some, more closely connected to their sense of personal identity than are their political beliefs or affiliations (e.g., among groups of young people, often alienated from public sphere political discourse, the music listened to is taken to be a genuine expression of one's self and one's commitments whereas affiliation with recognized political institutions is viewed more skeptically and with greater detachment) and, until we encounter undergraduate philosophy courses, we standardly believe ourselves to have the technical competence to explain who we think we are as individuals; second, in many nations, the act of expressing political

judgements is more charged, even dangerous, and so the need to have a certain sophistication of expression is greater at the outset. If we hone the technical competence to make judgements about aesthetics and then transfer that ability to political judgements, we can then, as political actors, develop a sensitivity to positions born of alienation (e.g., the examples I took up earlier of the Holocaust survivor and the isolationist First Nations community) through what Taylor calls the 'politics of recognition'. This heightened awareness, when transported back to the aesthetic domain, then offers the possibility of recognizing a distinct aesthetic in art born of existential alienation – for instance, allowing us to see Kertész's *Kaddish* as a significant literary statement, both about resistance and in the form of resistance, rather than simply dismissing it as a self-absorbed and badly-written novel (which it definitely is not, although a careless, cursory read might suggest just that).

This potential of art (specifically, music) – to show us something significant about the formation of political community – is something that Jacques Attali addresses in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music.* For Attali, music is both "a herald of times to come" and "a way of perceiving the world" (4). "With music is born power and its opposite: subversion," he says (Attali 6). Its power lies in its capacity to be "a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community" (Attali 6), that is, music exists as political possibility. And it is subversive in its capacity to articulate "demands for cultural autonomy [and] support for differences or marginality" (Attali 7). It has this ability because, claims Attali, musical order mirrors social order and social marginality can be expressed in musical dissonances (29). Given the variety of musics which exist, this mapping provides added strength to claims that musical pluralism is closely connected to polyculturalism. And it illuminates the value of improvisation that I have been arguing for throughout this work: that improvisation – the working out within a group of contributed fragments and themes into a coherent idea – is, at its most abstract, a

liberatory social practice. Detached from its context and its creators, all improvisation can be seen as liberatory in that it follows no text, but is instead contingently constructed out of the inspirations of the musicians and the responses to these inspirations by their fellow players and their audiences. This is an abstract account of the power of which Attali speaks.

However, I have spent much of my time here arguing against abstract analyses of improvised music, arguing that divorcing such works from their contexts and their creators is a kind of violence. Indeed, when we consider improvisations within their specific performative contexts, we see the potential inversion of these liberatory possibilities. We could imagine, for example, a festival organized by a far-right group committed to racial or religious segregation and the marginalization of cultural minorities which used improvising musicians to promote a sense of community amongst its followers. This is possible, and yet far from anything I want to endorse as a liberatory possibility of improvised music. It should not surprise us, though, that a contextualized instance can function in ways completely contrary to what the abstract principle tells us. This is the paradox of artistic creativity, especially in avant-garde art: art has immense power in shaping personal and cultural identities but, in form and function, it is always susceptible to subversive revisionings.

Because it can be used to articulate a variety of standpoints and commitments, there is always the potential for it to express something that will strike one as a violation of the very value that the art-making practice in question is *supposed to be* endorsing. And, if we take to heart the aesthetic pluralism that I have been advocating, then we will have no way of definitively ruling out-of bounds the uses we object to. We will have only the ongoing negotiation of what we, as members of aesthetic communities, find valuable, and any consensus we arrive at will always be open to challenge – by those who contribute to these

communities in good faith, and those who seek to distort practices or theories to serve their own purposes. We will also have no way, obviously, of determining in advance who is in good faith (and therefore deserves to be listened to), therefore we will need to listen to, and consider the merits of, everyone who wants to say something. Thus, as I noted at the end of my Foucault discussion in chapter two, in improvisation, it does too, and will always, matter who is speaking.

Appendix

"My Favorite Things" original lyrics

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens
Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens
Brown paper packages tied up with strings
These are a few of my favorite things

Cream colored ponies and crisp apple streudels
Doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles
Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings
These are a few of my favorite things

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes
Snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes
Silver white winters that melt into springs
These are a few of my favorite things

When the dog bites
When the bee stings
When I'm feeling sad
I simply remember my favorite things
And then I don't feel so bad

(Repeat all verses)

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