DRIFTING ON A READ:
JAZZ AS A MODEL FOR LITERARY AND THEORETICAL WRITING

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
1988
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James Michael Jarrett
For Pam and the Boys
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this most secular of ages--what we could call the Age of the Book--where both the addressor and the addressee are demonstrably absent, it is most fitting that pages of acknowledgment take the form of prayers (as Derrida would remind us, always already answered). In every case, they are benedictions posing as invocations. Written after books are complete, they, nevertheless, stand at their beginnings; their placement, in the liturgy of the Book, represents a call to personal muses that will be summarily answered. I shall not depart from this practice. What follows is a list of magical names which will, henceforth, summon forth my words. Amen.

I took my first graduate course in English as something of a lark. It was a course in modern American literature taught by Dr. Larry Broer. He encouraged me to continue, actually to start, working. To him and two other faculty members at the University of South Florida, I owe a special debt of gratitude. Robert Chisnell made me aware of the tropes of Medieval drama. Joseph Bentley provided my first exposure to Menippean satire and also guided my first reading of Ulysses. Other professors there taught me what was meant by the phrase "close reading."
My experience at the University of Florida has been immeasurably rich. It is, nevertheless, possible to single out a few moments that have made it so. First, while in my second semester, I took courses offered by Gregory Ulmer and Aubrey Williams and sat in a class taught by Robert Ray. My subsequent work has virtually been an improvisation on motifs raised by these men. Next, I would like to acknowledge the influence of a most unlikely pair of scholars. John Leavey taught me to read postmodern criticism with the rigor of a Jesuit and the eye of a heretic. Melvyn New gave me the opportunity to read extensively in the literature of satire and the freedom to write a highly experimental essay on my findings. Both genuinely cared about my progress. Last, I regard the members of my supervisory committee--Gregory Ulmer, Robert Ray, Anne Jones, Andrew Gordon, and Robert D'Amico--as friends, no small praise given the institutional constraints under which students and professors operate.

A host of people, sometimes unknowingly, have contributed to my work. Some to whom I owe a special debt of gratitude are as follows: Richard and Yvonne Jarrett, Michael Disch, Bruce Carnevale, Alex Menocal, John McKenzie, William Kinnally, Michael and Lori Fagien, Don Ball, and Eric Whiteside.

Finally I wish to thank the two people who, in vastly different ways, serve as my models for writing, which is to say, writing in the broadest possible sense as living: the director of this dissertation, Gregory Ulmer, and my wife, Pamela.
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ABBREVIATIONS


BH  Nathaniel Mackey, Bedouin Hornbook (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky, 1986).


GM  Jeremy Campbell, Grammatical Man (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DRIFTING ON A REED:
JAZZ AS A MODEL FOR LITERARY AND THEORETICAL WRITING

By
James Michael Jarrett

August, 1988

Chairman: Gregory L. Ulmer
Major Department: English

A pun on Charlie Parker's composition "Drifting on a Reed," my title points to three questions which guided this study. First, what happens when jazz enters the discourse of this culture? Next, to what extent is jazz an effect of representation? Last, and most important, what could it mean to employ jazz as a model for writing?

To engage these questions, I examine representations of jazz in literature and film. Specifically, working from a critical posture associated with postmodern literary theory and taking Gunther Schuller's study, *Early Jazz*, as a departure point, I survey musicological treatments of jazz and locate four multivalent images—rhapsody, *satura*, obbligato, and *charivari*—which mark the entry of jazz into discourse. After demonstrating how these images shape the nonfiction discourse of jazz and, in turn, cultural perceptions of jazz, I show how, as enabling figures or tropes, they structure and destabilize specifically literary representations of
jazz. To accomplish this task, I pair four works of critical theory with four examples of jazz fiction. The critical texts I employ are Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination*, John Cage's *Silence*, Roland Barthes's *S/Z*, and Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked*. The fictive texts analyzed are Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Michael Ondaatje's *Coming through Slaughter*, Ishmael Reed's *The Free-Lance Pallbearers*, and Martin Scorsese's film *New York, New York*. The purpose of this pairing is to demonstrate how the tropes of jazz can be employed as models for conceptualizing and writing critical theory.

Throughout this study I assume that acoustical patterns, if they are to be perceived and counted as music (or noise), must be mediated, and that our experience of such phenomena is necessarily constrained by modes of representation operative in a particular culture and by specific culturally sanctioned representations.
He suddenly became aware that the weird, drowsy throb of the African song and dance had been swinging drowsily in his brain for an unknown lapse of time.  

--George Washington Cable

Music is an oversimplification of the situation we actually are in.  

--John Cage
My feeling--or my doubtlessly ineradicable prejudice as a writer--is that nothing will endure if it remains unspoken; that our present task, precisely (now that the great literary rhythms I spoke of are being broken up and scattered in a series of distinct and almost orchestrated shiverings), is to find a way of transposing the symphony to the Book: in short, to regain our rightful due. For, undeniably, the true source of Music must not be the elemental sound of brasses, strings, or wood winds, but the intellectual and written word in all its glory--Music of perfect fullness and clarity, the totality of universal relationships.

--Stéphane Mallarmé

Couldn't I try. . . . Naturally, it wouldn't be a question of a tune . . . but couldn't I, in another medium? . . . It would have to be a book: I don't know how to do anything else.

--Jean-Paul Sartre

One story told by jazz aficionados--probably the one most frequently repeated--goes like this. A socialite asked Louis Armstrong to define jazz. He replied, "Lady, if you gotta ask what it is, you'll never know."²

Coming from an entertainer who would one day be accused of obsequiousness (charged with playing the role of Uncle Tom), Armstrong's rejoinder seems puzzling--uncharacteristically curt. Any number of explanations could be adduced to account for this, but two should suffice. Perhaps its author was frustrated: maybe Armstrong's lip was giving him trouble; maybe he missed New Orleans; maybe he loathed
sycophantic bluestockings. Or else, the normally sanguine entertainer, feeling especially zealous about his art, was merely expressing a heartfelt conviction. In either case, though, whether prompted by frustration or conviction, Armstrong's motivations are essentially irretrievable. The importance of his declaration lies neither in its putative origins in an individual psyche, nor in its correspondence with some "real" object--jazz music--but in its status as a verbal structure. It is, in the words of Kenneth Burke, an allegory: an interpretation of one semiotic system by the terms of another. Quite obviously, it is not jazz (although, through an imaginative act of "reframing," we might be able to hear it as such). But it has made jazz speak.

The issue, then, at least for my purpose, is this: when jazz speaks, what does it say? To engage this question, I necessarily involve myself in several large issues in aesthetics and, then, initiate an investigation into what might be called the discourse of jazz, by studying representations of jazz in literature (nonfiction and fiction) and film (Martin Scorsese's New York, New York). Throughout this study I assume that our experience of jazz is not simply a matter of acoustics, but that, like any other experience, musical or otherwise, it is contingent upon, mediated and constrained by, prior representations. Jazz, it turns out, is an idea (which is not to deny its ineluctable materiality). It has, to lift a phrase from Edward Said, "a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality
and presence in and for the West."\(^4\) Detailing this history and tradition is a task this study assumes.

Students of literature and critical theory will immediately notice that my real subject here is the problem of representation and that my study is redolent of (if not positively indebted to) such well-known, applied studies as Hayden White's *Metahistory* and Said's aforementioned *Orientalism*, for like the authors of these texts, I seek not to formulate a veridic discourse about some autonomous object (which has been, and, often still is, the goal of musicologists, historians, and Orientalists), but to theorize a group of texts which constitute a body of knowledge. Like White and Said, I examine systems of discourse; I, to take another phrase from Said, analyze "the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes" (*Or*, 20). My emphasis does differ from theirs, however. White characterizes historical texts as "in reality formalizations of poetic insights that analytically precede them and that sanction the particular theories used to give historical accounts the aspect of an 'explanation'" (*MH*, xii). His elaborate schema, which systematically organizes the ways rhetorical tropes are formalized--transformed into plots, arguments, and ideologies--bears this out. Said regards Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts . . . an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction . . . but also of a whole series of "interests" (*Or*, 12). His extensive research and
sustained argument bear this out. I imagine jazz as the musical and written dissemination of several culturally engendered images or, in Barthes's designation, symbolic codes, and I trust that this essay will not only bear this out, but will convince the reader that, when applied to the study of jazz texts (and, by extension, any kind of text), postmodern critical theory is not merely adequate for analysis (i.e., verification) but for invention as well. In short, then, White foregrounds the logic of consciousness ("a historical thinker chooses conceptual strategies by which to explain or represent his data"--MH, x); Said foregrounds the logic of ideology (the "intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural energies [which] went into the making of an imperialist tradition"--Or, 15); I foreground the logic of writing. But again, this is a matter of emphasis. All three texts treat the written representation seriously: first, because writing always signifies a strategy of circumscription, whereby some thing is forced to submit to the institution authorizing the written text; second, because writing always signifies a strategy of production, whereby a thing is made to come into representation, made to make sense.

II

Returning to Armstrong's rejoinder, we notice that it is cast in what White calls the ironic mode and shares all the features of what Barthes calls a cultural or reference
code. First, it is a commonplace. It refers to, but at the same time summarily refuses to define or sanction, an accepted body of knowledge about jazz, and it points to the "capacity of language to obscure more than it clarifies in any act of verbal figuration" (MH, 37). In other words, through the rhetorical figure of aпория (literally "doubt"), jazz has been brought into language, imbued with an ironic voice that tacitly acknowledges a preestablished and normative body of knowledge, and, paradoxically, afforded "a basis in scientific or moral authority." Armstrong, a sign functioning as a metonym for the sign jazz, alludes to and, thus, affirms an inarticulable body of knowledge and an ever-receding epistemology for the express purpose of warranting an authoritative, but highly problematic, withdrawal from discourse.

Next, as a gnomic expression, a speech formula repeatedly appropriated by members of a subculture (which I shall call "the jazz community"), Armstrong's rejoinder reflects and reinforces social relationships. Taking a phrase introduced by Malinowski and theorized extensively by Jakobson, it functions phatically. It conveniently divides the world into two groups, those who do not know what jazz is and those who no longer ask, and it sententiously reaffirms a set of shared assumptions (cultural codes or connotations) about the nature of the music. Nevertheless, the double bind it expresses--represented by the phrase, "our music cannot be put into words"--is, of course, not a claim made exclusively by the jazz community. It is routinely made for all music. For
example, Barthes observes that language manages "very badly" "when it has to interpret music," and Elmer Bernstein (The Man with the Golden Arm, The Magnificent Seven, Walk on the Wild Side) virtually revises Armstrong's quip when he states, "Music is particularly emotional: if you are affected by it, you don't have to ask what it means." 7

Indeed, music is traditionally characterized as "irrational," "unrepresentable," "largely unknowable and mysterious": that is to say, as a woman. Novelist Fatima Shaik, in The Mayor of New Orleans, acknowledges this when she has her character, Walter, declare, "Music and love is both women and truth is too," and thus echo Nietzsche's formulation, "Truth is a woman." Carol Flinn, in her study of the discourse of film music, notes it when she writes: "the tendency to align music in general with the feminine circulates extensively across a wide range of critical theory." 8 And Duke Ellington celebrates it. He imagines the drum as a woman, "its form a womb, its skin a maidenhead"; in his autobiography, Music Is My Mistress, in a poem entitled "Music," he writes:

Music is a beautiful woman in her prime,
Music is a scrubwoman, clearing away the dirt and grime,
Music is a girl child
Simple, sweet and beaming,
A thousand years old,
Cold as sleet, and scheming. 9

Although this stanza and the ten which follow it make one glad that, as a rule, Ellington eschewed the Muse of poetry as effectively as Armstrong deterred the inquiries of socialites, it does demonstrate music's metaphorical inhabitation of the female body.
Jazz, it seems, "organizes" its discourse by advancing "a real or feigned disbelief in the truth of its own statements" (MH, 37). It inscribes, even shrouds itself with mysteriousness (aporia/unsignedifiability). It does this on several levels: the level of emplotment or narration (the Armstrong anecdote), the level of poetics or figuration (Ellington's engendered metaphor), the level of ideology (the implications of an epistemology based on inarticulable "experience," a secularized version of divine revelation) and the level of exposition or argument (as I will later demonstrate). And it lays claim to a double enigma. It can be neither notated on a score, nor represented in words. If classical music cannot be put into words, or so the argument goes, it can, nonetheless, be notated (here and elsewhere I employ the term classical music and, occasionally, if I want to convey a hint of irony, the proper noun Music as an inclusive term referring to the entire European musical tradition). In fact, notation and classical music are related reciprocally; the development of each is unthinkable without the other. Jazz, on the other hand, is characterized as wholly other. Certainly, this claim demands scrutiny; we must return to it. Before we do that, however, we shall consider another bold claim—one made by Mallarmé in the 1890s. It functions as a pedal point for my study.  

He wrote: "Mystery is said to be Music's domain. But the written word also lays claim to it."
The jazz community, like all subcultures, differentiates itself from the larger culture: (1) by marking off a body of knowledge—what Julio Cortázar had one of his bohemian characters in *Hopscotch* self-righteously proclaim "a repertory of insignificant things"—that distinguishes and situates (albeit problematically) an "inside" and an "outside" audience, and (2) by protecting and policing this body of knowledge by repeating it in the form of gnomic codes or references to specialized repertories. Indeed, as anyone familiar with the hit parade (or the rankings of *Cash Box, Billboard, Radio and Records, and Rolling Stone*) understands, repetition constitutes (creates and reflects) recognition. When a subculture, out of all the utterances made by its members, grants one particular statement the status of "proverb," recognizes it as meaningful, it does so by repeating it. Or conversely, when a subculture, out of all the utterances made by a single, highly-regarded member, repeats one particular statement, that statement acquires meaning; it becomes a proverb.

Repetition, as numerous theorists argue, has consequences. According to Benjamin, it "emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual," displaces the whole question of "authenticity," and brushes "aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery." For Attali, writing specifically of the importance of the hit parade "to the organization of the commercialization of music," repetition heralds "the new processes on the way, the end of the market economy and the
price system." We shall concern ourselves with, perhaps, less utopian themes and look at two effects of repetition: the destabilization of the notion of author and the notion of meaning.

If a statement gets repeated, gains recognition as a proverb or cultural code, then it must give up its claim as the exclusive product of a single consciousness. Proverbs, by definition, express agreed upon (if only localized or subcultural) truths. For the materialist, they are products of ideology. For the metaphysician, they are utterances of Truth. Therefore, elevating (or lowering) Louis Armstrong's rejoinder to the level of proverb, paradoxically, reduces (or raises) its author to one--but only the first--in a series to cite an "already-written" truth about jazz. Repetition retrospectively transforms the author of the phrase, "If you gotta ask, you'll never know," into a "collective and anonymous voice," the voice of jazz (S/Z, 18).

The phrase itself is transformed into a system of relationships, completely independent of what one literary theorist, Paul de Man, describes as "the substantive assertions of a presence." Theoretically, it can come to mean anything. Practically, it means only what, but everything that, the "collective and anonymous voice" of jazz will allow. As an iterable formula, implying the radical absence of an author as well as an infinite number of contexts, it has destabilized any conception of meaning, which holds meaning to be a thing which, although hidden (buried or transcendent), is,
nevertheless, unalterable and, through work or help from on high, discoverable.

Obviously, I must delineate what I mean by this now-mysterious voice of jazz and investigate its textual-political machinations, but before I begin that task, the reader must notice that the conditions (e.g., cutting, spacing, and grafting) which operate on Armstrong's rejoinder--making it possible and destabilizing it at one and the same time--moving it from an "original" utterance created in the moment to a citation of the "already formulated"--all derive from an economy of repetition (writing in the broad sense) and operate on all texts (including this one). Far exceeding any narrowly circumscribed boundaries of language or writing, these conditions, of what has been called a theory of general textuality, serve as tropes--collectively, as models or rhetorics--by which post-modernist theory conceptualizes (produces or imagines) the world. Rather than suggesting a theory which regards music and language as different effects of similar conditions (formalism) or as isomorphic systems (structuralism), hence, graspable through some especially sufficient metadiscourse of science (a master language for consumers), they suggest the possibility that debates over referentiality (which we also must pass through) can be finally displaced by a theory of textual production that would regard language and music as imaginable--that is, producible (whether "understandable" or not)--through the play of certain figures or tropes.
By the term trope I, of course, not only refer to "turns" or "tricks" of language, but allude to a musical term which, used loosely, signifies any interpolation or embellishment "of text, music, or both into a liturgical chant" (HCDM).

As one will recall, most scholars hold that it was from such tropes—the Quem quaeritis texts—that medieval drama developed. Bevington writes:

According to a ninth-century monk from St. Gall named Notker Babulus, "tropes" had begun as wordless musical sequences with which the singers in the choir would embellish the vowel sounds of certain important words in the service. One such word, for example, was the alleluia in the introit (opening processional chant) of the Easter mass. Babulus reports that musical tropes of this sort had become so elaborate in the ninth century that words were added to make the sequences easier to memorize.15

But, and this is the rub, tropes were amplifications of holy texts—the liturgy and the scriptures. They signified a rupture in the Church's hegemony, for taken collectively, they tended towards glossolalia or plurality. They allowed, some might say encouraged, the rhetorical figure of catachresis (literally "misuse"), "the manifestly absurd Metaphor designed to inspire Ironic second thoughts about the nature of the thing characterized or the inadequacy of the characterization itself" (MH, 37). And just as surely as the Protestant Reformation (in 1517 Luther affixed his 95 theses to the Schlosskirche at Wittenberg)—itself a trope writ large—they opened up the possibility of aberrant readings, because they marked an assumption, on the most fundamental of levels, that scripture was not a closed book; it was subject to interpretation. It could be added to, commented on, in short, endlessly
glossed. Not surprisingly, the implications of tropological practice—what we could call the politics of mnemonics or the logic of embellishment—proved too much for the Roman Church to bear. At the Council of Trent (1545-63), it considered abolishing "all music in the service other than plainsong," and ended up suppressing "all but four tropes and sequences" (HCDM). Drama, of course, continued to be a thorn in the side of both Catholics and Protestants.

My main point here is relatively straightforward. If, like White, we follow the practice of "traditional poetics and modern language theory" and postulate metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony as the four basic tropes of figurative language, then representations of music are easily classified as ironic, precisely because they tend to draw attention to the inadequacy of their own representations. They are "'sentimental' (in Schiller's sense of 'self-conscious')" or artificial (MH, 31, 37). If by emphasizing the medieval use of the term, though, we notice the obvious—that jazz is always conceived as operating according to the logic of the trope (i.e., the tricks and turns of embellishment in the broadest sense of the word)—and if we understand that the very notion of trope already implies a more-or-less, self-conscious deployment of the musical or written sign's arbitrariness, then our work has, actually, only begun. We need to write out the figures of irony, the tropes of troping. This, in brief, is the task of my study. I hold that the figures which organize jazz are, in fact, the figures which organize writing.
In "The Rhetoric of Blindness," de Man maintains that the "real" Rousseau, as opposed to Rousseau's misinterpreters (whether Starobinski, Raymond, or Poulet--the unwittingly blind--or Derrida--the wittingly aberrant), understood "the implications and consequences" of general textuality--"the semiotic and non-sensory status of the sign"--and that, in the Essay on the Origin of Languages (which had the original title, Essai sur le principe de la mélodie), he reversed "the prevailing hierarchy of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory" by asserting "the priority of music over painting (and, within music, of melody over harmony) in terms of a value-system that is structural rather than substantial" (B&I, 127). As partial evidence for this contention, de Man produces the following passage from Rousseau's Essay. What is important, for our purposes, is its restatement and extension of an oft-repeated analogy between music and language, which, by underscoring points I have already introduced, further illustrates the destabilization of meaning necessarily accompanying a theory of representation that privileges the consequences of general textuality.

No sound by itself possesses absolute attributes that allow us to identify it: it is high or low, loud or soft with respect to another sound only. By itself, it has none of these properties. In a harmonic system, a given sound is nothing by natural right (un son quelconque n'est rien non plus naturellement). It is neither tonic, nor dominant, harmonic or fundamental. All these properties exist as relationships only and since the entire system can vary from bass to treble, each sound changes in rank and place as the system changes in degree.
In this system of signs, where "un son n'est rien . . . naturellement," "the musical sign," writes de Man, "can never be identical with itself or with prospective repetitions of itself." It is volatile, "not being grounded in any substance" (B&I, 128): characterized by aporia.

On the one hand, music is condemned to exist always as a moment, as a persistently frustrated intent toward meaning; on the other hand, this very frustration prevents it from remaining within the moment. (B&I, 129)

Walter Ong makes a similar observation when he states, "Sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent." And Sartre's character Roquentin writes:

For the moment, the jazz is playing; there is no melody, only notes, a myriad of tiny jolts. They know no rest, an inflexible order gives birth to them and destroys them without even giving them time to recuperate and exist for themselves. They race, they press forward, they strike me a sharp blow in passing and are obliterated. I would like to hold them back, but I know if I succeeded in stopping one it would remain between my fingers only as a raffish languishing sound. I must accept their death; I must even will it. I know few impressions stronger or more harsh. (Nausea, 21)

But whereas Ong (as part of his program to distinguish orality from literacy) and Sartre (as part of an extended analogy) emphasize the unique physical properties of sound, de Man generalizes its semiotic implications to make a point about textuality. Ong states, "[N]o other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way" (O&L, 32). De Man, still echoing Rousseau, states, "The structural characteristics of language are exactly the same as those attributed to music" (B&I, 131), and in another place,
"Like music, language is a diachronic system of relationships" (B&I, 32).

In effect, de Man reverses the commonplace, "Music works like a language," to read, "Language works like music," declares the conventional superordinate/subordinate relationship between language and music problematic (if not void), and suggests a fundamental or, at least, an imaginable homology between language and music. Like Mallarmé, he enlarges the boundaries of the written word to admit mystery—a domain formerly assigned to (structuring) music.

Indeed, insofar as an analogous (even homologous) relationship between the workings of music and language as sign systems can be maintained, the adage "music is a language" (with the metaphorical vehicle, language, structuring our conception of a tenor, music) can be reversed and pressed into a new metaphorical (allegorical) arrangement. Music can serve as a vehicle structuring a tenor, "language," and language can be (to employ a highly suspect verb) imaged as a music—the relational play of difference, a matrix of possibilities. But, here again, there are consequences. When we admit a metaphorical reciprocity between music and language—aver that "music is a language is a music"—or allow that language may be a subordinate category of a superordinate category, music, we, in effect, declare that the relationship between "tenor" and "vehicle" or "subordinate" and "superordinate," like the relationship between "language" and "music," is one of structure—convenience, imagination, or
cultural/political necessity—not substance. Unhooked from a metaphysics of presence, from an unshifting, ontological base (or tenor), the words we employ and the syntagms we construct fall under a logic of structural relativity conventionally reserved for explanations of music or, in Derrida's employment of the term, writing. He states:

For some time now... one says "language" for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc. Now we tend to say "writing"... to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible; and also, beyond the signifying face, the signified face itself. And thus we say "writing" for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural "writing." One might also speak of athletic writing, and with even greater certainty of military or political writing in view of the techniques that govern those domains today. All this to describe not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities but the essence and the content of these activities themselves.18

Thus, before ensconcing "music" as the new term of privilege, we must call for a deconstruction of the binary opposition music/language (a project only suggested here), one that would stage the question: To what degree is the term music (as a key term in a particular system)
"broached/ruptured/held incomplete by that element [writing? semantics?] which the system must exclude in order to find closure as a system and yet is necessary for the functioning of the system?"19 This project, yet another extension of Derrida and the Yale School critics' deconstruction of
logocentrism ("writing reined in by metaphor, metaphysics, and theology"—OG, 4), would need to demonstrate (write out):

1) the "structurally and axiologically determined relationship" assumed between language and music (OG, 27);
2) the means by which one set of phenomena—the "identity category" music—is made to differ from another set of phenomena—the "identity category" language;
3) and the historico-metaphysical effects of (maintaining) such a system of difference.

More practically, such a study could ask such questions as:

1) Can we read music as an effect or continuing realization (exploration and repression) of the possibility of writing or recording (i.e., hypomnesia or "artificial memory")?
2) Can we demonstrate that "recording technologies" (from musician's guilds and griot societies to sheet music and compact discs) traditionally perceived as supporting music were actually the conditions for the possibility of music? For example, is it possible to show that standard notation, ostensibly developed as an efficient means for recording music on paper, carried beyond its goal and made classical music possible? Contrariwise, can we demonstrate that recording technologies make music impossible by undoing previously established conceptions of what music is (and is not)? For example, is it possible to show that standard notation destroyed classical music by implying serial music, or that
Thelonious Monk, one of the founders of modern jazz (bebop), was also one of its dismantlers. Is building and dismantling a simultaneous operation?

3) Given "that historicity itself is tied to the possibility of writing" (OG, 27), what is the historical relationship between music and writing (écriture: inscription in the narrow sense of the word)? What modes of representation have been privileged or disallowed when writing about music?

4) To what extent is the history of music—as one version (one track) of a (multi-tracked) history of recording technologies—a series of ideological strategies calculated to contain (repress) the effects of new recording technologies by forcing those effects to bolster or disguise the vulnerable points of previous technologies.

5) Do the recording technologies associated with music (from apprenticeship to digital sampling) anticipate, duplicate, or follow technological changes in other areas of culture? And how far can one generalize from the compositional strategies associated with music (writing in the broad sense of the word) and apply them to compositional tasks in other disciplines?

6) Music is often characterized as a nonrepresentational semiotic system. Quoting Eco, it "presents, on the one hand, the problem of a semiotic system without a semantic level (or a content plane): on the other hand, however, there are musical 'signs' (or syntagms) with an explicit
denotative value (trumpet signals in the army) and there are syntagms or entire 'texts' possessing pre-culturalized connotative value ('pastoral' or 'thrilling' music, etc.)."21 The question is, by what process do we assign meaning (denotation and connotation) to such a system? And should we conceive of music as a semiotic system that normally lacks meaning (i.e., as an exceptional or deficient language) or as a system where overdetermination—a surfeit of meaning—is labeled lack, until such time as cultural restrictions generate a semantic effect.

The project outlined by these questions—an elaboration or application of structuralist and post-structuralist thinking applied to music—is part, but only an extension, of an already begun pro-gram: grammatology. In fact, if, as Eco maintains, "the whole of musical science since the Pythagoreans has been an attempt to describe the field of musical communication as a rigorously structured system" (TS, 10), then grammatology could be regarded as the discordant overtones of just such an attempt—that is, unless we read musical science as an ever-vigilant effort to dampen the grammatological implications of its own endeavors.

Rousseau, as we have seen, announces (and, in Derrida's reading, summarily suppresses) grammatology when he works an analogy (to maintain an opposition) between music and language (OC, 197-200). Nietzsche re-announces it in The Birth of Tragedy, as does Mallarmé in his Essays. Max Weber explores
issues associated with it in The Rational and Social Foundations of Music when he speculates on the question: "Why did polyphonic as well as harmonic-homophonic music and the modern tone system develop out of the widely diffused preconditions of polyvocality only in the Occident?"22 And in A Theory of Semiotics Eco writes:

We note that until a few years ago contemporary musicology had scarcely been influenced by the current structuralist studies, which are concerned with methods and themes that it had absorbed centuries ago. Nevertheless in the last two or three years musical semiotics has been definitely established as a discipline aiming to find its 'pedigree' and developing new perspectives. Among the pioneer works let us quote the bibliography elaborated by J.J. Nattiez in Musique en jeu, 5, 1971. As for the relationship between music and linguistics, and between music and cultural anthropology, see Jakobson (1964, 1967), Ruwet (1959, 1973) and Lévi-Strauss (1965, in the preface to The Raw and the Cooked). Outlines of new trends are to be found in Nattiez (1971, 1972, 1973), Osmond-Smith (1972, 1973), Stefani (1973), Pousseur (1972) and others. (TS, 10-11)

To this list we should add even more recent studies: Jacques Attali, Noise; David Sudnow, Talk's Body: A Meditation between Two Keyboards; Joseph Kerman, Contemplating Music; and Wendy Steiner, ed., The Sign in Music and Literature.

In Applied Grammatology, a work theorizing the pedagogical application of a mode of writing "no longer subordinated to speech or thought," Gregory Ulmer identifies three phases of grammatology:23

a history of writing (still under way), a theory of writing (one version now formulated by Derrida), and a grammatological practice (the application of the history and theory to the development of a new writing). (AG, 6)

This study, like Ulmer's, works towards a realization of the third or applied phase of grammatology, and specifically, it
seeks to maneuver the discourse of jazz—representations in musicology, literature, and film—into a position from which this goal could be actively pursued.

IV

Jazz cognoscenti will immediately notice the "origin" of my title. An easy pun on Charlie Parker's composition "Drifting on a Reed," it points to three questions which directed my endeavors. First, what happens when jazz (imagined metonymically as a reed) enters discourse (imagined as the realm of reading)? Next, to what extent is jazz always an effect of representation (e.g., of phonograph records or writing), and to what extent do jazz music and jazz literature enjoy a reciprocal relationship? Finally, and most importantly, what could it mean to employ jazz as a model for writing (composition and improvisation)?

In order to engage these questions I read widely in the literature of jazz, and in so doing, I noticed and, finally, isolated four multivalent tropes which, as a set, provide jazz with a rhetoric. They are the images of (1) the obbligato or agréments, (2) the satura or amalgam, (3) the rhapsody or counterfeit, and (4) the charivari or chasse beaux. Marking the entry of jazz into discourse, these images (examples of what Barthes called a symbolic code, the "province of the antithesis"--S/Z, 17) literally give jazz a voice, structuring and destabilizing it, organizing it on a highly abstract
level. But this is not all. They also enable what I come to label jazzology (musicological methodology applied to the study of jazz). That is, they make possible the "serious" study of jazz and disrupt such a study--and they provide us with a model for writing; indeed, they have already been proven as generative (agents of dissemination). I organize my discussion by these tropes.

In the first chapter, I touch on the broad theoretical issues raised by an investigation of the discourse of jazz, spell out what I mean by a "grammatological" study, and explain my methodology. Chapters Two through Five are organized by the four tropes and form the body of my essay. Each chapter has two main parts (with one transitional section). The first part locates a particular trope in the nonfiction literature of jazz and analyzes how it has been employed to generate a referential--i.e., scientific--effect. Here, like White, I demonstrate that the supposedly scientific text is predicated on a conceptualization of phenomena that is "generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature" (MH, ix), and I argue that nonfiction representations of jazz most often work by disguising their literary-rhetorical base (i.e., suppressing ideologically disenfranchised connotations of the very signifiers which make representation possible). To make these points evident I stage an especially close, intentionally aberrant, reading of the first paragraph of Gunther Schuller's Early Jazz, a representative musicological text, and I survey a wide range of nonfiction literature about jazz. Since few
surveys of what a literary scholar would call jazz criticism exist, and since no study has taken the literature of jazz as its sole object of study, the first part of every chapter beginning with Chapter Two is necessarily detailed. The second part of each chapter, however, is much sketchier, for in the interest of suggesting a broad range of approaches to a wide range of materials, I choose to recommend departure points, actually critical positions, from which one could play out full-fledged grammatical experiments. Here, I match the trope I located in the nonfiction literature of jazz with exemplary literary and theoretical texts, and briefly suggest (1) how the literary (i.e., the belletristic) representation of jazz can be conceptualized--i.e., organized and disrupted--as the play of these highly efficacious images, and (2) how these same tropes ("turns" or "tricks") occupy the concerns of postmodern critical theory. The pairings of texts made in the second, more experimental parts of Chapters Two through Five are most easily represented by the following figure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER TWO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBBLIGATO</td>
<td>SATURA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ralph Ellison</td>
<td>Michael Ondaatje</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible Man</td>
<td>Coming Through Slaughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacques Derrida</td>
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<td>Dissemination</td>
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<tr>
<th>CHAPTER FOUR</th>
<th>CHAPTER FIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RHAPSODY</td>
<td>CHARIVARI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ishmael Reed</td>
<td>Martin Scorsese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Free-Lance Pallbearers</td>
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<td>Roland Barthes</td>
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Briefly, obbligato, as both what is obligatory and merely an ornament, raises the issue of composition and improvisation. The refrain "What did I do to be so black and blue?" and the Rinehart episode from Ellison's *Invisible Man*, are examined with a view towards writing obbligati on these texts rather than writing a "theme" about them. The experimental essay which results from this study takes its lead from Derrida's *Dissemination* which, as a whole, advances the "thesis" that the concept *thesis* is untenable: a hermeneutic of *dissemination* could replace a hermeneutic concept of *polysemy*.

*Satura*, a word originally signifying a *mixture* or *medley*, and the word from where we get the English word "*satire,)* contests and, yet, maintains distinctions between the pure and the amalgam. Cage's *Silence* is read as a manifesto declaring modern music's reinvestigation of *satura* as a generative trope, and Ondaatje's docu-novel is advanced as a model work, repeating the image of the *satura* on both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. This section surveys fictive representations of jazz music through a model derived from Cage and Ondaatje.

*Rhapsody* works off notions of symphony and order and problematizes the opposition "counterfeit/genuine." Ishmael Reed's work is taken as a rapp (an counterfeit coin that passed for currency in 18th-century Ireland), i.e., as a genuine counterfeit. It is examined in the light of Barthes work on narrative in *S/Z* and especially his assertions that the "area of the (readerly) text is comparable at every point to a
(classical) musical score" and that "to unlearn the readerly
would be the same as to unlearn the tonal" (S/Z, 28, 30).

The Charivari represents the ritual/political employ-
ment of noise (noise comes from the Old French word "nausea").

The Raw and the Cooked provides the conceptual tools for
viewing New York, New York, a film directed by Martin Scorsese,
as a celebration and a warding off of unnatural unions.

In its efforts to set up the possibility of a grammatol-
logical reading of texts devoted to the representation of
jazz, this study, finally, offers the reader a choice of
thesis statements:

1) Certain literary or artistic texts, although sometimes
only intermittently, assume a grammatical theory of
writing and "self-consciously" employ a grammatical
methodology in representing jazz.

2) Certain literary or artistic texts, because they
represent provisional solutions to the problem of repre-
senting jazz, can be understood or conceptualized as
creative imitations, elaborated or improvised models,
not of some transcendental signified named Jazz, but of
the cultural codes that make sense (and nonsense) of
jazz in this culture.

The first thesis assumes that jazz served as a model for
literary writing; it finds something (mimesis). The second
thesis promises that jazz can serve as a model for thinking;
it imagines something (semiotics). Both theses, I believe,
are subsumable by a third, that, while not shunning analytical
effects, does not make analysis or "scholarship" its goal. Here, instead of analyzing jazz, one would use it as an occasion for making a text. This, of course, is Barthes' lesson in S/Z. He writes, "[T]he goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (S/Z, 4). And it is also the lesson of the elementary school teacher who has her students draw or paint in response to music.

The active reader or writer (the two can be scarcely differentiated) assumes something elementary: texts prompt texts. Every jazz musician knows this, knows that the best response to someone else's composition or solo is to blow one of your own. Sartre knew it, and Kerouac knew it. Sartre believed that the most adequate response he could possibly have to listening to Sophie Tucker sing "Some of These Days" was to write Nausea. Kerouac, after hanging out on 52nd Street, listening to Monk, Bird, and Dizzy, wrote On the Road. And I know it too.

Notes


3Kenneth Burke, in Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973) pp. 14-15. Subsequent citations from White will be designated in the body of the text as MH.


A pedal point consists of "a long-held note, normally in the bass, continuing to sound as harmonies change in the other parts"-- Don Michael Randel, Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music, (1978). I associate the term with jazz bassist Charles Mingus, but here and throughout this study, I assume that the reader has neither a specialized knowledge of musical terms nor a broad acquaintance with jazz musicians. Randel subsequently cited as HCDM.


Storyville nights, where the old only really universal music of the century had come from, something that brought people closer together and in a better way than Esperanto, UNESCO, or airlines, a music which was primitive enough to have gained such universality and good enough to make its own history, with schisms, abdications, and heresies, its Charleston, its Black Bottom, its Shimmy, its Fox Trot, its Stomp, its Blues, to label its forms, this style and the other one, swing, bebop, cool, a counterpoint of romanticism and classicism, hot and intellectual jazz, human music, music with a history in contrast to stupid animal dance music, the polka, the waltz, the zamba, a music that could be known and liked in Copenhagen as well as in Mendoza or Capetown, a music that brings adolescents together, with records under their arms, that gives them names and melodies to use as passwords so they can know each other and become intimate and feel less lonely surrounded by bosses, families, and bitter love affairs, a music that accepts all imaginations and tastes, a collection of instrumental 78's with Freddie Keppard or Bunk Johnson, the reactionary cult of Dixieland, an academic specialization in Bix Beiderbecke, or in the adventures of Thelonious Monk, Horace Silver, or Thad Jones, the vulgarities of Erroll Garner or Art Tatum, repentance and rejection, a preference for small groups, mysterious recordings with false names and strange titles and labels made up on the spur of the moment, and that whole freemasonry of Saturday nights in a student's room or in some basement café . . . all of this from a kind of music that horrifies solid citizens who think that nothing is true unless there are programs and ushers, and that's the way things are and jazz is like a bird who migrates or emigrates or immigrates or transmigrates, roadblock jumper, smuggler, something that runs and mixes in. . . .

. . . jazzology, deductive science, particularly easy after four o'clock in the morning.

--Julio Cortázar
The disappearance of the "authorial voice" . . . triggers off a power of inscription that is no longer verbal but phonic. Polyphonic.

--Jacques Derrida

However much post-Saussurean theory may hold to a view of language and music as non-mimetic, a ceaseless play of signification whose only referent is, in Rousseau's words, "le néant des choses humaines," we must admit that our day-to-day experience of language and music seems far more circumscribed. For example, I may concede that the jazz proverb, "If you gotta ask, you'll never know," could suggest any of the meanings listed below. But in practice I know, or at least sense, that Louis Armstrong's retort to a socialite's query ("What is jazz?") signifies a very limited set of possibilities.

1) Armstrong the Zen master. Speculation, even the need to ask what jazz is, precludes knowing. Cf. Mumon.
2) Armstrong the phenomenologist. Jazz is of the order of experiencing, not the order of knowing. There is a radical split between language and things, subjects and objects. Cf. Husserl.
3) Armstrong the linguist. Asking "What is jazz?" can only be answered by delineating what we do not mean by the sign jazz. "Jazz" is defined not by knowing it, what it includes, but through an awareness of all that is excluded in constructing the set jazz, i.e., in the
relational difference between the set of signs the particular sign jazz includes and the set of signs it excludes (i.e., everything from acoustic phenomena to styles of clothes). The socialite who asks Armstrong to define jazz cannot know jazz; she is one of the "signs" jazz excludes. Cf. Saussure.

4) Armstrong the metaphysical poet. Given the obscene etymology associated with the word jazz, the socialite's question is the equivalent of Armstrong asking the socialite a question that carried with it the connotation, "What is copulation?" The answer—coyness to the coy—is a knot of irony. Cf. Marvell.

5) Armstrong the modernist. Jazz cannot be inherited, passed on to another like a Persian rug. "If you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense . . . and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence." Cf. Eliot.4

6) Armstrong the postmodernist. If we presume to ask the question "What is jazz?" we have already presumed the validity of, and an answer to, the recursive question, "What is is?" We have already grounded our inquiry on a preestablished notion of being, i.e., presence. Thus, the initial (typically modernist) question assumes too much: namely that jazz is, and that it is a system—a tradition or construct—we can know from a position outside that system (outside textuality). Armstrong's
statement—which cunningly, parasidically mimes the motions of a metaphysics of presence—exemplifies a politics of indirection (it, through a ruse, teases out presuppositions), deconstructing jazz (as a transcendental signified) and suggesting that it is "definable" only as praxis, textual strategy. Cf. Derrida.

7) Armstrong the home-spun philosopher. Lincoln, if we trust material given in a short play by Woody Allen, was once asked, "Mr. President, how long must a man's legs be?" He replied, "Long enough to reach the ground."

Some questions require answers that make common sense (which isn't so common nowadays). Cf. Will Rogers.5

To this list, I should, but will not, add more interpretations: an Afro-American, feminist, Marxist, or Lacanian reading, for example, would work well. I could even declare that Armstrong's rejoinder, like his recording of, say, "Potato Head Blues," has the potential to mean anything (which is to say, everything and, thus, nothing) because it can be read in an infinite number of contexts. But why heap on more possible readings? Everyone pretty well knows what the statement means. Right?

Outside of a few institutional sites (schools, churches, courts, or the media, where "trained" exegetes--teachers, judges, ministers and priests, and news commentators--make sense of things for us), we seldom feel overwhelmed by the anxiety of hermeneutical possibility. Even if we know otherwise, we tend to think that things just mean what they mean.
And explicating an off-the-cuff remark such as Armstrong's (even if it is frequently appropriated), as though it were a line of lyric poetry, is likely to strike us as, at best, pedantic, at worst, completely asinine. Why is this the case, though? I suspect two reasons. One, the labor of exposition imbues the phrase with value, and this value teases out ideologically assigned values, the values our culture thinks that the phrase merits ("It isn't a line from Pope or Keats! It's Louis Armstrong, for crying out loud, not Schoenberg!").

Quite obviously, this is exactly what is happening when a jazz critic, for instance Gary Giddins declares, "In four decades of prize-giving, the Pulitzer Committee has never recognized a jazz composer." On the one hand, his statement calls attention to the institutional (non)status of jazz. On the other hand, because it does not evoke peals of laughter over the absurdity of its implied suggestion, that is, because it can be made with a straight face, it (like this study) calls attention to the rising status, to the institutionalization, of jazz. Two, exposition violates a tacit interdiction forbidding speculation, undercuts the assurance that things are exactly what they seem to be (by merely assuming the need for explanation), and, thus, opposes the very logic a "correct" interpretation of the phrase would demand ("Pops meant just what he said! The music speaks for itself. Asking what he could have meant is crazy, almost as wrongheaded as asking what jazz means.").
My point could be taken as trite, yet another homage paid to the omnipotent work of ideology, a restatement of the claim that any sign of any sort is always made to mean less than it could mean. But it is not—that is, not trite and not a homage. I do assume that meaning is socially produced and constrained, that, in Fiske's words:

The meanings I find in a sign derive from the ideology within which the sign and I exist: by finding these meanings I define myself in relation to the ideology and in relation to my society.

But instead of emphasizing the constraints ideology places upon (unimaginable but, somehow, felt) potential meanings—or how ideology delimits both orders of signification (denotation and connotation) or, more specifically, what I can say or even think about a phrase such as my chosen example—I would rather trace the means by which ideology—writing as a politico-social activity—produces (appropriates and validates) tropes to conceptualize representations of "objective" structures in this culture. Stated practically, I am less interested in demonstrating how the dominant ideology has contained potential meanings of jazz (although this needs to be shown), exposing the rhetoric of jazz "as the signifying aspect of ideology," than in naming favored images—"signifiers of connotation"—which this culture has chosen to represent (model) jazz to itself (IMT, 49). But more than this, I am eager to exploit a principle we have already noted. Namely, the connotations an ideology allows, which are, in effect, the connotations which construct that ideology—made explicit through the work of explication (writing in the narrow sense)
--always threaten the hegemony of the system that generates them, because in their multiplicity they reveal that

   denotation [truth, objectivity, the law] is not the first meaning, but pretend to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and to close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature. (S/Z, 9)

   In subsuming denotation under connotation or in writing out the connotations of the tropes a culture employs to conceptualize a given system, one will, of course, remain within ideology, for if ideology or "society," as Durkheim states, "may . . . be seen as that total genus beyond which nothing else exists," then it has no bounds, no beyond (both terms become problematic); getting outside it is less than desirable, if not positively dangerous.® But if, as Barthes writes, "Connotation is the way into the polysemy of the classic text" (S/Z, 8), then reintroducing the plurality which was banished (always ineffectually because it cannot be sent "outside") for the sake of insuring univocality (canonical meaning) insures the substitution of a model of production for the classic model of representation (S/Z, 4-7); stressing suppressed connotations (available, once again, because they always return) is tantamount to forsaking "the path of the object" (the "study of the nature of the 'objective' structures of a given cultural text") for "the path of the subject" ("which would instead foreground the interpretive categories or codes through which we read and receive the text in question") (PU, 9).
Again, stated practically, the tropes which bring jazz into discourse are enabling images. They successfully enunciate jazz--differentiate it from other musics and imbue it with meaning for our culture. But they also have connotations which would disrupt discourse, difference, and meaning. Writing out of these tropes (employing them as thesauri) is, therefore, not an attempt to "arrange all the meanings of a text [jazz] in a circle around the hearth of denotation" (S/Z, 7), but an attempt to employ the discourse of jazz as a compositional/improvisational model for opening up, scattering, and disseminating.

Meandering

[T]here would be no music if language had not preceded it and if music did not continue to depend on it.  
--Claude Lévi-Strauss

The analogy with language, often used by improvising musicians in discussing their work, is useful to illustrate the building up of a common pool of material--a vocabulary--which takes place when a group of musicians improvise together regularly.  
--Derek Bailey

Who can tell you what love is?  
--Miles Davis

Before I proceed any farther I should make it clear that jazz has two types of meaning for me, arising from two orders of signs. First, it has specifically musical, non-referential meaning. Second, it has referential meaning--meaning that is articulable, culturally shared and frequently contested.
After years of listening to Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, and other jazz musicians, I understand and enjoy their music because I have learned the musical language they "speak." I have learned to make intramusical maps; I can translate within the realm of music. More specifically, because I have learned a group of "musical" signs (including codes of selection and combination: e.g., a paradigmatic code given the title of "blue" note, a syntagmatic code designated the I-VI-II-V chord changes to Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," or a musical grammar called "tonality"), I recognize certain acoustical patterns as jazz, other patterns as not-jazz. These signs—which produce what could be termed musical meaning (perhaps a different order of meaning than that produced by referential signs)—form the object of study for musicology and ethnomusicology ("the study of music in culture," to use Alan P. Merriam's phrase).10

The nature of the purely musical sign raises serious problems for study, though. In the Overture to The Raw and the Cooked, Lévi-Strauss states that music cannot be "the object of linguistic discourse, when its peculiar quality is to express what can be said in no other way."11 For example, we may admit the arbitrariness of all signs, but examples of synaesthesia such as "blue note," "hot jazz," "sweet jazz," or "hard bop," or oxymorons such as "musical sign" or "sound object" strike us as particularly arbitrary—lacking in motivation. Again Lévi-Strauss writes, "It [music] is the only
language with the contradictory attributes of being at once intelligible and untranslatable" (R&C, 18).

So then, Lévi-Strauss would agree with Louis Armstrong. Jazz makes sense, and it cannot be translated. Wilder Hobson, in *American Jazz Music*, writes:

> It is often said that jazz cannot be notated. It cannot; and, strictly speaking, of course, neither can any other music. Any music is played with a "translation" of the written note values according to tradition for that particular kind of music and the instincts of the performer.12

Itself a type of notation, this statement, it would seem, is, paradoxically, the only completely accurate statement one can make about jazz or any other type of music. But we are in the midst of a double bind. Translation—in this case, translation as performance—implies a stable text which has some type of prior existence and which is not so much knowable as already known (hard-wired into our brains).

Given the critical positions of Armstrong, Lévi-Strauss, and Hobson, we observe that naming sounds, designating types or styles of music, constitutes an impossible translation, an employment of catachresis. Mapping jazz onto linguistic discourse, moving from music, a potentially analogical code, to words, a digital code, not only does jazz violence, it inevitably fails. Translation or mapping captures only that which is common to both jazz and linguistic discourse. That which is specific to jazz always eludes translation.

This claim, an application of a general problem in semiotics to the specific problem of notating jazz, is articulated
in the following statement made by Winthrop Sargeant. In Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (1946), he writes:

Anyone who has attempted to transcribe folk music . . . in terms of our musical notation has observed that the symbols traditionally used by us in writing music are very imperfectly suited to such purposes. The problem is somewhat similar to that of recording in printed words the precise sound values of a dialect only remotely related to the language for which the system of writing was created. The task of the musical transcriber is, indeed, more difficult than the comparison would indicate, since music involves a far more complex group of important distinctions in the realm of sound than language does.

The distinction here indicated ["between music itself and the usually somewhat inaccurate representation of music that is achieved in symbols written or printed on paper"] is not only valuable to our discussion in that it points to the untrustworthiness and inaccuracy of notation as a conveyance for jazz; it is also important as indicating a difference of attitude toward the art of music between us, whose ideas of music are often colored by notational considerations, and the musically illiterate folk artist whose ideas of music are not so colored.13

This is an important passage, because it represents a set of problems which must concern any ethnomusicology; it cogently states the pitfalls of ethnocentrism. It repeats points raised by any number of texts—e.g., by Vico, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Swift—written when Western thinkers began to come to terms with what were actually the implications of exploration and colonization, echoes contemporary concerns in anthropology (it was written in 1946), and anticipates issues that would later (i.e., now) animate orality/literacy discussions in the humanities. But it also manifests all the marks of what has been designated logocentrism, because once started, Sargeant's argument—ostensibly leveled against notation—falls back on the concept of some transcendental Music (outside difference, translation, or notation) from which all music
derives (and to which all music supposedly strives). Faced with the difficult task of extricating his logic from the very system it would oppose, Sargeant relies on that which is untenable to deny that on which he relies. That is, he appeals to **Music** to maintain the distinction between "music itself" and representations of music and, hence, opposes a logic of repetition which, if generalized, could actually account for the possibility of his argument as well as folk music. The point is, given full rein the logic of notation, what Derrida has called iterability, would destabilize both the concept **Music** and the concept **notation**. Thus, in order to function --in order to keep the concepts of notation and translation from becoming problematic, implicating all music and, hence, collapsing the distinction between **notated** and **unnotatable** music--Sargeant's argument must stop the logic of its own logic.

Sargeant's argument is a jazz version of the tune harped on by numerous philosophers from Plato to Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss, and my argument, although much too sketchy, could be read as a jazz version--a fleeting quotation in the middle of a solo--to a tune played by Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (cf. OG, 195). Sargeant continues:

The noblest department of Western concert music has become the art of composition. This art of composition is not concerned directly with the creation of music (i.e., sound) but rather with the creation of plans from which music may be subsequently created. In its domination by the **planner** rather than the **manipulator** our musical system is unique; and its peculiarities have obscured, for many of us, the fundamental nature of musical expression. In its primitive essentials the art of music has nothing whatever to do with the institution of the
composer. Actually improvisation—the art of creating music directly with vocal or instrumental means—is far more fundamental to music than is the complex, difficult and specialized art of planning compositions on paper.

If we may alter the familiar opening to Genesis to suit yet another connotation: "In the beginning was improvisation." (pp. 32-33)

Thus, Sargeant's affinity for jazz is easily explained. It, among all the musics of the West, is one of, if not the closest music to Music. Rhetorically and symbolically, jazz—the art of the improviser not the composer—still shares a vestige of the purity of an originary Music because it is created "directly" without the mediation of a composer; compared to classical music, jazz has sustained fewer translations. It is primitive music in the best sense of the word. This is precisely Socrates' argument for dialectics over writing in Plato's Phaedrus, and it is Rousseau's argument for music in his Essay on the Origin of Languages. One might even note that my rhetoric, although it opposes this tendency, is contradicted by my grammar, for when I write or seek to theorize "representations of jazz," I assume the very notion I would deny—namely, that jazz can be distinguished from its representations, that representation (which, of course, includes but is not restricted to the written) is supplemental, tacked on—to the real, musical item.

Many ethnomusicologists and musicians would readily agree with Sargeant; at least one contemporary musician has extended the logic of his argument. Keith Jarrett, who is best known for repopularizing the solo piano concert in jazz, has become one of the most vociferous spokesmen against electronic music.
In an interview conducted in 1983, he reiterated the ancient, metaphysical argument against notation (representing music graphically) and carried the jazz version of the logocentric position to its inevitable—Socratic—conclusion. Here is a portion of his statement.

MUSICIAN: Let me also broach the issue of Con Ed and what it has wrought on the musical landscape. It's now ten years since your major anti-electric music proclamation.

JARRETT: I think my argument is more persuasive today. Today there are a lot more "interesting" things happening with electronic music than there were ten years ago. And I think it's probably more dangerous than it was then.

MUSICIAN: What do you mean, dangerous?

JARRETT: I mean it is a kind of poison. Something that takes your connection from the soil away is a poison. I think that for a long, long time it will be a lot of fun, and then at a point electronic music will either go away or it will be all that we have. If it's all we have, then the poison has done its job. People are not able to listen to acoustic music after they've heard electronic music. I know this is true for me; it's a very difficult, difficult thing to get used to.

MUSICIAN: Why poison? Why an image of sickness and death?

JARRETT: Because it's something people are doing to themselves.

MUSICIAN: What do you become desensitized to?

JARRETT: I feel first of all, there doesn't need to be art. Even acoustic music is, in the end, a secondary thing to the spirit that animates it. Likewise, the painting is not the most important thing; it's what the painter does to paint it. So I don't understand why we have to take ourselves so far away from basic, close organic substances that are already far enough away in acoustic instruments. I know ultimately that it's a poison that either can get worse or get better and if it gets better we're lucky.14

Although I am tempted to devote much more space to discussing Sargeant and Jarrett's restatements of logocentrism, I will not do so for reasons that smack of kettle logic: I do not feel competent to do so; my comments would distract me from the main line of my argument (to which I shall shortly return); but, in fact, the general problem—the valorization of music
over literature, presence over writing--has, as I have noted, already been redressed, most notably, in the work of Derrida and de Man.

I will emphasize, however, the assertions of Sargeant and Jarrett are particularly interesting and deserve further attention. They approach the problem of "writing"--i.e., notation, translation, and representation--from outside philosophical discourse, and, yet, they echo the rhetoric of the metaphysics of presence (or voice) which, for two thousand years, has dominated Western ways of thinking. As popularized versions of continuing but ancient philosophical debates, they readily demonstrate that the discussions animating contemporary critical theory, far from being abstruse and hidebound, reflect and speak to issues which concern culture as a whole.

Jarrett's argument is especially noteworthy. It is a glaring example of telephobia (the fear of being separated from "basic, close, organic substances that are already far enough away"). And, because it is advanced against an electronic medium (electronic music is a copy of acoustic music, which is itself a copy of "spirit"), it is particularly timely, indicative of a larger issue producing similar arguments used in polemics against all forms of "secondary orality": e.g., television and the computer. A generalization or extension of Sargeant's rather specific complaint, it is powerful in its abstraction. It demands that recording (on tape, vinyl, or compact disc) and, more importantly, playing and listening be acknowledged as types of notations or
translations—problematic mappings from one "language" to another. Finally, in updating and practically paraphrasing Socrates' condemnation of writing, it suggests that we reassess and ultimately reject Lévi-Strauss's thesis that intelligibility and untranslatability are sui generis features of the language called music, precisely because this claim has also been made for speech and other "languages." As Andrei, the protagonist of Tarkovsky's film Nostalghia, puts it, "Poetry is untranslatable like the whole of art."

All languages, it could be maintained, seem to "express what can be said in no other way." Intelligibility and untranslatability are general attributes of language. Intersemiotic mapping is both an impossibility and a precondition of language, whether one is translating from painting to linguistic discourse, from English to Chinese, or from the thoughts in my brain to the typed words on this paper.

Two questions must be engaged. Why is establishing the uniqueness of music essential to Lévi-Strauss's argument in The Raw and the Cooked? And, given the untranslatability of music (not to mention all languages), how does intelligibility arise? I shall answer the first and a related question—Why must structuralism reject serialism?—in a later chapter, but for now, notice Levi-Strauss's response to the question of intelligibility. He writes:

Baudelaire made the profound remark that while each listener reacts to a given work in his own particular way, it is nevertheless noticeable that "music arouses similar ideas in different brains." In other words, music and mythology appeal to mental structures that the different listeners have in common. (R&C, 26)
According to Lévi-Strauss, music and mythology are natural systems, automatically intelligible, because they are expressions of the a priori conditions that make communication possible. They are originary languages. Everyone understands them (for they constitute the conditions for understanding); no one can translate them. Or stated differently, "when the mind [individual or corporate] is left to commune with itself and no longer has to come to terms with objects, it is in a sense reduced to imitating itself as object" (R&C, 10). The product of such self-reflexive objectification is music (individually produced) or mythology (socially produced). Hence, we understand music and mythology because these isomorphic, original languages mimic—actually model—the structures of the human mind. This is why Lévi-Strauss can declare, "music has its being in me, and I listen to myself through it" (R&C, 17). Demonstrate the logical operations that govern music and mythology, and you reveal the pattern of basic and universal laws that govern human beings.

There is, however, another—my preferred—way of accounting for the intelligibility of music, and although this way accepts the impossibility of translation, it also asserts the necessity of translation. Unlike structuralism, it does not seek to ground itself in ontology. It declares that intelligibility is an effect produced by mapping one system (or structure) onto another.15

Although philosophically impossible—ineluctably problematic—translation generates intelligibility or understanding.
And it inevitably occurs. Stated more forcefully, I assume that intelligibility is a by-product of imagining or creating maps; institutionally sanctioned maps create the effect of ontological stability, truth. If a music is to gain significance in a culture, it must be turned into some kind of text and, thereby, acquire referential meaning.

So then, as I stated earlier, jazz has referential meaning. It possesses denotative and connotative values, or, better, it acquires these values when it enters (is mapped onto or translated into) discourse (textuality): when, in pairing "cultural" signs (linguistic and nonlinguistic semic, reference, and symbolic codes) with "musical" signs, our culture represents—enunciates—jazz to itself. Because I am acquainted with the "cultural" signs which signify jazz (and which jazz signifies), I assume (whether rightly or wrongly is not the issue) that I understand jazz. The point is, the effect of believing that I know what jazz means results not so much from the ability to read musical signs (which could be called the ability to play or listen), but from an acquired competence in deciphering the culturally assigned and politically privileged signs that govern the presentation of jazz (e.g., the metascientific discourse of ethnomusicology, the styles of clothes worn by beboppers, or the argot of the hipster). These signs or codes, which mark sites of ideological contestation, form the object of study for the literary theorist and, subsequently, for my work. Whether found in artistic, musicological, or "cultural" texts they refer not
to what jazz is, but to what jazz says. They are always identifiable as writing (in the broad sense of the word), and in my study, except in the section on Martin Scorsese's film New York, New York, as écriture (writing in the narrow sense).

Thriving on a Riff

In December 1965, with my personal life and fortunes at low ebb. I went to Rome. One day I visited many churches. I was overawed to observe that in each one there were urns containing the remains of saints and soldiers. How incredible that persons of such opposite beliefs—each in his own way attempting to influence our world—could end up in exactly the same place—a jar.

——Ornette Coleman

... tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre.

——Stéphane Mallarmé

As one with a background in literary studies, I conceptualize jazz as a text—actually as a textual ensemble, an imaginary bibliography of preferred and excluded readings. And I regard my own knowledge of jazz as something pre-written: composed by records I have heard, movies I have seen, stories I have been told, books I have read, concerts I have attended, and musicians with whom I have spoken. Along with Jameson, I tend to assume that

we never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or—if the text is brand-new—through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions. (PU, 9)
Probably, Jameson is correct. Our readings of texts do arrive always-already-mediated. But what do we make of this notion of a "fresh" text? Just because we never really experience jazz in its pristine form "as a thing-in-itself"--isolated from "sedimented layers of previous interpretations"--does not insure that it could be heard in a hypothetical pre-lapsarian, utopian, or millennial state. Never having been in such a state, we should be willing to imagine (with Jameson) that jazz must be especially good there (since it is fresh, does not have to pass through layers of sediment), fear (with Lévi-Strauss) that there is no jazz there (because, even though music [like mythology], provides a basis for language, it is meaningless without language), or be satisfied to observe that, in this culture, in our experience, jazz, like any music, drifts on a read--on socially produced texts that sustain (even create) it as a music with specific meanings.

What, then, are we to make of the texts which name--present, model, and situate--jazz, that bring it into discourse? How should we approach the recordings, clothes, musical instruments, spaces for performance, and especially, at least for my purposes, the books and films that position (and overdetermine) this culture's experience of jazz? And how can we speak of these types of representations or of jazz without assuming an impossible position outside textuality? Nathaniel Mackey, author of Bedouin Hornbook--an epistolary novel whose discourse, like the music of one of its characters, manifests a "somewhat French-inflected sense of
African drumming"--has his protagonist, N., offer one possible solution to our dilemma. After awaking from a dream, he writes to the Angel of Dust, the recipient of his correspondence:

I awoke to the even more radical realization that it's not enough that a composer skillfully cover his tracks, that he erase the echo of "imposition" composition can't help but be haunted by. In a certain sense, I realized, to do so only makes matters worse. The question I was left with, of course, was: What can one do to outmaneuver the inertia both of what one knows and of what one feels or presumes to feel? There must be some way, I'm convinced, to invest in the ever so slight suggestion of "compost" I continue to get from the word compose. (BH, 78-79)

N.--a founding member of a musical collective known as the Mystic Horn Society, an aggregation patterned after Sun Ra's Arkestra or the Art Ensemble of Chicago--hints at a grammatical approach to compositional inertia (i.e., a provisional solution to the problem of how to unclench one's teeth--trigger composition). Although he declares, "I don't claim to have come up with a solution yet," he does admit that he has probably assumed John Coltrane's stated goal (quoted in the liner notes to Coltrane Live at the Village Vanguard Again!) and is "trying to work out a kind of writing that will allow for more plasticity, more viability, more room for improvisation in the statement of the melody itself." His approach--decomposition--has the extravagance and elegance of a metaphysical conceit, but as a postmodern inventio it is, according to Ulmer, "another version of what Derrida describes as the most fundamental feature of language--iterability" (AG, 58).
Detecting the ever so slight whiff of "compost" in the word "compose" is the discourse equivalent of reversing the direction (sens) of sublation, for it begins the work of returning composition, a master concept of Western thought, to the bodily metaphor (philosopheme) on which it was based (or, at least, to a base, bodily metaphor). By this method, whereby the intelligible is manured (from manouvrer, to work with the hands, cultivate) into the sensible, decomposition challenges (outmaneuvers) "the idealizing and appropriating operations of metaphysics, which lifted metaphors into concepts and which exalted the episteme over aisthesis as the only genuine source of truth" (AG, 51-52); it reintroduces that which was suppressed or ignored. It presents a way to write, that is, write out of, the tropes which organized Western metaphysics, and it provides this study with an experimental (tentative and alternative) means of writing about the tropes which organize the rhetoric of jazz.

Ulmer writes of such a project:

In decomposition . . . a term does not generate its opposite but metamorphoses into its own allosemes, without unity, conclusion, or hierarchy, but only scattering. (AG, 66)

The task of (de)composition, then, is to break down (letter-alize) the concepts that compose one's knowledge of a particular field into a textual compost pile that can be exploited in a search for "a kind of writing that will allow for more plasticity, more viability, more room for improvisation." Rather than feigning originality by erasing "the echo [or trace] of 'imposition' composition can't help but
be haunted by" or skillfully covering writing's tracks to past texts, a grammatical mode of writing--like jazz music--feeds "off the decay of tradition."  

In stating this I am, of course, feeding off the theory (grammatology) and method (deconstruction) exemplified in the work of Derrida and a group of theorists broadly referred to as textualists, just as traditional studies continue to feed off a theory (mimesis) and method (formal analysis) as old as, and most readily identified with, Aristotle (p. 87). Accordingly, I feel no more incumbency to actually restate the textualist (deconstructionist/grammatological) position, than a traditional scholar would feel to restate Aristotle's Poetics. Both have already been done. My study is not a commentary on Derrida (except in an oblique sort of way). It is, however, (though it is hard to use the word anymore without wincing) something of a deconstruction of the musicological literature of jazz and, then, a suggested application of grammatical theory to three books and a film which represent jazz: an experiment in (de)composition, an emblem, an allegory or model of a new kind of writing.

**Just for the Record**

[T]he disc is scratched and is wearing out, perhaps the singer is dead.

--Jean-Paul Sartre

The musicological work which speaks of jazz represents an attempt to bring that music into written language. One
might say that it is one, maybe the institutionally privileged, means by which this culture provides jazz with a speaking voice. Unlike its object of study, however, the musicological work is susceptible to the type of theoretical scrutiny and speculation most frequently reserved for so-called "literary" or "artistic" texts, because it is first and foremost a verbal structure. It, to paraphrase White, combines "data," theoretical concepts for "explaining" these data, and a linguistic structure to, presumably, present an icon of the music under examination (MH, ix). If we grant that music is the purview of musicologists, we must allow that the products of musicology--since they are written and not musical--fall within the realm of literary studies. Or stated even more forcefully, musicology may possess a specialized language or metadiscourse sufficient for the study of music, including jazz, but it possesses no discourse capable of self-reflexively analyzing its own, exclusively, linguistic products. Literary theory, it seems, is that discipline which has developed a metadiscourse sufficient for the study of musicological discourse. Accordingly, this study does not attempt to examine jazz music, nor does it directly examine musicological "data" or "theory." Rather, it concerns itself with representations as representations. It shifts the object of study to the written or filmed representation of jazz and attends to matters of "style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original"
(Or, 21). As far as I have been able to ascertain, it is the first book-length study to privilege the signifiers of jazz over the signified, jazz. It seeks, above all, to theorize how I, and, by extension, this culture, have managed to understand one of the most interesting art forms of this century.

I chose to survey the language of musicological studies of jazz for five reasons. First, since the language of musicology occupies a privileged position in university music departments, an investigation of that language constitutes an institutional imperative to any study that would investigate representations of jazz in imaginative literature or the perception of jazz in the cultural reference. Second, although, generally speaking, musicological literature describing classical music has become increasingly self-conscious of its basis in language, musicological literature describing jazz has shown little interest in scrutinizing--philosophizing or theorizing--its own rhetoric. This work needed to be done. Third, a survey of musicology provides an occasion for commenting on issues associated with the theoretical problem of referentiality and with what has been called a theory of general textuality, because it foregrounds that large set of problems which inevitably arises when one seeks to represent music--"a semiotic system without a semantic level (or content plane)" (TS, 11). Fourth, jazz is an index of modernism. Even more than the music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, it (to the chagrin of critics such as Adorno)
formed the soundtrack to the Modern Age and pointed towards postmodernism (much as rock and roll--more than the music of Cage and Boulez--forms the soundtrack to postmodernism and points to something else as yet unrealized). A survey of musicological responses to jazz provides a convenient departure point for discussing institutional responses to questions that concerned modernism. Fifth and more to-the-point, I am what the French call an amateur de musique; surveying musicological literature devoted to jazz gave me a scholarly excuse to read what I enjoy reading anyway, and, of course, it granted me a way of, at least obliquely, writing about something I love.

In order to draw up the list of books that guided this survey, I surrendered both to the scholar's urge to systematication and to the jazz lover's urge to spontaneity. On the systematic side, to start my work, I classified and evaluated a selection of texts chosen from three bibliographies: Booth's chapter, "Ragtime and Jazz," in American Popular Music: A Reference Guide; Kennington and Read's The Literature of Jazz; and Harrison's chapter on jazz in The New Grove: Gospel, Blues and Jazz. But this study is in no way intended to be encyclopedic in scope. I have not read all of the books listed in these bibliographies. Instead, by reading widely but selectively I attempted to gain a general conception of the field of jazz discourse: its "shape and internal organization, its pioneers, patriarchal authorities, canonical texts, doxological ideas, exemplary figures, its
followers, elaborators, and new authorities" (Or, 22). On the spontaneous side, I followed a general rule of invention laid down by Edison. He said, "When you are experimenting and you come across anything you don't thoroughly understand, don't rest until you run it down; it may be the very thing you are looking for or it may be something far more important." Gelatt describes how this rule led to the invention of the phonograph.

For years Edison had labored to increase the efficiency of the telegraph. . . . In the summer of 1877 he was working on an instrument that transcribed telegrams by indenting a paper tape with the dots and dashes of the Morse code and later repeated the message any number of times and at any rate of speed required. To keep the tape in proper adjustment he used a steel spring, and he noticed that when the tape raced through his instrument at a high speed, the indented dots and dashes striking the end of the spring gave off a noise which Edison described as a "light musical, rhythmic sound, resembling human talk heard indistinctly."

Instead of ignoring this phenomenon, Edison pursued it. His interest in the telephone—a recently invented carbon transmitter for Bell's one-year-old invention had already made the thirty-year-old Edison financially independent—encouraged him to speculate that if one could record a telegraph message, one could also record a human voice—more specifically, a telephone message. He abandoned his work on the telegraph and shifted his efforts to "a makeshift to which he had resorted during his work on the carbon transmitter." Gelatt explains:

Edison was by then already showing signs of deafness and could not trust his hearing to judge the loudness of a sound as it came over the telephone receiver. To bypass this difficulty, he had attached a short needle to the diaphragm of the receiver. When he let his finger
rest lightly on this needle, the pricks would show him the amplitude of the signal coming over the line. Harking back to this experience, Edison reasoned that if the needle could prick his finger it could just as well prick a paper tape and indent it with a record of the human voice.

In theory, the phonograph was invented. On July 18, 1877, Edison jotted in his notebook:

Just tried experiment with diaphragm having an embossing point and held against paraffin paper moving rapidly. The speaking vibrations are indented nicely, and there's no doubt that I shall be able to store up and reproduce automatically at any future time the human voice perfectly.

In subsequent experiments, Edison improved his invention—for example, he substituted tin foil for paraffin wax—but its general operating principle remained the same. On August 12, he handed John Kruesi, "one of his most trusted mechanics," a sketch of the phonograph. Thirty hours later, according to "official" accounts, Kruesi was finished. Edison shouted "Mary had a little lamb" into the instrument's mouthpiece and made the first phonograph recording.

I relate this account for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it provides a (mythic) rationale for digressive tendencies. Just as Edison's digression precipitated the invention of the phonograph, one of my lapses from systematic reading in the field of jazz turned up Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (1985). This exemplary work introduced me to the study of classical music as organized and practiced in the United States and Britain since World War II and acquainted me with the standard divisions of labor in musical studies—viz., musicology, theory, analysis,
ethnomusicology and criticism. It functioned for me much as Terence Hawkes's *Structuralism and Semiotics*, Catherine Bel- sey's *Critical Practice*, or similar introductory surveys of literary theory might function for a student of music interested in critical theory. Although it did not discuss any books or articles specifically on jazz, it oriented my thoughts *vis à vis* contemporary musicology.

But I also repeated the story of Edison's invention of the phonograph for another reason. Because the history of jazz is coextensive with the invention and development of the phonograph (including associated inventions such as the microphone and tape recorder), this account introduces several motifs which we shall repeatedly encounter in this study. For example, the phonograph was perceived and situated as, at once, "an invention, an industry, and a musical instrument" (*Phono*, 11). As such, its products, which include jazz, like the products of the Edison's Kinetograph or Kinetoscope, must be received as imbricating science, economics, and aesthetics.

If cinema would be impossible without (it is inseparable from) the technology which brought it into existence, jazz, a much more problematic case, because it could have conceivably developed without electronic modeling systems (electronically dependent technologies for recording and reproducing sound), is, nevertheless, unthinkable apart from the phonograph and radio (radio, undoubtedly the primary means by which jazz was disseminated, electronically reproduces sound, but, unlike
the early phonograph, which could record and play back, it
does not store up its reproductions). As Miles Davis quipped,
when speaking of a fellow trumpet player's campaign to preserve
time-honored, jazz traditions:

"Wynton Marsalis? I don't know about him, man. But
I know he doesn't talk like that when we're alone togeth¬
er. 'Preserve this' and 'preserve that'--the way they're
going we'll have blacks back on the plantation. I mean,
it already is preserved. Isn't that what records are
all about?
"I just tell people it's like this: I can't wear
bell-bottom pants anymore. And I don't drive an Edsel.
I drive a Ferrari."22

Yet, as virtually everyone who studies this type of music
observes, jazz is also antithetical to "artificial" recording
technologies. Martin Williams notes that "phonograph records
are in a sense a contradiction of the meaning of the music."
Gunther Schuller states, "A jazz recording of an improvised
performance . . . is a one-time thing, in many instances the
only available and therefore 'definitive' version of something
that was never meant to be definitive." But probably the
most famous testament to the jazz musician's antipathy to
recording is the brief anecdote told about Freddie Keppard
and the Original Creole Band. "Early in 1916 [one full year
before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded the first
jazz record, "At the Darktown Strutters' Ball," for Columbia]
the Victor Phonograph Company approached the Original Creoles
with an offer to record. Keppard thought it over, and said:
"Nothin' doin', boys. We won't put our stuff on records for
everybody to steal."23
Jazz, then, is a response to, and a reaction against, the technology of electronic sound reproduction and, therefore, makes a good test case for studying how electronic modeling systems—actually new means of writing—inevitably get bound up in philosophical, scientific, economic, and aesthetic issues with, ultimately, political ramifications (i.e., raise issues of power, most often discussed in terms of class, race and gender). In the following pages I shall return to, expand and focus, these observations. But for now, it is enough to notice that the questions raised by the electronic reproduction (and recording) of jazz—a music created, as Anthony Davis put it, "in the moment"—present a particularly interesting, contemporary version of the ancient opposition between mneme and hypomnnesia and, consequently, recapitulate the orality/literacy discussions which have concerned theorists such as Parry, Lord, Havelock, Foley, Ong, McLuhan, Goody, and Derrida for the last twenty-five years or so.24

Out of the Tropics

She told me things she knew, like when the white man came to Africa he acted friendly at first and tried to show the tribes his superiority in magic—but our people's medicine was as advanced as his and more so when it came to tropical fevers and diseases. The white man had one magic we didn't have—he could write, he could write down ideas and this amazed our people.

--Charles Mingus

"Yes," he said, surprised to find he was muttering out loud, "as a wonderful singer once remarked: 'An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties.'"

--Nathaniel Mackey 25
One critic described *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* as "among the two or three finest contributions to jazz literature." But that is not why I employ the Preface to Volume I of Gunther Schuller's, as yet uncompleted, "comprehensive history of jazz music," as the departure point for my survey and analysis of musicological literature devoted to jazz. My reasons are guided primarily by personal-professional interests: the concerns of my thesis.

Schuller's Preface, whatever its other putative merits, serves my purposes because it provides a history of writing about jazz as well as a register of the author's attitude towards that history. As a succinct, diachronic (or syntagmatic) account of jazz musicology, it affords a useful overview of the rhetorical topography of jazz. Hence, I shall cite it almost in its entirety. But in addition to this, Schuller's Preface also presents—in its first paragraph—what could be called a synchronic (or paradigmatic) representation of jazz musicology. In this passage Schuller, who was formerly President of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Artistic Director at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, and the French horn player on Miles Davis' historic recording, *The Birth of the Cool*, accuses the majority of books on jazz of some very specific mistakes. His reasons for doing so are simple, a rhetorical necessity. To distinguish his book—set it apart from the pack—he must simultaneously perpetuate and repudiate a critical tradition: i.e., a heritage of representations that both comes before him (which
allows him to write) and after him (whose future—if his book is taken as definitive—will be fixed or even foreclosed).

In order to accomplish this task, he, to mix my metaphors, attempts to situate his own work within a critical field, and at the end of a historical/intellectual lineage. And in the process of identifying his work with, and distinguishing it from, a critical tradition, he—perhaps unintentionally—attributes a extraordinary, albeit negative, unity to a diverse group of writings. He states:

Although there is no dearth of books on jazz, very few of them have attempted to deal with the music itself in anything more than general descriptive or impressionistic terms. The majority of books have concentrated on the legendy of jazz, and over the years a body of writing has accumulated which is little more than an amalgam of well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion. That this was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis is attributable not only to the humble, socially "unacceptable" origin of jazz, but also to the widely held notion that a music improvised by self-taught, often musically illiterate musicians did not warrant genuine musicological research. Despite the fact that many "serious" composers and performers had indicated their high regard for jazz as early as the 1920s, the academic credentials of jazz were hardly sufficient to produce a serious interest in the analysis of its techniques and actual musical content. (EJ, vii)

For reasons I shall soon produce, this passage is as eminently remarkable as it is altogether unexceptional. Hold your finger on it.

The bibliography following the jazz entry in The New Grove Gospel, Blues and Jazz lists 109 books under the headings "Criticism," "History, Analysis," and "Sociological and Related Works." And as one might expect, the combined effect of the voices represented by this bibliography hardly produces an effect describable as euphonious (although the effect that
it does produce could be likened to collective improvisation, that is, as analogous to descriptions of early, New Orleans-style jazz, where, without subordinating one instrumental voice to another, all group members played at the same time). Since the word jazz started to appear in print sometime between 1913 and 1915—or, to give the reader several other points of reference, since Jelly Roll Morton claimed he invented jazz (1902), Paul Whiteman debuted Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue (February 12, 1924), and Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five made their seminal recordings (1928)—the literature that brings jazz music into language has agreed on very little.27 In describing it one constantly runs the risk of writing useless generalities or engaging in endless specificity.

Schuller's opening paragraph avoids these dangers, though. Granted, it envisions a set of texts that share an object of study (whose definition, although problematic, is assumed to be knowable, even self evident). Granted, it supposes that jazz—the object of study—can be observed by "itself," unencumbered by past representations. And granted, it speaks from a narrative position where it can purportedly measure the value of a representation against a thorough knowledge of the thing represented: assumptions we have already discussed and to which we shall return. But more importantly, this passage comprehends jazz scholarship as a legacy of lack. Rather than present the structural or thematic features all jazz texts hold in common, it notes deficiencies shared by the majority of books on jazz. It conceptualizes—brings unity
to--jazz scholarship by assigning images of paucity to past texts and by filling in this poverty with a tacit promise of imminent plenitude.

As it turns out, the "negative" images Schuller uses to organize jazz scholarship are, in slightly disguised form, privileged tropes that all who represent jazz in writing--whether in fiction or nonfiction--use to conceptualize this music. Sometimes they are given a negative valence (as in the writings of Adorno); sometimes they are given a positive twist or turn (as in the body of Early Jazz). In the following chapters, I shall introduce these enabling images--four tropes which provide a means of "writing" jazz. This will lead me to an examination of Schuller's project, or, better, his musicological ideal, which, by means of a generalization, I read as the dream of the science of jazzology: how "serious analysis"--"genuine musicological research"--seeks to rise above (supplement or cast out) the merely rhetorical--the deficiencies of "general descriptive or impressionistic" texts.

Without a doubt, my comments could be misconstrued as an attack on musicology, and its stepchild, jazzology. That would be a mistake. In fact, my comments should be taken as a literary theorist's attempt to understand how musicology succeeds--how it comes to count as truth--not how it inevitably fails or is stalled by contradictions. The fact is, I believe musicology is riddled with contradictions; I agree with Leonard Feather when he writes: "Many have tried to explain jazz in
words; all have failed." But, strange as it may seem, contradiction and failure have never been barriers to writing or rhetorical success. Far from it. As structuralism has repeatedly shown, contradiction motivates composition, and as poststructuralism is fond of pointing out, the semiotic conditions which would undo writing (e.g., the impossibility of establishing a stable context) also make it possible (iterability, the mobility of the sign, allows writing).

Hence, although I make no claims of being disinterested, I did not choose the Preface to Early Jazz because I featured that it would make an easy whipping boy. I chose it because it exemplifies contradictions that animate (enable and defeat) nonfiction discourse on jazz and because it evidences a level of scholarship that books on jazz have consistently striven to achieve, but seldom attained.

Notes

1Cortázar, pp. 69-70, 74.


11 Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, p. 31. Subsequently cited as R&C.


17 Nathaniel Mackey, Bedouin Hornbook (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky, 1986), p. 144. Subsequently cited as BH.


19 Nausea, p. 176.

20 Mark W. Booth, "Ragtime and Jazz," American Popular Music: A Reference Guide (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,


24 Data are available should one wish to trace the dissemination of jazz as a direct (if unintended) result of the technology associated with the invention of the phonograph ("an invention, an industry, and a musical instrument"). One should consult, first, Stephen W. Smith's "Hot Collecting," in Jazzmen, pp. 287-99, then, the following: Phono; Evan Eisenberg, The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987); Peter Gammond and Raymond Horricks, The Music Goes Round and Round: A Cool Look at the Record Industry (New York: Quartet Books, 1980); and H. Wiley Hitchcock, ed., The Phonograph and Our Musical Life: Proceedings of a Centennial Conference, 7-10 December 1977 (Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, Department of Music, School of Performing Arts Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 1980).


26 Kennington and Read, p. 110. Although they fail to identify this critic, others, whose blurbs are recorded on the book jacket of EJ, have also praised it. Leonard Feather called it "A milestone in technical ethnomusicology," Nat Hentoff said that it represented "A remarkable breakthrough in musical analysis of jazz," and Martin Williams remarked, "All future commentary on jazz--indeed on American music--should be indebted to Schuller's work."
27 Alan P. Merriam and Fradley H. Garner, "Jazz--The Word," *Ethnomusicology*, 12 (1968), 385-86. This article is subsequently cited as "Jazz." Its authors record:
the oldest reference to the word jazz seems to be that advanced by Chapman who [in 1958] is reported to have "turned up a poster some 100 years old, with the word Jazz on it." Other than this, we have Austin's statement that "the term 'jazz' in its relation to music dates from about this time (post Civil War)," while Clay Smith notes: "'Jazz' was born and christened in the low dance halls of our far west of three decades ago,' which would place it about 1900.

Ornament is confabulation in the interstices of structure. A poem by Dylan Thomas, a saxophone solo by Charles Parker, a painting by Jackson Pollock—these are pure confabulations as ends in themselves. Confabulation has come to determine structure.

—Kenneth Rexroth

The "perpetual conflict" between clarity and grace is what makes hot jazz hot. The best performers continually anticipate or delay the phrase beginnings and endings. They also, in their performances, treat the beat or pulse, and indeed, the measure, with grace... This, not syncopation, is what pleases the hep-cats.

—John Cage

The variations were the real matter, not the theme.

—Dorothy Baker

Nothing is so easy as improvisation, the running on and on of invention.

—Henry James

We believe that a thing is valuable to the extent that it is improvised (hours, minutes, seconds), not extensively prepared (months, years, centuries).

—F. T. Marinetti

Agréments

Schuller's treatise on early jazz begins with a pronouncement. Of all the volumes published on jazz, most are mere textual ornaments. Embellishments of what could be called "the sound object," these texts have only attempted to deal with "the music itself" in "general descriptive or
impressionistic terms." They are, in the language of musicology agréments.

A collective term introduced into the French musical vocabulary of the 17th century and "finally adopted into all European music," agréments refers to a group of "signs or abbreviations" for signifying musical ornaments. In the art music of the West, the codification of agréments marks the systematization and ultimate standardization of improvised ornamentation ("the practice . . . of embellishing musical works through additions to or variations of their essential rhythm, melody, or harmony"). Although their correct interpretation "constitutes a considerable problem in performing music of the 17th and 18th century," and although the term itself may seem to suggest "the existence of unadorned compositions representing the pure intentions of their composers," the musical figures that agréments represent were indispensable features of many musical works, "particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries." They are divided into the following categories: "(1) appoggiatura (also double appoggiatura); (2) trill; (3) turn; (4) mordent; (5) Nachschlag; (6) arpeggio; (7) vibrato" ("Ornamentation" and "Agréments," HCDM).

Other than noting that "the majority of books have concentrated on the legendry of jazz," that is, on a matter supposedly tangential to real issues, Schuller does not elaborate on or catalog the various approaches writers took in writing embellishments on jazz, "the music itself." He chooses not to list and analyze the agréments of nonfiction texts on
jazz music. This task, however, needs to be done. To start with, someone could systematize the pre-musicological discourse of jazz, theorize the connotative values it assigns to the music. As of yet, though, no one has produced the semic (that is, the connotative) codes that structure representations of jazz.

Nevertheless, although the literature treating jazz can claim no equivalent of Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* or *Mythologies*, no meta-musicological text schematizing codes of musicological and ethnomusicological discourse, we could initiate such a study by observing that jazz—like its written representation—is consistently apprehended as a more or less spontaneous process whereby one elaborates or palimpsestically "plays over" that which is conceived as already composed. This process (which even in its conception is already a representation of jazz) is always assigned a name. For example, in this chapter and, especially, in the section on Ellison's *Invisible Man*, I designate it as the obbligato figure. Denis Hollier, in his reexamination of Sartre, links it with variation: "changes made in a tune through the addition of ornaments which nevertheless allow the basic melody and movement to be maintained."² It could also be referred to as the figure of ornamentation or grace (a "term used by early English musicians for any musical ornament, whether written out in notes, indicated by sign, or improvised by the performer"—HCDM).
But most frequently, it (i.e., the process of making jazz) is called "improvisation," a term that, in addition to denoting a spontaneous or extemporized composition, suggests a previously established text (e.g., a musical phrase, the chord changes to a song, a rhythm or riff, or, perhaps, in the case of "free jazz" the concept, actually the prescription, of freedom) that is recalled when extended or recomposed in another piece. Marjorie Perloff, in her study of the textual strategies of the Futurists (a movement coterminous with, and having deep affinities for, the Jazz Age), calls it "an art that depends not on revision in the interests of making the parts cohere in a unified formal structure, but on a prior readiness, a performative stance that leaves room for accident and surprise" (FM, 102). Her comments summarize a statement by Gerald L. Bruns that can be easily applied to a study of jazz:

> to improvise is to begin without second thought, and under the rules there is no turning back. ... Improvisation is the performance of a composition at the moment of its composition. One preserves such a moment by refusing to revise its results. ... it is discourse that proceeds independently of reflection; it does not stop to check on itself. It is deliberate but undeliberated.³

In a word, improvisation defamiliarizes: both an "original" text (in Shklovsky's phrase, it transfers "the usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception") and the very process, the trusted conventions, of invention and composition.⁴ It is designed, once again drawing on Bruns, "to outwit the reader ... to disrupt readerly expectations" (FM, 148).
An especially vivid illustration of this final point is found in William Zinsser's biography of Willie Ruff and Dwike Mitchell, the first jazz musicians to go to China (1981). In it, according to the author's own account, "You have a story that is essentially, extraordinarily dramatic--two black men in China, one of whom is explaining jazz, which is a totally oral tradition based on improvising, to the oldest literate and literal society in the world." According to Zinsser, after describing improvisation, "the lifeblood of jazz," "something created during the process of delivery," to a group of faculty and students at The Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Ruff (playing French horn) joined his partner's piano in an improvisation on a simple blues theme. Not surprisingly, the audience was nonplussed. They had never heard anything like this before. Their language did not even have a word for improvisation. Following the performance there was a call for questions.

An old professor stood up. "When you created 'Shanghai Blues' just now," he said, "did you have a form for it, or a logical plan?"

"I just started tapping my foot," Ruff replied, tapping his foot to reconstruct the moment. "And then I started to play the first thought that came into my mind with the horn. And Mitchell heard it. And he answered. "But how can you ever play it again?" the old professor said.

"We never can," Ruff replied. "That is beyond our imagination," the professor said. "Our students here play a piece a hundred times, or two hundred times, to get it exactly right. You play something once--something very beautiful--and then you just throw it away."5

The real question here is, of course, who is "outwitted," whose "readerly expectations" are disrupted. Naturally, the answer
one gives turns on the narrative position one takes up (or refuses to take up). On the one hand, the presuppositions on which the Chinese base the creation and performance of music have just been contested, but, at least at the close of the narrative, they, and especially their makers, seem hardly shaken. On the other hand, the presuppositions of jazz have also been contested; the value of improvisation has been attacked. Ruff does not answer (or, rather, if he did, his answer is not given). In any event, we are left with two observations. First, improvisation has meaning only within certain contexts. It is a sign operative in (a textual effect of) certain semiotic systems. To be abrupt, Zinsser is wrong. Jazz is not "a totally oral tradition," for in such an imaginary zone, improvisation would have absolutely no meaning. It (draw a large "X" over this pronoun) would simply be Music. Pierre Boulez puts it this way: "It is necessary to deny all invention that takes place in the framework of writing. . . . Finally, improvisation is not possible" (in Noise, 145). Second, improvisation can be read as a reflection of Western ideology. The old professor, to press a little on his comment, sees improvisation as congruent with what has been repeatedly called "a throw-away society." Barthes warns, "I distrust spontaneity, which is directly dependent on habits and stereotypes."6

This is certainly close to Adorno's view of jazz. He refers to it as embellishment, and he portrays it—a commodity
of mass culture--as "a veneer of individual 'effects'" pasted on the standardized form of popular song. He writes,

In serious music, each musical element, even the simplest one, is "itself," and the more highly organized the work is, the less possibility there is of substitution among the details. In hit music, however, the structure underlying the piece is abstract, existing independent of the specific course of the music. . . . For the complicated in popular music never functions as "itself" but only as a disguise or embellishment behind which the scheme can always be perceived. In jazz the amateur listener is capable of replacing complicated rhythmical or harmonic formulas by the schematic ones which they represent and which they still suggest, however adventurous they appear. The ear deals with the difficulties of hit music by achieving slight substitutions derived from the knowledge of the patterns. The listener, when faced with the complicated, actually hears only the simple which it represents and perceives, the complicated only as a parodistic distortion of the simple. (p. 22)

Adorno disparages the emphasis jazz fans place on "the music's improvisational features," maintaining that such features--"mere frills"--mask "the fundamental characteristic of popular music: standardization" According to him, that which normally passes for improvisation is "the more or less feeble rehashing of basic formulas"; real improvisation, when it does occur "in oppositional groups which perhaps even today still indulge in such things out of sheer pleasure," is impoverished by its dependence on popular song form (i.e., a "standard") and the chord progression of the twelve-bar blues, because both musical structures are products of mass culture, as standardized as automobiles mass produced by Ford. Thus, we see that in coming to grips with jazz and popular music (he regards the two as synonyms), Adorno substitutes the concept of the embellished, standardized product for what Schuller calls "the music itself."
Although it can be dismissed as wrongheaded (his knowledge of jazz seems to have stalled somewhere around the time of his essay on popular music or, if one prefers a jazz landmark, somewhere around the time of Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall Concert), declared a facile, reductio ad absurdum argument equally applicable to the "serious" music he lauded, or typified as itself an embellishment of the single note, anti-mass culture theme he harped on all of his life, Adorno's characterization of jazz does employ a favored trope of jazz writing. Indeed, his argument hones in on and attacks, not the music itself (although that is probably intended), but an image supporters and detractors alike enlist to conceptualize or give voice to the music. For example, notice how the following passage from a jazz appreciation textbook works off exactly the same image Adorno employs:

Early jazz musicians often began improvising simply by embellishing the melodies of pop tunes. Eventually, the embellishments became as good as and more important to a performance than the tunes themselves. In some performances, all that remained was the original tune's spirit and chord progressions. What is today called improvising was referred to by early jazz musicians as "messin' around," embellishing, "jassing," "jazzing up." Convention dictates that, if we would have our discourse count as speech or writing about jazz, we must speak of embellishment, variation, grace notes, improvisation, ad-libbing, or ornamentation: images that have come to stand (metonymically or metaphorically) for jazz itself. The issue, then, is not which trope to use in representing jazz, but what valence to assign to that trope.
Returning to Adorno's argument, we may observe that it will be taken as truth—as a blow against jazz and, by extension, as a blow against mass culture—precisely to the extent that it scores a blow against a trope organizing our conception of a jazz (i.e., to the extent that it discredits—negates or problematizes—the verbal construct improvisation by convincing the reader that "real improvisation" rarely occurs or that it is, in fact, mere embellishment). The point is, the target of Adorno's virulence may be jazz or mass culture, but his rhetorical strategy involves an attack on a privileged metaphor which he rightly assumes this culture will identify with the object of his scorn. For his argument to function, he must create the effect of attacking jazz (imagined as either a referent or signified) by invoking—actually accepting and, then, contesting or devaluing—an image identified with jazz: one which he, the ever-ready iconoclast, hopes (and rightly knows) will be taken as an icon of jazz.

At this juncture, we would do well to ask a question. What must a written piece look like before it will be accepted as dealing with what Schuller refers to as "music itself"? Or stated differently, in order to make the claim hold—that one writes about jazz, its essence, stripped of all impedimenta—how must one write? Before this question can be adequately engaged, however, one must speculate on another question: What must patterns of sounds do (how must they affect the human ear) before the statement, "This is jazz," can be said to make sense? My answer to this last question, although
highly schematic and ultimately incomplete, will reinforce and elaborate what we have already seen.

For a given acoustic pattern to be taken as jazz, it has to be perceived as an individual performance—a musical equivalent of parole—deriving from and contributing to a fundamental structure—a musical equivalent of langue. Moreover, the fundamental structure which allows and determines a particular performance is, to adopt and paraphrase Saussure, both a social product of the ability to make sounds (with voices and musical instruments) and a group of necessary conventions (e.g., improvisation), collectively labeled jazz, that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that ability. For example, sounds may arise naturally (objects--animate and inanimate--vibrate in air and receive vibrations); music, according to most theorists, is a social product. But both designations, sound and music, imply a social context where the oppositions sound/silence and music/noise are maintained. Simply put, cultures--and, specifically, institutions--determine what counts as sound, music, or jazz, and as Attali notes, the conventions which dictate the production, distribution, and reception of music are ideologically motivated. Designating, defining or merely recognizing, a group of sounds as noise or music is not a neutral or innocent act; it is a gesture of appropriation and control. Listening to music is a political act, because in designating a group of sounds as music or noise the listener ratifies or opposes the system that produced and
distributed that music (Noise, 6). This is why Adorno can declare: "To dislike a song is no longer an expression of subjective taste but rather a rebellion against the wisdom of a public utility" ("Pop Music," 43-44). In listening, as in watching a movie or reading a book, one is situated by ideology.

Thus, the two questions I asked above--"What must a written piece look like before it will be accepted as dealing with music itself?" and "What features must patterns of sound manifest before they will be counted as jazz?"--are inextricably intertwined. The study of jazz itself is part of the political system that determines what will be construed--included and excluded--as jazz itself. When one listens to jazz or writes about it--recognizing one pattern of sound as "jazz," excluding another--deeming one text as representing music itself, excluding, another--one necessarily takes part in a system of determinations that constrain the production and perception of jazz in this episteme. So then, the tropes which represent jazz match up with our perception of jazz--"the music itself"--for good reason.

In this section I have argued that jazz is always represented as a set of "unwritten" agréments which are disseminated orally (by word of mouth) and electronically (by means of radio and recordings), and that the goal of musicology is to systemically write out the ornaments that organize jazz as a musical language, thereby, through means of a fundamental tautology, ratifying the image or model of jazz as a set of
agrément and opposing, what Perlman and Greenblatt call, the "commonly-held assumption among people whose acquaintance with jazz is casual or informal that the music is made up out of nothing, invented out of thin air." In short, I have argued that, although my language inevitably continues to treat it as such, jazz music is less a locatable thing than a oscillating set of auditory signs, and, similarly, that written representations of jazz may be regarded as (defined as) sites where certain privileged signs are set over and against other signs. Improvisation, then, is best conceptualized as a textual practice—a figure of debate or contestation—raised, most notably, by the sign jazz.

In their essay "Miles Davis Meets Noam Chomsky," Perlman and Greenblatt explain the jazz solo through an analogy that likens improvisation to "linguistic performance." Their description, which recalls Parry, Lord, and Havelock's explanations of Homer's mnemonics, summarizes my discussion of a major enabling trope of jazz by, once again, illustrating the convention of conceptualizing jazz as spontaneous ornamentation. It underscores the necessity of mapping music onto language (mapping one semiotic system onto another generates the effect of intelligibility) and the explanatory power that results from such a mapping, that is, when, through an enabling trope, one translates jazz into language.

Just as the speaker of a language makes instinctive use of the lexicon and structure of his/her language when s/he speaks or writes, the musician accomplishes his/her aims through mastery of and spontaneous resort to a basic vocabulary of musical figures, interspersed with quotes and connected by scales and arpeggios. It is the musical
figures, or "licks" (played, of course, on the correct scale- and chord-tones) that give a jazz solo its distinctive jazz sound, in the same way that speaking English implies the use of the available word stock of the language, including bona fide loan words and recognizable neologisms. The basic lexicon of jazz licks is not large—there are perhaps two or three dozen that most players rely on—but, since any lick can be played over any chord, beginning with any scale/chord-tone and repeated indefinitely up and down the entire range of the instrument, the number of improvisational possibilities becomes enormous. (pp. 175-76)

This passage also makes a couple of final points. It reminds us that a reliance upon formulas—agrément—is not necessarily exclude complexity. But more than that, it suggests, in its argument for the value of improvisation (no one is writing articles arguing for the value of composition or the complexity of classical music), that the image which brings jazz into discourse is, once again, the site of ideological contestation and struggle.

Improvisation, embellishment, ornamentation, and ad-libbing—terms in a series of binary oppositions—are thinkable only in a paradigm (or through a construct) that has established a concept "text." In our culture (perhaps in our episteme) they mark that which is auxiliary and ephemeral, that which is artfully (artificially) tacked on to the real item: the original text. Most importantly, these terms are already in place—they are pregnant with meaning—when jazz arises (diachronically, in history, or synchronically, in performance).

Jazz entered this culture pre-represented. The codes which spoke it, imbued it with meaning were, so to speak,
already situated when it arrived. Or as the Horacio Oliveira, the narrator of *Hopscotch*, puts it:

Bessie's singing, Coleman Hawkins's cooing, weren't they illusions, or something even worse, the illusion of other illusions, a dizzy chain going backwards, back to a monkey looking at himself in the water on that first day? (p. 49)

Jazz linked up with what Nietzsche called "a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms"; which is to say, those who represented it enlisted already available signifiers of connotation which they, in turn, mobilized for their own ends. Historically, the opponents of jazz declared that it equaled embellishment, ornamentation, and ad-libbing (i.e., \{-jazz = agréments\}), the ultimate elevation of style over substance, and, hence, if accepted as a legitimate way of creating music, it would turn the values of the music world upside down (or be a sure indication that the entire world had already capitulated to the madness which jazz only represented). To make sure that their arguments were taken as truth, these critics invested rhetorically in the already established negative connotations of the signifiers of jazz.

On the other hand, those sympathetic to jazz devised two lines of approach. First, they interpreted jazz as radical music (modern, avant garde, or proletarian) and used it to invert (or they read it as inverting) the very oppositions which the foes of jazz hoped to maintain. They reversed the polarity of the connotators of jazz and glorified it as the vindication of style over substance, improvisation (spontaneous creation) over composition (labored deliberation), and the
primitive over the civilized (i.e., +[jazz = agréments]). But what if supporters of jazz were unwilling to wield this music as a weapon in the fight against oppression (of whatever sort)? For instance, what if their financial resources were not sufficient to allow them to estrange themselves from positions of power, or what if such an estrangement would effectively silence them? Then they still had another option. They could maintain that jazz might have originated as embellishment, ornamentation, and ad-libbing, but that good or real jazz could never be reduced to a series of agréments (i.e., jazz > agréments; improvisation > embellishment).

Jazz, if one listened closely enough, was good music by any standard (which meant it was good by standards argued for by the opponents of jazz).

The important issue, then, was not whether jazz would be represented by means of a metaphor which I, out of convenience, labeled the figure of agréments. As we have seen, jazz arrived (and, synchronically, arises) already understood as ornamentation. It was situated in the midst of a paradigm—a system of representations—that distinguished unadorned things from embellished things (one can imagine that the embellishment would have little or no meaning to a West African griot of the eighteenth century or to a Greek of Homer's day). Its metaphors were quickly naturalized and normalized because, in fact, they pre-dated the music. The issue was, and still is, one of interpretation. The battle for the possession of the sign jazz centered on reading: which group's interpretation
of the tropes that brought jazz into discourse would be taken as true or authoritative (something that obviously changed in time and from place to place).

Of course, no particular side won. I think for two reasons. First, as Gramsci notes, hegemony is a "moving equilibrium." To establish a particular interpretation of a trope as authoritative, a group had to win, reproduce, and sustain a reading, but in order to accomplish this it had to suppress aberrant readings actually made possible by its own hermeneutic. These aberrant readings, byproducts of hegemony, not of opposition (for that is another matter), constantly returned to destabilize meaning. Second, and most obviously, jazz lost its popular appeal (although it has not ceased trying to win it back). The battle continued, but its front changed.

Obbligato

Should one seek to deconstruct the binary opposition "composition/improvisation," which is to say, if one decided to demonstrate that the terms "composition" and "improvisation" are, as Derrida might say, always already untenable—both terms made constructs by an impossible operation where one seeks to contain the opposed term, in the sense of stopping or restraining it, but ends up containing it, in the sense of retaining or holding it—he could begin by playing off possibilities suggested by the musical term obbligato. It
cuts to the heart (but, then again, perhaps only to the rind) of the issue of improvisation, for although jazz cannot be reduced to this figure (even critics will admit that an improvisation is more than a series of obbligati), the obbligato is one of the basic tropes from which jazz derived and is built. Interestingly, this undecidable, double-edged word has two, opposed meanings. The HCDM defines it thus:

**Obbligato** [It.]. Obligatory, usually with reference to an instrument (violino obbligato) or part that must not be omitted; the opposite is *ad libitum*. Unfortunately, through misunderstanding or carelessness, the term has come to mean a mere accompanying part that may be omitted if necessary. As a result, one must decide in each individual case whether obbligato means "obbligato" or "ad libitum"; usually it means the former in early music and the latter in more recent pieces. (my emphasis)

Clearly, at least from the HCDM's point of view, someone or something, either "through misunderstanding or carelessness" (How was this determined? Were these the only choices?), has behaved improperly towards what we could call the obbligato as obbligato. And that mysterious someone or something's "messin' around" or "jazzing up" made the obbligato as obbligato "come to mean" something else. Let us name the product of this illicit relationship, the result of this unfortunate scandal, obbligato as ad libitum, and let us raise a series of questions which will not be answered, at least not directly through the means of declaration.

By what process does one differentiate the obligatory from the arbitrary, the embellishment from the thing itself? Is the improvised, that is, the unwritten-on-a-score, thought-up-on-the-spot obbligato arbitrary or obligatory? Can an
improvised obbligato displace a melody, become something more than a subordinate voice? When does an obbligato--by Schuller's definition, "an embellishment of a melody" (EJ, 380)--become the sine qua non? When does the arbitrary become obligatory? The obligatory arbitrary? Should we designate the obbligato as ad libitum as a product--perhaps an "unintended" result--of obbligato as obbligato? What (il)logic moves the obbligato as obbligato to become a simulacrum of itself, obbligato as ad libitum? How can one distinguish an obbligato from its double? If "one must decide in each individual case whether obbligato means 'obbligato' or 'ad libitum,'" then how was the generic, albeit liberal, law of 'usually it means . . .' determined? Why has obbligato as obbligato been opposed to, and privileged over (eg., privileged over, even in my nomenclature), obbligato as ad libitum? What does Music have against obbligato as ad libitum?

Of course, the paraerotic phrase, "come to mean," which links obbligato as obbligato to obbligato as ad libitum cannot help but prompt an association with jazz, for jazz, as is commonly known, once functioned as a euphemism for copulation. Merriam and Garner, for example, in their well documented but inconclusive, etymological essay on the word jazz, note this and indicate "a possible line of research" connecting "jazz" with "jasm." Jasm, they write, "may be connected with the American dialect word gism," which Allen Read defines as "Strength, talent, Genius, ability. Cf. Spunk." Read continues, "In various parts of the South, gism has the meaning
'gravy,' or 'cream sauce.' In the North, it is commonly used to mean 'semen'" ("Jazz," 385-86).

Now, it could be easily maintained that I am taking things too far (perhaps, as adolescents say, even going "all the way"), that this kind of free association can be done with any word. But that is precisely the issue here: How far can one go? What can and cannot be said about, done with, words? Indeed, as Susan Stewart observes in Nonsense, the problem of ornament is the problem of defining boundaries. Or, one might say, the obbligato figure—which signifies the mise en question of ornamentation—dares us to explore the limits of what Julia Kristeva and others following her have called signification. Naturally, since we are tracing the tropes of jazzography, following the explicit model of the discourse of jazz, we are obliged to take up this dare. We turn to Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.

Obbligato Played with a Borrowed Horn: Ellison's "Invisible Man" and Derrida's "Dissemination"

Inevitably, the question one faces in writing about is this: where to begin? "Dissemination," Derrida's essay—actually "a tissue of 'quotations'"—on Philippe Sollers's Numbers, names this problem as le déclenchement (the trigger) (Diss, 287, 290). It asks (tacitly, of course), given general textuality, how does one unclench the teeth, begin speaking? What can be done to, for, or with that which has been delivered (yet, still, "can always not arrive"—Diss, 366)? For us, the
question is what can be said of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man?

Several conditions would keep me from saying anything, keep me skirting the issue. In order to point them out, I repeatedly appropriate text from Derrida's Dissemination (it is my borrowed horn), even though this operation—as a jazz musician might say, this "copping of licks"--is also caught up in the very problem I am examining. Indeed, if the reader desired, he or she could read my comments as obbligati blown between lines Derrida has written.

First, and most obviously, What can be said when the author is absent? I cannot, except as a kind of joke or as a gesture calculated to keep up pretenses, declare, "Ralph Ellison said thus and so." He cannot authorize my reading unless I create him afresh, and order cannot be brought to his text unless, ultimately, I affect a discernment "between the imitator and the imitated" (Diss, 191). Only then can I manufacture a thesis: maintain that Ellison works off the trope of the obbligato, or that he raises but does not resolve the problem of identity (textual, racial, individual) as essence or social construction in his novel.

But what about the text? Couldn't I say something like, "Although Invisible Man (1952) admits the possibility, perhaps even the inevitability, that in this culture the black man is a cipher, it, nevertheless, affirms that 'humanity is won by continuing to play in [the] face of certain defeat'" (IM, 499). Or, disassociating myself from the responsibility
to uphold humanistic values, or their discourse equivalent, coherence, could I argue that the novel's humanistic rhetoric (conveniently identified with the voice of authorial intention) is at odds with, undercut by, its novelistic effects, that the novel, finally, says more than it wants to say? Certainly, I could write about this; it is commonly done. But even so, I have not come to terms with another question, another effect of a theory of general textuality: what can be said when the text as "the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself" is absent? (Diss, 36). For instance, to play around with an example that is in no way hypothetical, let us suppose that I want to write about the textual implications of Invisible Man, logically, step-by-step demonstrate that the novel, rather than imitating any referent or reality, mimes the trope of the obbligato, and let us suppose that I intend to argue that here is a case where the obbligato is taken seriously. First, I would aver that the obbligato "cannot be assigned a fixed spot in the play of differences" (Diss, 93). Like Theuth, Thoth, or Hermes—gods of writing—it is a "floating signifier," shuttling back and forth between, better, problematizing the poles of obligation and choice. It "puts play into play"; it represents what Derrida has dubbed a program (Diss, 20). Next, I would write out the following outline:

Invisible Man as obbligato. Houston Baker, in his study of the Trueblood Episode (Ch. 2), states what can be claimed for the whole novel: "As a text this chapter
derives its logic from its intertextual relation with surrounding and encompassing texts and in turn complicates their meanings."16

I. Invisible Man as a series of breaks, elaborations and digressions on hermeneutical possibilities ("you slip into the breaks and look around"--IM, 11). For example:

A. Of the dialogical melody set in motion by Dostoevsky in Underground Man (Cf. Bakhtin).

B. Of the refrain to Louis Armstrong's version of Fats Waller and Andy Razaf's tune, "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue" (IM, 15).

C. Of the Invisible Man's dream of his grandfather and, specifically, of his message: "To Whom It May Concern . . . Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" (IM, 35).

II. Invisible Man as improvisation (cf. Epilogue, pp. 495-503), where improvisation, to quote a definition given by John Corbett, is envisioned as a "diverse range of strategies," as "a confederation dedicated to the relocation of 'music' in the body of the performer--but one that is unified neither at the level of the three bodies (knowledge, performer, instrument) nor at the juncture of those bodies, but in the space between improvisors, at the level of what Attali calls 'tolerance' and what we might call 'paradoxy'" (emphasis mine).17
III. Invisible Man as a scattering of the mythology of blackness ("Brothers and sisters, my text this morning is the 'Blackness of Blackness.'"--IM, 12).

IV. Invisible Man as an exploration of the concept of liminality, in Baker's words, "a ludic and tropological stroll."

A. Syntagmatic limits: what a black man can and cannot do.

B. Paradigmatic limits: what can and cannot be done with the discourse of the "enemy."

What would be the effect of such a thesis, such an essay? It would turn Invisible Man into, argue that it already was, a polythematic or polysemic text. Consequently, it would destroy the obbligato.

Polysemy always puts out its multiplicities and variations within the horizon, at least, of some integral reading which contains no absolute rift, no senseless deviation --the horizon of the final parousia of a meaning at last deciphered, revealed, made present in the rich collection of its determinations. Whatever interest one might find in them, whatever dignity one might grant them, plurivocity, the interpretation it calls for, and the history that is precipitated out around it remain lived as the enriching, temporary detours of some passion, some signifying martyrdom that testifies to a truth past or a truth to come, to a meaning whose presence is announced by enigma. All the moments of polysemy are, as the word implies, moments of meaning. (Diss, 350)

Now the truth is (there is no reason to demurely mask my prejudices), I believe that Ellison's novel and, while we are on the subject, jazz music are classic examples of plurivocal texts. They inevitably seek to recover, place limits on, rein in the possibilities that their own discourse engenders. Invisible Man inexorably moves towards the apocalypse of
Chapter 25, the revelation of invisibility. And its ABA plot structure—an "envelope" opening with a Prologue ("I am an invisible man"), moving to a lengthy explanation, and closing with an Epilogue ("Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?")—suggests "the final parousia of a meaning at last deciphered." Jazz also, at least through much of its history, moves towards resolution, returns to a musical Rock of Ithaca, to the tonic. This is Adorno's argument: the digression, after all, honors the thematic in the breach.18

For instance, to digress a bit and get onto the main subject of this section, consider the Rinehart episode of Invisible Man (Ch. 23). Here the protagonist, reeling after the death of Brother Clifton (his comrade in the Brotherhood) and fleeing the wrath of the Black Nationalist, Ras the Destroyer, sees "three men in natty cream-colored summer suits . . . wearing dark glasses" (IM, 417). The image of them produces a dramatic, epiphanic or parallactic effect. He writes: "I had seen it thousands of times, but suddenly what I had considered an empty imitation of a Hollywood fad was flooded with personal significance." Shooting across the street to a drugstore, the Invisible Man seizes the darkest lenses he can find, "immediately," he says, "plunging into blackness and moving outside." Within moments, though, he is stopped by "a large young woman," wearing a "tight-fitting summer dress" and reeking with "Christmas Night perfume." She mistakes him for someone else, Rinehart.
"Rinehart, baby, is that you?" she said. Rinehart, I thought. So it works. She had her hand on my arm and faster than I thought I heard myself answer, "Is that you, baby?" and waited with tense breath. "Well, for once you're on time," she said. "But what you doing bareheaded, where's your new hat I bought you?"

I wanted to laugh. The scent of Christmas Night was enfolding me now and I saw her face draw closer, her eyes widening.

"Say, you ain't Rinehart, man. What you trying to do? You don't even talk like Rine. What's your story?"

I laughed, backing away. "I guess we were both mistaken," I said.

She stepped backward clutching her bag, watching me, confused.

"I really meant no harm," I said. "I'm sorry. Who was it you mistook me for?"

"Rinehart, and you'd better not let him catch you pretending to be him."

"No," I said. "But you seemed so pleased to see him that I couldn't resist it. He's really a lucky man." (IM, 817-18)

After stopping at the first hat shop he sees and purchasing "the widest hat in stock," The Invisible Man returns to the street as Rinehart, a character whose name, Robert O'Meally claims, Ellison took from a blues by Jimmy Rushing, and who Gary Lindberg rightly divines, is not actually a character at all (he never "appears") but "merely a mask and a set of roles."19 Subsequently, the Invisible Man is taken as "Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rine the lover and Rinehart the Reverend," and he "begins trying to place Rinehart in the scheme of things" (IM, 430, 426).

He reflects:

He's been around all the while, but I have been looking in another direction. He was around and others like him, but I had looked past him until Clifton's death (or was it Ras?) had made me aware. What on earth was hiding behind the face of things? If dark glasses and a white hat could blot out my identity so quickly, who actually was who? (IM, 426)
The question of identity--although like a tape loop or a musical call-and-response pattern, it will have to be repeatedly raised and answered--is easily re-solved. The Invisible Man asks himself (the reclamation of identity always takes the form: I ask myself), "Could he himself [Rinehart] be both rind and heart?" (IM, 430). He concludes that the world in which we live is "without boundaries"; it is a "vast seething, hot world of fluidity." He reflects, "I was and yet I was unseen"; he realizes that invisibility is the "fundamental condition." And, although frightened at this "world of possibilities," he purposes "to do a Rinehart," as he puts it, "to move them without myself being moved" (IM, 438).

This is the Invisible Man's version of the Saussurean maintenance of difference, the Hegelian movement of relève (Aufhebung), and the Platonic "cure by logos" (the moment where the pharmakos is driven into the wilderness) (Diss, 128). Here he preserves the notion of self at the expense of the notion of world. His resolution, introduced but not explained in the novel's Prologue, finds a direct analogy in listening to jazz music, specifically in the way the obbligato figure is understood. In a very important passage, he writes:

Now I have one radio-phonograph; I plan to have five. There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to feel its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body. I'd like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing "What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue"--all at the same time. . . . Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he is invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music. Once when I asked for a cigarette some jokers gave me a reefer, which I lighted when I got
home and sat listening to my phonograph. It was a strange evening. Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music. (IM, 11)

Lindberg finds in this passage a representation of Ellison's approach to narrative as well as the answer to the Invisible Man's question of personal and racial identity. He notices, although he never uses the word, that obligati are "simply disruptions, threatening moments of chaos" to one "who is trying to keep the beat, to follow the melody, or analogously to pursue the aspirational story line" (CMAL, 249). The "absurdist intrusions in Ellison's plot" tend to distract anyone used to following a linear, orderly story line. To the reader willing to slip into the breaks and look around, however, the novel offers an alternative order. The same goes for the Invisible Man. The obbligato trope offers a solution to his dilemma: "whether to align oneself with 'the forces of history' or run and dodge them" (IM, 244). "Rinehart," Lindberg argues, "lives in the breaks; by mastering what seems chaotic he demonstrates that fluidity is not pure chaos" (CMAL, 249). Pierre Boulez writes of this solution through play in an essay on Stravinsky:

Play is sometimes amusing, but it can also be deadly serious, since it questions the necessity of creation. Play may help us to shirk fundamental issues; it may also go to the very heart of the truth, and of our own uneasiness, by revealing the huge accumulation of culture with which we are more or less bound to live, and indeed to "compose": playing with this culture means trying to abolish its influence by making it quite clear that one
has mastered all its mechanisms--from outside--even the most perverse. ²⁰

Lindberg hastens to add, Rinehart's "heartless masquerading is not Ellison's ultimate model." Instead, "The Invisible Man is interested in the melody as well as the breaks, in the orderly, historically relevant plots as well as the purer perception available during performance disruptions." His perspective is, after all, dialectical. For instance, he notices that when he plays a record, he does not just play a record. The record also plays him. Music slips into the nodes--the external and internal breaks--of his body. Cracks, fissures, and spaces make music, that is, make hearing possible. If the body can be conceived as a melody, a kind of cantus firmus, music functions as an obbligato; contrariwise, if music constitutes a melody, then the mind is an obbligato, entering the breaks in the music. Hence, "a kind of double consciousness" is called for: that of "a con-man actor engaged in the plots of 'history' and a more fluid shape-shifter who dodges history and thus preserves the alternate rhythms of his own being and of other realities than those celebrated in the current script" (CMAL, 249-50).

Now the effect of the above digression is fourfold. First, I prove my thesis. By describing how I read Invisible Man, I show how it admits but quickly shuts down plurivocity in favor of monovocity (the sanctity of the self). Second, by pointing out that plurivocity is suppressed in the novel, I demonstrate how monovocity is attained. One might state (wrongly) that I begin to deconstruct the novel. Third, by
repeating the motions of polysemy I give hopes of laying out the multiplicities and variations of the novel within the horizon, at least, of some attainable integral reading where meaning would be at last deciphered, revealed, made present in the rich collection of its determinations. That is, I suggest that, had I enough time and energy, I could make all parts of the novel cohere within the coherence of my own authoritative utterance. Four, over and over again I reduce the obbligato to one of its simple elements by interpreting it, paradoxically enough, in the light of the very oscillating, indeterminable, disruptive textual effects I claim it makes possible (Diss, 99). Such a digression, actually an essay within an essay, to appropriate Derrida's discussion of the Preface, constitutes an attempt to get outside textuality and reduce the Book to "effects of meaning, content, thesis, or theme." Of necessity, it confines "itself to the discursive effects of an intention-to-mean," but, once again, "in pointing out a single thematic nucleus or a single guiding thesis, it cancels out the textual displacement" wrought by the very operation "represented." Simply put, in order to write about the obbligato trope, I had to do the impossible: stop it from turning, still its textual effect, suppress one of its aspects. But as an undecidable figure (a "quasi-concept" whose structure produces a kind of conceptual blinking effect), traversing the gap between the determined and the discretionary, and, by extension, other oppositions such as composition/improvisation, melody/break, speech/writing,
literal/figurative, original/copy, tenor/vehicle, inside/outside, etc., this trope resists such operations. "Any formalism, as well as any thematicism," is impotent to dominate its structure (Diss, 21). Because it speaks of a duplicitous passage, a irremediable confusion or slippage between the obligatory (the already written) and the ornamental (the supplementary mark), it speaks of iterability, that condition which makes writing (the "so-called 'normal' functioning" of the mark) possible. The point is, without the play between obbligato as obbligato and obbligato as ad libitum there could be no writing; there could be no Invisible Man, no jazz.

We still have a problem, though, for we have in no way answered the question: What can be said of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man? But oh! someone observes. Do you really believe that you can go on writing about the novel obliquely? The answer, of course, is no. As of yet, nothing has been written about Invisible Man. To presume that it has would be to accept what could only be labeled a solution by cuteness, to not take seriously the argument that has been put forth. The issue here is not so easily solved. If the obbligato figure traverses all discourse, then how can we speak of it without essentializing, substantializing, or immobilizing it? Which is to say, How can we represent the obbligato?

Derrida writes:

[0]ne must choose between text and the theme. It is not enough to install plurivocity within thematics in order to recover the interminable motion of writing. Writing does not simply weave several threads into a single term in such a way that one might end up unraveling
all the "contents" just by pulling a few strings. (Diss, 350)

More specifically, how can one cite Invisible Man? To single out one part—I am especially interested in the novel's Prologue—always ends up as an affiliation with a thematic trying to say. It constitutes a determination to regard the part as but a repetition (perhaps the most "complete" repetition) of a whole (that is to say, Platonism), or, what amounts to the same thing, the whole becomes but an obligatory thematic exercise, a working out of the part (that is to say, Aristotelianism). But what would it mean to quote the whole of Invisible Man? Isn't that Barthes's tactic in S/Z when he cites Balzac's novella, Sarrasine, in its entirety, twice? And isn't that Derrida's tactic in "Limited Inc," when he cites every word of John Searle's reply to "Signature Event Context"? Absolutely, not. In fact, these texts demonstrate graphically—they show as well as argue—that the productions of Balzac and Searle (like the productions of Barthes and Derrida) always exceeded, were in fact predicated on exceeding, the limits of their physical boundaries (their putative contexts). In brief, the concept of text implies that books are never contained by book covers. The textual forces that make a book possible—e.g., intertextuality or the obligato figure—also tend to annihilate it as a thing, "closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside" (Diss, 130). We must not forget that books are shaped like guillemets, that guillemets are formed in the shape of opening/closing books. Finally, one cannot cite Invisible
Man by reproducing all of its 503 pages. The novel, like its main character, is invisible. He writes:

A beautiful girl once told me of a recurring nightmare in which she lay in the center of a large dark room and felt her face expand until it filled the whole room, becoming a formless mass while her eyes ran in bilious jelly up the chimney. And so it is with me. (IM, 10)

Of those novels, like Invisible Man, "concerned with their own process of composition," Stewart observes: "exaggeration and miniaturization are foregrounded as techniques." And she states succinctly what we have already noticed: "[A]nything set off to be depicted threatens an unlimited amount of significance" (Nonsense, 100).

This is perfectly illustrated in Invisible Man when Brother Tarp gives the protagonist (at this point in the novel, a Marxist recruit) a link of chain, "a thick dark, oily piece of filed steel that had been twisted open and forced partly back into place." Of it, Tarp says, "I think it's got a heap of signifying wrapped up in it" (IM, 336).

Stewart, we should note, demonstrates this same point through an example taken from Tristram Shandy, for in this novel "the idea of dimensions become apparent." She writes:

Consider Uncle Toby's miniature fort in Tristram Shandy, where the accumulation of details increases until the miniature becomes larger than life. Each miniature emphasizes the point that a surplus of signification will not be diminished by a reduction in the material being discussed by the discourse. A reduction in physical scale will not result in a reduction of descriptive scale. On the contrary, the manipulation of the physical dimension of the described object can extend to the limits of significance beyond the "median" provided by everyday discourse. (Nonsense, 100)
Derrida calls this phenomenon *restance*; the term, actually a neologism, signifies that "remainder" or "excess" which resists thematics. His own writing, it seems, seeks to extend the limits of significance beyond the median (if by median, we understand an institutionally sanctioned boundary, always already ruptured), to demonstrate graphically how the tendency towards a "surplus of signification" is not an abnormality of language, but the very condition of its normality (AG, 42).

A thematic program, therefore, might be characterized as an impossible but persistent attempt to repress *restance*, cut down on "a heap of signifying" for the sake of clarity, truth, sense, responsibility, etc. A program modeled on the obbligato trope, however, would have to freely--it has no choice--give itself over to *significance*. Derrida explains:

If there is thus no thematic unity or overall meaning to reappropriate beyond the textual instances, no total message located in some imaginary order, intentionality, or lived experience, then the text is no longer the expression or representation (felicitous or otherwise) of any truth that would come to diffract or assemble itself in the polysemy of literature. It is this hermeneutic concept of *polysemy* that must be replaced by *dissemination*. (Diss, 262)

Like Lester Young blowing obbligati between phrases sung by Billie Holiday (or like Lady Day insinuating her voice into Prez's horn lines), dissemination would consist of the reader writing himself: i.e., of noneschatological, nonteleological text in general. Or to take another model, consider the blank chapters in *Tristram Shandy*, which encourage the reader to contribute to the making of the book, or Book VI, Chapter 38, of the same novel, where Tristram tells the reader to
"call for pen and ink" and describe your mistress, thereby demonstrating how texts function as obbligati: both in prompting the reader to complete them and in blocking readings.23

Or, finally, observe—I have been writing about it all along—something that Derrida emphasizes in "The Double Session," an essay on two texts, one by Plato and another, Mimique, by Mallarmé (which is to say, Platonics and Mallarmimesis): i.e., rhythm, the implications of spacing—between title and text, between letters, in the margins. Here he advances the view that in Mallarmé's employment of spacing, idealized and recognized as a theme by modern criticism, "the very textuality of the text is re-marked," and the limits of thematic criticism are determined (Diss, 244). White space on the page, "the regular intervention of the blanks," Derrida notes, points to that which allows writing (i.e., without "the law of spacing" letters could not be differentiated or combined into different configurations) but also to that (la décollation) which decapitates and unglues the text, destabilizes thematic or Idealist readings.

Undoubtedly, Derrida's has an interesting idea, even compelling in its logic, but one may well ask, How does his essay avoid being merely a newer or more adequate thematic reading? What makes the Derridean text more than a rigorously close reading, designed to close off the text, preempt future readings? Simply this, Derrida has learned—his essay illustrates—the lesson of the obbligato. In Mimique (the same could be said of any of Derrida's "pre-texts") he found a
text with which he could and had to sing along: i.e., he had things, which he found interesting, to say about it; it was part of that textual "always already" which had shaped his consciousness. It triggered something in him. It forced him and gave him the freedom (the space, if you will) to unclench his jaws. He writes of Sollers *Numbers* what could be said of his own text:

The disappearance of the "authorial voice" ("The Text speaking there of itself and without the voice of an author," as Verlaine was told) triggers off a power of inscription that is no longer verbal but phonic. Polyphonic. The values of vocal spacing are then regulated by the order of that tainless voice [a reference to a mirror without backing, a image of the end(s) of mimesis], not by the authority of the word or the conceptual signified, which the text, moreover, does not fail to utilize, too, in its own way. (Diss, 332).

The same goes for Ellison. Along with other texts, in "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue?" he discovered--rather it discovered him--a tune he could hook up with, jazz up. The resulting text (the same could be held for the original as well) represents a creative confusion of *obbligato as obbligato* and *obbligato as ad libitum*, a folding together, a hymen, "between desire and fulfillment, perpetration and remembrance," obligation and freedom (*Mimique*, in Diss, 175). *Invisible Man*, therefore, comes to signify the "betweenness" of not only the black man (what Baker calls "the essential juxtaposition between white hegemony and black creativity"--p. 196), but the betweenness of writing itself: the essential, material juxtaposition between white space and black characters. It represents both a fusion (marriage) and a separation (tearing).
The real question, therefore, becomes: What cannot be said about *Invisible Man*? How can one play a wrong note? The only way to answer that question is to try and see. Blow an obbligato on the book. Insinuate yourself into its spaces and folds. Follow the model of jazz, which is to say, Ellison's model and, arguably, the model of postmodern criticism.

Hawkes, in his description of the new role Barthes envisioned for the literary critic and the new methodology he demonstrated in *S/Z*, makes a direct connection between postmodern critical practice and the playing of jazz. He notes that the critic could now be ranked with the jazz musician, "as an artist whose art derives from 'given' material, 'given' signifiers (a text, a chord-sequence) but which creates, from these, new signifieds, a new reality which is not given, and which surpasses the original in invention and beauty."24 While one could easily quarrel with Hawkes retainment of the concept of aesthetic value, not to mention his insistence that the new text surpass the beauty of the old one (i.e., improvise = improve-ize), his point is well taken.

The critic, then, has become, yes, I have become, if one will pardon the gender bias of what is now my expression, an Invisible Man. "I am the boy / That can enjoy / Invisibility." My favorite song (some might say my only song)? "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe--Tekeli-ti! and all that Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin) mumbo jumbo--nor am I especially livid anymore. The very act of trying to put
it all down has confused me and negated some of the anger and some of the bitterness. No, I am a man of substance, full of sperm, water, ink, paint, and perfumed dye: (Get Up, I Feel Like Being A) Writing Machine, a Puritan-with-reverse-English, a man of the word.

The joke, of course, is that I don't live in Harlem but in a border area, the outlying districts, the 'burbs, where comedy arose--outside the groove of history in The Land of Discount TV & Hi-Fi. I have a big record collection. I plan to find time to hear all my records one day. Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time; you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes now I listen to Louis Armstrong playing and singing "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue." Perhaps I like him because he's unaware that he is invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music. When codes become manifest--black and white--lose their transparency--people realize their invisibility. Let me tell you, Louis is no critic. I don't suppose he's ever tried to write out the codes that construct him, that construct his music. He doesn't see them; they are invisible to him. I, on the other hand, wonder what made the codes so opaque to me? "Recognition," you see, Ralph Ellison said this, "is a form of agreement."

Notes


11Lévi-Strauss, to take but one example, postulates: "Whereas colors are present 'naturally' in nature, there are no musical sounds in nature, except in a purely accidental and unstable way; there are only noises" (R&C, 19).


17 Corbett, p. 71.

18 This final sentence is a paraphrase of a statement of summation in Pat Rogers, "Shaftesbury and the Aesthetics of Rhapsody," British Journal of Aesthetics, 12 (1972), 254. Here Rogers argues that an aesthetics of rhapsody, even in its "ruptures," presumes an "organist" world view.


24 Hawkes, p. 121.
"Notes is good enough for you people, but us likes a mixtery."
--Nathaniel Mackey

The sound filled the beige chamber with a muted desolation.
A fuzzy, hybrid tone, an acoustical alloy.
--Josef Skvorecky

That grand wild sound of bop floated from beer parlors; it
mixed medleys with every kind of cowboy and boogie-woogie in
the American night.
--Jack Kerouac

Thought I knew his blues before, and the hymns at funerals,
but what he is playing now is real strange and I listen careful
for he's playing something that sounds like both. I cannot
make out the tune and then I catch on. He's mixing them up.
He's playing the blues and the hymn sadder than the blues
and then the blues sadder than the hymn. That is the first
time I ever heard hymns and blues cooked up together.
--Michael Ondaatje

Amalgam

Because of their failure to deal "with the music itself
in anything more than general descriptive or impressionistic
terms," Schuller views the majority of books written about
jazz as glosses: adornments, ornaments, and embellishments,
tangential to the real item, the referent jazz. Instead of
generating "genuine musicological research," analyzing the
"techniques and actual musical content" of jazz, these texts
"concentrated on the legendry of jazz" (EJ, vii). This
amounted to gilding the lily, or to employ a more musically
oriented metaphor, jazzing jazz.
Viewed collectively, though, Schuller imagines the literature of jazz as "little more than an amalgam of well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion" (EJ, vii). Probably he gave little thought to this image of the amalgam. Probably he did not expect his readers to make much of it either. But should not Early Jazz, regardless of Schuller's intentions, be held accountable for its metaphors? (And furthermore, by what means do I determine what Schuller expected, distinguish it from what the text says and what I want to say?) Amalgam, after all, like the figure of agréments, is a good image for the multifarious body of writing about jazz that has accumulated over the years. In the following pages we shall survey this body.

Roger Pryor Dodge wrote "Consider the Critics," one of the earliest surveys of jazz criticism in 1939. According to the editors of Jazzmen, the book in which it appeared, it is a "careful résumé of the critical attitude which developed along with jazz." It is also a thinly veiled polemic, opposing the process of recuperation where "premature white-collar meddling" replaces "primitive improvisation" with "symphonic jazz" (Jazzmen, xi, 301). One year earlier, in Jazz: Hot and Hybrid, Sargeant had iterated these two kingdoms of jazz:

Small differences aside, then, we have distinguished for our present purposes two general types of jazz, both of which represent types of performance rather than types of composition. They are "hot" jazz and "sweet" or commercial jazz. The former is more purely Negroid, more purely improvisatory, and comparatively independent of composed "tunes." The latter is the dance and amusement music of the American people as a whole. The tunes on which it is based issue from Tin Pan Alley, the center of the popular song-publishing industry.
These tunes are, some of them, purely Anglo-Celtic or Central European in character, some of them pseudo-Negroid. (p. 54)

Henry Osgood, in So This Is Jazz (1926), an early attempt to legitimate the productions of Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin, championed "sweet" or commercial jazz. Both Sargeant and Dodge boosted "hot" jazz. They were not alone. In 1934, Hugues Panassié had published Le Jazz Hot. Of it Whitney Balliett writes: "Aside from the erratic Aux Frontieres du Jazz, brought out two years before by the Belgian Robert Goffin, it was the first book of jazz criticism, and it put jazz on the map in Europe and in its own country--an English translation was published here in 1936 as Hot Jazz--where the music had been ignored or misunderstood its forty-year life."² Novelist Josef Skvorecky has the protagonist of The Bass Saxophone liken it to the "Book of Mormon written in the language of angels."³

Panassié strikes an exceptional figure in jazz history. In addition to writing over a dozen books, he organized four recording sessions for RCA Victor in 1938, presaged (and, probably, precipitated) the New Orleans revival (which ran, roughly, from 1940 to 1947), and became the nemesis of beboppers, after concluding that bebop was a "form of music distinct from jazz."⁴ Along with Charles Delaunay (only child of the geometric-futurist painters, Sonia and Robert Delaunay, the first discographer of jazz, and the biographer of gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt) he started Jazz Hot, "now the world's oldest pure jazz magazine" (AM, 4-7).
But, of course, the nonfiction, literary representation of jazz did not begin with Panassié and Delaunay. Starting in the 1920s, jazz became a locus of critical debate. Schuller states:

there was an avalanche of derogatory articles and pamphlets by popular writers who fantasized relentlessly over the pernicious influence of jazz on music and morals. Moreover, the statements of many jazz musicians themselves in the early years of jazz encouraged others to treat the subject lightly. (EJ, vii)

The final sentence of this statement warrants something of a digression. It undoubtedly refers to statements made by members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, for later in his book, Schuller portrays this band as "a press agent's dream come true." From my point of view, they articulated the four topics of jazz: (1) jazz as "jumble," amalgam or satura, (2) jazz as rhapsody or counterfeit, a garment stitched together, bordered with lace, (3) jazz as a politicized space, emblematized by the charivari or the chasse beaux, a figure of disjunction/conjunction, and (4) jazz as improvisation, the obligation to play freely, which I have called the trope of agréments or the figure of the obbligato. ODJB trombonist Edward B. Edwards, "who read music and was well-trained on his instrument," told reporters, "Jazz, I think, means jumble" (EJ, 176). Nick La Rocca, the band's leader and cornet player, in describing "how jazz works," said, "I cut the material, [clarinetist Larry] Shields puts on the lace, and Edwards sews it up" (EJ, 177). Another time, "in a widely published interview," La Rocca described jazz as "revolution in 4-4 time," and after ODJB pianist Henry Ragas, died of alcoholism
"a strenuous round of parties and engagements" which had "undermined his health"—the band's leader recalled, "I don't know how many pianists we tried before we found one who couldn't read music" (Jazzmen, 51). "The career of the ODJB was," in Schuller's words, "both as fantastic and as typical as any that jazz has had to offer." He continues:

Its story features the inevitable high points: the gradual grouping together of basically self-taught musicians, their sudden catapulting to world-wide fame, their equally sudden demise, and, in between, the million dollar law suits over copyrights and the petty jealousies, alcoholism, premature deaths, and all the rest. (EM, 176)

At this point, we would do well to begin to mark the rhetorical strategy that prompts Schuller (a metonym for musicological literature devoted to the study of jazz) to demythologize jazz. He acknowledges that the ODJB's claim of musical illiteracy greatly contributed to the effect that "their playing was ipso facto freshly improvised and inspired during each performance" (EM, 180). And he likens the controversy which surrounded the music of the ODJB to "the initial controversy over the Beatles" (EM, 176; it would appear that a comparison with the debate which surrounded Elvis Presley's early recordings for Sun Records and RCA or the Sex Pistols' record, "Anarchy in the U.K.," is also merited, perhaps even more appropriate). But he makes these observations with an eye towards establishing a clear distinction between music and "extra-musical factors," that is, between rhetoric (what one claims to be the case) and dialectic (what, arguably, is the case) and, more specifically, between language about music and language about music makers. Unlike Hebdige, who, in
Subculture: The Meaning of Style, postulates that the musical object imbricates and is implicated by ideology (the dissemination of a single, unitive musical subject), Schuller evokes the musical subject for the express purpose of denying it admittance to his study of musical objects, but he fails to realize that it is this rhetorical operation where one evokes, bars, and subsequently (unconsciously or surreptitiously) invites back the suppressed term that makes his text (and the musical object) possible. Hebdige examines how a fractured social order—in his example, one encoded in the music created by the youth subcultures of post-war Britain and designated as "'folk devil,' Other, or Enemy"—is repaired when the subculture which broached culture is "incorporated as a diverting spectacle within the dominant mythology from which it in part emanates" (Sub, 96). Schuller, one might argue, actively participates in a recuperative process analogous to the one Hebdige describes. Here a subcultural sign, for instance jazz or a calculatedly provocative statement by a musician, which marks a rupture or a contestation of a cultural code, is assimilated by a dominant mythology (musicology): institutionally appropriated or diverted as a spectacle.

For example, in his discussion of the ODJB Schuller undercuts "the myth of total anarchy" which the band cultivated, by asserting that their "playing contradicted the effect that their statements were designed to create" (EJ, 180). He, thereby, re-defines (recuperates) their music as nonsubversive. This allows him to easily dismiss the
jazz rhetoric which surrounded the first jazz band to make a record—their most famous recording, 'Livery Stable Blues,' outsold Sousa and Caruso—as pure fantasy "over the pernicious influence of jazz on music and morals" (EJ, vii, 181). He thus converts a potentially subversive sign into one suitable for mass consumption.

This rhetorical strategy—what we could label a musico-logical imperative—demands that one acknowledge the social consequences of the language which informs music, but it also demands that one proceed by denying that that language actually affects music. In other words, if Schuller does not create the effect of erasing or bracketing off the implications of the comments make by the ODJB, then he cuts himself off from the institutional base that sustains his discourse and gives it power, because he has acknowledged that the musical object and the language that represents it cannot be demarcated. His text becomes, at best, a book concentrating on the legendry of jazz, at worst, a book never published—instead of the authoritative voice of musicology, and jazz loses cultural legitimacy or even viability (i.e., it could cease to be represented).

Returning to our survey of the literature which brought jazz into language, we note the obvious. Early jazz had its patrons. There were composers and conductors—Aaron Copland, Ernest Ansermet, Igor Stravinsky, George Gershwin, Edward Burlingame Hill, Constant Lambert, Darius Milhaud, and Virgil Thomson—critics and publicists—Alfred Frankenstein, Carl
Engel, Henry Osgood, Masimo Mila, Gilbert Seldes, Carl Van Vechten, and John Hammond—who were not only sympathetic to jazz, they regarded it as metaphor of modernism, an emblem of America. As MacDonald Smith Moore notes, in a study which I shall soon discuss more fully:

Claims that jazz represented America . . . emanated primarily from two sources: domestic white critics with impeccable old-line Protestant credentials, and foreign observers caught up in the romance of America as a symbol of cultural freedom.5

Among its early supporters, debate also raged as to what constituted jazz ("When a musical piece deviates from an inherited, socially-produced folk base is it still jazz?") , what in jazz music merited support and critical attention ("Is symphonic jazz merely a dilution of hot jazz?" "Is hot jazz more than a folk music?"), and what direction the music should take in order for it to gain or maintain artistic credibility.

In examining the assimilation of jazz into mass culture, Neil Leonard asks, "Did the events involved in the acceptance of jazz fall into any pattern?" Not surprisingly, he discovers exactly what he was looking for: a pattern of Hegelian derivation with a thesis, antithesis and synthesis that accounts for the reception of jazz, specifically, and aesthetic novelty, generally.6 His book, Jazz and the White Americans (which stops its analysis with the advent of bebop), superficially resembles Subculture: The Meaning of Style, but instead of employing semiotic theory, reading subcultures as contradictory sign systems--textual ensembles--defined only in relation to
each other, as Hebdige does, Leonard tends to define sub-cultures as stable, predefined entities. For example, he writes:

A new art form or style, touching upon the basic assumptions of a culture-system, usually provokes controversy. Traditionalists, that is, those who hold strongly to conventional values (esthetic and non-esthetic), tend to disregard or oppose the innovation. On the other hand, modernists, who find that the innovation satisfies esthetic and other needs, react against traditionalist opposition by drawing together in an area of understanding or brotherhood and often ignore or flout important traditional values. Before long, a group of moderates arises and tries to bridge the gap between the sensibilities of the two camps. (p. 156)

Admittedly, this a highly workable (though not especially original), generalizable model for explaining the cultural assimilation of jazz, but Jazz and the White Americans neither examines the dynamic by which a musical event comes to be counted as old or new, nor the dynamic by which a social group comes to be labeled traditional, moderate, or modern. Its blatantly tautological arguments are ultimately less concerned with the consumptive patterns which determine, and are determined by, ideology than with the ultimate acceptance of pre-defined products by pre-defined social groups. Although it shifts critical attention from the production of jazz to its consumption, an admirable feat indeed, it never adequately demonstrates how patterns of consumption, through a kind of feedback loop, alter or modify the production of music. Nevertheless, this is an admirable study. Few books have attempted to discuss jazz on any level other than that of production.
One exception, though, deserves special notice: Moore's *Yankee Blues: Musical Culture and American Identity*. It argues that cultural debate employed the representation of music as a vehicle for manipulating "the root metaphors of symbolic groups in the United States" (YB, 2).

Here is a brief summary of the book. In the 1920s, Yankee composers and critics—among them, Charles Ives, Daniel Gregory Mason, and Henry Adams—feeling "increasingly isolated from the sources of political and economic power," "found it difficult to extol an individualistic, boundless, and rootless progressivism, as Emerson had done," as they saw special interest groups repeatedly appropriating "the symbolism of redemptive America to identify their own interests with a transcendent national destiny." Armed with the belief that such a misuse of Yankee ideals fed a materialistic society, these composers and critics "sought to reestablish their vision of an essentialist American faith that would delineate not merely a horizontal democratic order but a vertical order of transcendental values" (YB, 6). To accomplish this aim, they "managed to link music in the United States with issues of American identity" (YB, 3). Thus, "racialism shaped the metalanguage of this American drama of national consciousness," and when "Yankee spokesmen such as Mason proved unable to control the interpretations placed on their metaphorical system," "music criticism became a primary locus of national cultural conflict" (YB, 66–67, 2).
"Through metaphors of musical valuation," Moore writes, "Americans struggled to define and rank the key symbolic groups in American society of the twentieth century: Yankees, Negroes, and Jews" (YB, 3). "Writers of all backgrounds attributed a sensual culture to Negroes and a spiritual culture to Yankees." Jews--emblematized as both "coarse and sensual" and "neither black nor white"--were understood as terms of mediation--"rootless middlemen . . . who combined in an ethos of consumption capitalism the bewildering intellectuality of technology and the preference for immediate gratification" (YB, 170).

Jazz, Moore explains, came to be read as expressive of the paradoxical temper of modern America: "its egoistic fragmentation of community, its materialism, its fascination with modernism in general and with avant-gardism in particular" (YB, 66). It was championed by "white rebels" or "foreign observers" who, "drawing on romantic racialism," "affirmed the artistic, spiritual, and national value of sensualism" (YB, 68). And it was damned by those who saw it standing "for the basest form of musical romanticism, the devolutionary forces of sensual blackness" and, paradoxically, "the antimusic of robots and riveting machines, the technology of urban civilization" (YB, 82, 108). Critics attributed its popularity "among whites not to Negroes, deemed too dull to exploit their own essential characteristics, but to an intermediate symbolic group, the Jews." "[T]he religious metaphor of Jew-as-horned-Devil was replaced gradually by the racial
metaphor of Jew-as-Oriental," a merchant "trading on the base sensuality attributed to Negroes and the Anglo-Saxon, spiritual tradition associated with Yankees" (YB, 170, 71).

Moore ends his brilliant reading of American culture by observing that the Yankee vision of redemptive culture (a secular version of the Puritan's God-given mission to the wilderness) perished during World War II, but he postulates that its principles bore curious fruit decades later (YB, 168). His conclusion will allow me to continue this survey of the nonfiction literature of jazz:

Ironically, redemptive culture was resurrected in the 1960s, but in a new color: black, not white. Nominated to be art music by some white Americans and Europeans in the 1920s, jazz gradually gained in status among Negroes as well. Black intellectual pride in jazz rose inversely with the decline of jazz as a popular black music. As the ideological rationales for "Black Power" peaked in the late 1960s, jazz served increasingly as the cherished touchstone of self-worth for Negro intellectuals. No longer just entertainment, jazz was believed to express specifically Afro-American values. In the black aesthetic of identity, jazz possessed a uniquely organic beauty which drew inspiration from the sensual warmth--"soul"--of the Negro spirit. Black redemptive culture came full circle; some black writers, including Harold Cruse, voiced antiwhite and occasionally anti-Semitic racism. Still trapped by their opposition and by the metaphors of the old racial stereotypes, in pain and anger they acted out roles drawn from the music drama of the 1920s. (YB, 171)

Examples of nonfiction writing about jazz informed by a "black aesthetic of identity" abound, but I shall provide only two examples. LeRoi Jones, in _Blues People_, reads "black" music as an index (or, as he calls it, "an analogy") of the Negro's historical experience in America. He interprets jazz as a text that says "something about the essential nature of the Negro's existence in this country . . . as well as
something about the essential nature of this country, i.e., society as a whole." Ortiz Walton's *Music: Black, White and Blue* is less a history of black music, than "a sociological study of its development, its use and misuse." He states, "[E]ven though a deliberate plan was executed to deprive Blacks of their African culture . . . what persevered and developed were the essential qualities of the African world view, a view concerned with metaphysical rather than purely physical interrelationships."7 Explainable (or recuperable) as perverse readings--examples of radical catachresis or synaesthesia (eg., *black* music?)--or easily dismissible as essentialism or romantic, Marxist criticism of the most vulgar sort, the approaches of Jones and Walton, in their emphasis on "verifiable emotional referents and experiential categories of Afro-American culture," not only sought to question or discredit the musicological approach to jazz epitomized by white scholars such as Sargeant and Schuller, but by revealing that so-called "objective analysis" always functions as "criticism" (raises and resolves issues of meaning and value) and arguing that the cultural codes which made normative judgments possible were, by definition, inaccessible to white writers, they also implied or stated outright that such analysis never ceased to be informed by racialism.8

The musicological, that is, the analytical, literature of jazz may eschew the rhetoric of "romantic racialism" which animates pronouncements by writers associated with, first, the Harlem Renaissance (Van Vechten, Langston Hughes, and
James Weldon Johnson), later, with the Beats (Mailer and Kerouac), and, more recently, with the Black Power movement (Baraka or Frank Kofsky), but its insistence on positivistic methodology is ambivalent and can be read in either of two ways. One, the discourse of positivistic methodology signals the arrival (or evolution) of a disinterested, ideologically neutral attempt to represent jazz in a metalanguage most adequate to such a task. Second, the discourse of positivistic methodology belies an attempt to block all the connotations of jazz that would destabilize the hegemonic power enjoyed by musicology as an institution; it is an integral part of the process by which aberrant readings of jazz are recuperated by the dominant mythology. Hence, and this is very important, any reintroduction of connotation into musicological discourse—which can take the form of introducing non-preferred connotations or simply pointing out that what is taken as denotation is, in fact, a preferred connotation—will be dismissed by musicologists: counted as naive, scandalous, inept, racist, impressionistic, and so on.

Thus, the normalization of the language of musicology (a process which, by concealing its own metaphorical basis, labels all other discourses about jazz as merely metaphorical) provides yet another illustration of the replacement of a non-preferred language (impressionism, myth, Marxism) with the analytic language of science. The naturalness, the unquestioned appropriateness, of the frequently made claim, "I study music itself" reveals the extent to which musicology
has been able to solidify its power: discredit or preclude alternative discourses (i.e., approaches to study). Schuller, in the following passage, details the emergence of "genuine musicological research" and unwittingly chronicles the steps musicology took as it normalized its language and co-opted jazz. He completes my historical survey of nonfiction writing about jazz.

After 1930, however, there appeared a number of books that were not only sympathetic and serious in intent but revealed an understanding of the essential nature of jazz: Robert Goffin's Aux Frontières du Jazz (1932), Wilder Hobson's American Jazz Music (1939), Frederic Ramsey's and Charles Edward Smith's Jazzmen (1939), and Hugues Panassié's The Real Jazz (1942). But even in these books, a musician interested in learning about jazz as a musical language could learn very little about its harmonic and rhythmic syntax, its structural organization, its textures and sonorities, or what in technical terms made one performance better than another. In addition, these authors were so heavily committed to propagating the absolute primacy of New Orleans jazz that their books were anything but comprehensive.

The first book to look closely at materials and grammar of jazz was Winthrop Sargeant's Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (1946). Dissatisfied with the speculative or impressionistic approach of his predecessors, Sargeant used the tools of theoretical analysis to define jazz and to describe its musical anatomy. The standards Sargeant set were not met again until ten years later when the French writer and composer André Hodeir published Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence, in which the analytical screws were tightened once more, taking full advantage of the perspective provided by the innovations of Charlie Parker and the whole modern jazz movement. Apart from the intrinsic value of Sargeant's and Hodeir's books, they helped to stimulate new standards of excellence in jazz criticism. Their influence on Martin Williams, Nat Hentoff, Max Harrison, the present author, and a host of other writers contributing to magazines like the Jazz Review, is undeniable. (EJ, viii)

To summarize, Schuller may envision the accumulated body of writing about jazz synchronically, as an amalgam, but, more importantly, to employ a term of Hayden White's,
he "emplots" it as moving diachronically towards a purity of essence (in the body of his own work).

It is difficult to think about an amalgam without thinking about dentistry. The word, of course, refers to the soft, alloy used in dental fillings; it derives from the Greek malagma, an emollient, which was itself derived from malassein, to soften. It denotes a combination, mixture, or blend, and, specifically, "any alloy of mercury with another metal or other metals."

Jazz is always conceptualized as an amalgam: a synergistic, uneasy conjunction of diverse musical elements. And although I shall not pursue the association now, do note that the popularity of jazz is coterminous with the popularity of collage, and that "collage, literally a pasting, is also a slang expression for two people living (pasted) together—that is to say, an illicit sexual union—and that the past participle collé means 'faked' or 'pretended'" (PM, 51). These things will become more and more important as we proceed in our study of jazz tropes.

Gridley writes that jazz "is the result of a gradual blending of several musical cultures." Sargeant argues that jazz and spirituals "represent a fusion of musical idioms in which both White and 'African' contributions play indispensable roles." Feather declares:

The music we recognize today as jazz is a synthesis drawn originally from six principal sources: rhythms from West Africa; harmonic structure from European classical music; melodic and harmonic qualities from nineteenth-century American folk music; religious music; work songs; and minstrel shows.
And Schuller concludes: "It seems in retrospect almost inevitable that America, the great ethnic melting pot, would procreate a music compounded of African rhythmic, formal, sonoric, and expressive elements and European rhythmic and harmonic practices" (EJ, 3).

Thus we see that jazz is conceptualized by exactly the same image, imaged by the same vehicle, that Schuller assigns to the body of writing about jazz. "And yet," to quote Hollier (who is himself playing a variation on a theme by Lyotard), "who would be able to say, precisely, concerning a metaphor, where and when it starts—or stops?" Once a tenor (from the French tenere) finds a vehicle, who can hold it back? What is to keep us from making something of jazz, taking a vehicle which structures it somewhere it has not been? What happens when the amalgam—an institutionally sanctioned image associated with synthesis, fusion, blending, the melting pot, and the satura—is made to carry a melody?

Satura

Satura, the term from which we derive the English word "satire," literally means a "mixed dish," a "farrago," "hodge-podge," or "medley." Originally employed as an adjective meaning "full" in the phrase satura lanx, or "full plate," it referred to a platter of mixed fruits offered to the gods and was associated with copiousness.¹¹
Secularized and generalized as a metaphor, *satura* received its literary formulation in any number of encyclopedic works—Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, Rabelais' *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*—but one could argue that it was in the *Satyricon*—a first-century work whose title, Arrowsmith notes, may be a pun on both *satura*, a potpourri of "mixed subjects in a variety of styles," and *saturika*, a literary piece "concerned with satyrs, which is to say, lecherous, randy"—that the term was first, completely extrapolated as a generative device for writing. Here Petronius, its author, not only created a literary medley, a written piece whose form seems modeled after a dish of mixed fruits, he frequently worked off gastronomic associations suggested by his title. The classic example of this is, of course, the famous scene at Trimalchio's banquet (Ch. 5), but even in the first chapter, Petronius, in a fine bit of overblown rhetoric, links literary composition with the preparation of food. He accuses rhetoricians of concocting "great sticky honeyballs of phrases, every sentence looking as though it had been plopped and rolled in poppyseed and sesame." He charges, "by reducing everything to sound," they concocted a "bloated puffpaste of pretty drivel whose only real purpose is the pleasure of punning and the thrill of ambiguity."  

Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 B.C.) adds another gastronomic association to *satura*. He states that it may have been an alternate term for a kind of stuffing ("farcimen,"
from which "farce" is derived). We should also observe that the title of his own Saturae Menippeae—about 150 works named after Menippus of Gadara (340-270 B.C.), of which only fragments, some 600 lines, survive—according to C. A. Van Rooy, meant "satiric medleys in the (Cynic) manner of Menippus." Or to give two more examples of this term, another logophage, Juvenal, in Satire I, refers to "the mixed mash [or 'farrago'] of my verse." And according to Higet, when Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.), the originator of Roman "satire," took the term satura for the title of his four books of miscellaneous poems, he meant not only that they were a mixed dish of simple coarse ingredients, but that they grew out of an improvised jollification which was (although devoid of plot) dramatic, since it mimicked and made fun of people and their ways, and contained dialogue sung or spoken.

The section that follows is not a satire, in the generic sense of the word, but it is a satura, a literary cornucopia. It surveys the specifically literary discourse of jazz by creating a thesaurus of comments and citations, and it finds its model—actually feeds off—two texts: John Cage's Silence, a collection of experimental essays by one of the foremost composers of this century, and Michael Ondaatje's docu-novel Coming Through Slaughter, a collage narrative which tells the story of jazz's first mythical figure, trumpeter Buddy Bolden.
That special blend of legend and fact, which flavors the lives of many great jazz musicians, has it that Buddy Bolden was, as Michael Ondaatje writes in *Coming Through Slaughter*, "the first to play the hard jazz and blues for dancing," and that on his last and finest gig—a parade down New Orleans' Iberville Street with Henry Allen's Brass Band in 1907—he went totally insane. "Dementia Praecox, Paranoid Type" *(CTS, 24, 132).*

There is more to Bolden's story than its archetypal, tragic ending, however. For one thing, although he never recorded, Bolden's innovation of mixing secular and sacred music—hymns and blues cooked up together like some beautiful, hellish gumbo—cuts its way into every recording in jazz history. It provides an image, a code, that structures all representations of jazz. For another thing, his mandate to mix, create farragoes, also suggests a model for writing about jazz and using jazz as a model for writing, because, as legend also has it, in addition to cutting hair for a living, Bolden ran a gossip sheet called *The Cricket*. He was the first jazz publisher. Ondaatje writes that Bolden "respected stray facts, manic theories, and well-told lies," and that he took all the thick facts and dropped them into his pail of sub-history" *(CTS, 24).* This, we are told, is how
he composed—both music and texts. And this is also how Ondaatje composed Coming Through Slaughter.

The sources of the stray facts employed in Coming Through Slaughter are listed, like credits in a movie, on the Acknowledgements page. They include Ramsey and Smith's Jazzmen, Martin Williams' Jazz Masters of New Orleans, Al Rose's Storyville, New Orleans, tape recordings of jazz musicians from the Jazz Archives at Tulane, and files from the East Louisiana State Hospital. Other material, "expanded or polished to suit the truth of fiction," could be filed under the heading well-told lies: e.g., the characters of Nora Bass (Bolden's wife), Nora's mother, Webb (Bolden's detective friend), or the pimp, Tom Pickett. Under the category "manic theories," one could single out the "private and fictional magnets" which Ondaatje says drew E. J. Bellocq, a Storyville photographer, and Bolden together, but this is not nearly as noteworthy as another theory which self-reflexively accounts for the existence of Coming Through Slaughter itself. Towards the close of the narrative, after the resolution and after a page of "facts" that functions as something of a résumé of Bolden's life, Ondaatje writes himself into his novel. He describes Gravier, Phillip, and Liberty, the streets Bolden traveled seventy years earlier, mentions that, today, people in that old neighborhood have not heard of the famous cornet player, and, then, says, "When he went mad he was the same age as I am now" (CTS, 133). It is a startling passage, for not only does the novelist interpolate himself into his own
fiction, he raises a most important question. Why are we as writers or readers drawn to (and drawn by) certain texts? He ponders this question, and, through the surrealistic metaphor of a speculum confusing subject and object (representor and thing represented), he images a possible answer. He writes:

Why did my senses stop at you? There was the sentence, 'Buddy Bolden who became a legend when he went berserk in a parade . .' What was there in that, before I knew your nation your colour your age, that made me push my arm forward and spill it through the front of your mirror and clutch myself? Did not want to pose in your accent but think in your brain and body, and you like a weatherbird arcing round in the middle of your life to exact opposites and burning your brains out so that from June 5, 1907 till 1931 you were dropped into amber in the East Louisiana State Hospital. Some saying you went mad trying to play the devil's music and hymns at the same time, and Armstrong telling historians that you went mad by playing too hard and too often drunk too wild too crazy. The excesses cloud up the page. There was the climax of the parade and then you removed yourself from the 20th-century game of fame, the rest of your life a desert of facts. Cut them open and spread them out like garbage. (CTS, 134)

Were it not for this statement, Coming Through Slaughter—in spite of its artful arrangement of quasi-factual materials, imagined dialogue and monologue, and poetic patches spread out like garbage in the manner of collage—could be read as a relatively straight-forward documentary, a kind of literary version of cinéma vérité. But by jumbling autobiography and biography—or, rather, by revealing that personal and historical materials are always thoroughly imbricated in any representation—this passage denies the possibility of receiving the novel as either an expression of subjectivity or objectivity. In fact, it prohibits us from accurately calling
Coming Through Slaughter a novel or a fictionalized biography. It is a mixed dish: in every sense of the word a farrago.

Such is also the case with another omnium gatherum, the writings of composer, author, and mycologist John Cage; they exemplify the practice of "saturic" composition. For instance, on what we could call the syntagmatic axis, that is, the level of arrangement, they frequently display the utilization of montage/collage techniques, similar to Cage's musical compositions. He writes in the Foreword to Silence, his best known work:

For over twenty years I have been writing articles and giving lectures. Many of them have been unusual in form--this is especially true of the lectures--because I have employed in them means of composing analogous to my composing means in the field of music. My intention has been, often, to say what I had to say in a way that would exemplify it; that would, conceivably, permit the listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it. (p. 3)

Consequently, Cage has employed a panoply of styles and techniques to do theoretical writing. For example, in Silence he composes a manifesto on the use of noise to make music, writes a mock field guide on contemporary music and mushrooms, weaves together multiple narrative lines to form a single text, pontificates on the concept of indeterminacy, repeats phrases for rhythmic effect, imagines a dialogue on experimental music between "an uncompromising teacher and an unenlightened student," converses with the deceased, French composer Erik Satie, constructs a lecture out of questions and quotations, details a means of using the I-Ching (Book of Changes) to compose music, relates the history of experimental music in
the United States, arranges written text according to chance operations (such as following the imperfections in the sheets of paper on which one works), and tells some ninety anecdotes. One goes like this:

Two wooden boxes containing Oriental spices and foodstuffs arrived from India. One was for David Tudor, the other for me. Each of us found, on opening his box, that the contents were all mixed up. The lids of containers of spices had somehow come off. Plastic bags of dried beans and palm sugar had ripped open. The tin lids of cans of chili powder had come off. All of these things were mixed with each other and with the excelsior which had been put in the box to keep the containers in position. I put my box in a corner and simply tried to forget about it. David Tudor, on the other hand, set to work. Assembling bowls of various sizes, sieves of about eleven various-sized screens, a pair of tweezers, and a small knife, he began a process which lasted three days, at the end of which time each spice was separated from each other, each kind of bean from each other, and the palm sugar lumps had been scraped free of spice and excavations in them had removed embedded beans. He then called me up to say, "Whenever you want to get at that box of spices you have, let me know. I'll help you." (Silence, 193)

This anecdote, one should immediately notice, illustrates Cage's principle of textual arrangement. He mixes things: sounds with sounds, words with words. And, to further allegorize the story, he always forces his auditors or readers to make a choice. Should they set to work and try to sort it all out or simply try to forget about it?

The anecdote also illustrates one of Cage's favored principles of selection, one which, we might say, orders the paradigmatic axis of his texts. His writings abound in references to food and dining. For example, in "What Are We Eating? And What Are We Eating?" Cage writes an account of his travels with Merce Cunningham's dance troupe by detailing what they
ordered when they stopped to eat, and as I have already men-
tioned, Cage is an expert on mushrooms; he tells many anecdotes
about studying, gathering, consuming, and, occasionally,
vomiting them. But, one might ask, what is to be gained
from noticing that Cage, in the tradition of the satura lanx,
frequently talks about food and makes texts that look like
medleys? Or what can we make of the pun, dining and dinning,
which, Ulmer notes, informs all of Cage's texts? Simply
this. Cage's texts demonstrate the enormous, inventive possi-
bilities gained from collapsing the syntagmatic and paradig-
matic axes, folding together form and theme. His writings
show how arrangement or form can be generalized from, or
modeled after, favored paradigms, that is, how an ideology
can be extrapolated from an idiom; conversely, they also
show how principles of arrangement channel or delimit par-
ticular interests, that is, how the idiomatic is constrained
by the ideological.

Cage, and I am still speaking specifically of Silence,
restates, extends, and applies what we observed in Coming
Through Slaughter. Like Ondaatje, he demonstrates the imbri-
cation of the idiomatic (personal) and the ideological
(historical)--how exposition or documentation is implicated
by desire--and in his theories on music he demonstrates the
imbriication of sound and silence: how music is actually a
question of which sounds to frame as musical, which sounds
to frame as noise, and which sounds to frame as silence. He
writes: "There is no such thing as silence. Something is
always happening that makes a sound" (Silence, 191). Enter an anechoic chamber and one will "hear," not silence, but the sounds of one's own body making sound. Or stated differently, the music one hears in a symphony hall necessarily includes the sounds of musical instruments, environmental sounds, sounds made by the bodies of performers, and sounds made by the audience. Furthermore, the fact that these sounds ceaselessly impinge upon one another, paradoxically, makes it both possible to hear them and impossible to demarcate them. The world of musical signs, if you please, is a hodgepodge, and Cage's practice, both in his written and musical compositions, is to create the effect of a satura lanx.

* * * * *

The remaining portion of this chapter is an idiosyncratic, annotated bibliography of jazz fiction, whose monotony is only occasionally abated by a citation, usually one from Silence. One might say that it is modeled on the satura, but it is, after all, only a half-baked offering, for instead of cooking up a literary version of fully-done jambalaya based on a recipe provided by Cage and Ondaatje, I have merely given myself over to my whims and gathered together the raw materials needed to make such a dish. Nevertheless, I like to think that what follows is also analogous to any of these things:

1) the boxes of spices and foodstuffs Cage and Tudor received;
2) a field, a cow pasture, with an occasional outcropping of mushrooms;
3) a blueprint, shopping list, or menu (for making a quasi-literary, coffee-table, anthology of jazz fiction);
4) a banquet, where I feed off representations of jazz and which Cage and others occasionally interrupt;
5) a jazz recording.

★★★★

I BELIEVE THAT THE USE OF NOISE TO MAKE MUSIC WILL CONTINUE AND INCREASE UNTIL WE REACH A MUSIC PRODUCED THROUGH THE AID OF ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENTS WHICH WILL MAKE AVAILABLE FOR MUSICAL PURPOSES ANY AND ALL SOUNDS THAT CAN BE HEARD. (Silence, 3-4)

★★★★

Baker, Dorothy. Young Man with a Horn. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938. The Prologue of this novel succinctly recounts the story of a jazz trumpet player who cannot "keep the body in check while the spirit goes on being what it must be" and who, therefore, "goes to pieces, but not in any small way" (p. 6). The novel fills out the details of this theme. Based loosely on the life of trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke, it is, to my knowledge, the first jazz version of the myth of the self-destructive artist, what Vance Bourjaily calls "The Story."

The Story goes like this: a musician of genius, frustrated by the discrepancy between what he can achieve and the crummy life musicians lead (because of racial discrimination, or the demand that the music be made commercial, or because he has a potential he can't reach), goes mad, or destroys himself with alcohol and drugs. The Story might be a romance, but it is a valid one. Beiderbecke's was far from the only life that followed that pattern.
The Story is used, with variations, in more than half the jazz stories I could call to mind, not all by prominent writers--though James Baldwin was there with "Sonny's Blues," Shelby Foote with "Ride Out" and James Jones with "The King." The four I recalled most vividly are by Richard Yates, Terry Southern, Eudora Welty and a writer about whom I knew nothing except that he'd written it.

This was Charles Beaumont, anthologized along with some--not all--of the others in "Eddie Condon's Treasury of Jazz." The Beaumont piece is called "Black Country" and it tells The Story memorably with a voodoo undercurrent.

* * * *

Ragtime. Jazz. Blues. The new thang. That talk you drum from your lips. Your style. What you have here is an experimental art form that all of us believe bears watching. So don't ask me how to catch Jes Grew. Ask Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, your poets, your painters, your musicians, ask them how to catch it. (Mumbo Jumbo, 174)

* * * *

Jazz per se derives from serious music. And when serious music derives from it, the situation becomes rather silly. (Silence, 72)

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Baldwin, James. "Sonny's Blues." In Going to Meet the Man. New York: Dial Press, 1965. The definitive, bebop short story, "Sonny's Blues" should be printed in its entirety in any anthology of jazz fiction, but if it had to be shortened, one could begin with the concluding episode.

In it Baldwin writes:

All I know about music is that not many people ever really hear it. And even then, on the rare occasions when something opens within, and the music enters, what we mainly hear, or hear corroborated, are personal, private, vanishing evocations.

* * * *

It is necessary to see that there is not only a sharp distinction to be made between composing and listening but that although all things are different it is not their differences
which are to be our concern but rather their uniquenesses and their infinite play of interpenetration with themselves and with us.

No one can have an idea once he starts really listening. (Silence, 171, 191)

Barthelme, Donald. "The King of Jazz." In Sixty Stories. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981. This short story, wherein trombonist Hokie Mokie, the once and future king of jazz, loses and then regains his crown can be read as a parody of the "cutting session," or, rather, accounts of "cutting sessions."


If we drop beauty, what have we got? Have we got truth?

But music, do we have any music? Wouldn't it be better to just drop music too? Then what would we have? Jazz?

What's left? (Silence, 42-43)

Cartiér, Xam Wilson. Be-Bop, Re-Bop. New York: Ballantine, 1987. Jazz funerals in New Orleans, as is commonly known, have what is called a first line and a second line. The
first-line, composed of mourners and a band, marches slowly with the deceased to the cemetery. On the way back, though, a second-line forms, the music picks up and the dancing starts. Jazz--Lacan, Derrida, and others have noticed this of writing--is frequently associated with death. Hermes, god of communication and inventor of the lyre, was also the conductor of the dead.

Cartiér's novel (in a chapter entitled, "Be-Bop, Re-Bop & All Those Obligatos") begins with the death of Double, the father of the protagonist.

The liquor was flowing, everyone had a plate, folks had visited all the way back to the kitchen. . . . We were just settling into the spirit of Double's funeral wake when Vole took it in mind to drive all the guests from the house. (p. 3)

Although I shall not go into it now, this novel makes something of this interrupted second line; it suggests a connection between jazz, writing, mourning, and memory.

Cortázar, Julio. *Hopscotch*. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York: Pantheon Books, 1966. The scene described in Chapters 10-18 (pp. 40-75), which takes place at "the club," rates as literature's most sustained discussion of the implications of playing jazz records. The final paragraph of Chapter 17 (a portion of which forms the epigraph for Chapter 1 of this study) is a written equivalent of the jazz solo.

* * * * *

Why is it so necessary at certain times to say: "I loved that"? I loved some blues, an image in the street, a poor dry river in the north. Giving testimony, fighting against the nothingness that will sweep us all away. That's how in
the air of the soul little things like that will linger, a sparrow that belonged to Lesbia, some blues that in the memory will fill the small space saved for perfumes, stamps, and paperweights. (Hopscotch, 411)

* * * *

... art is a sort of experimental station in which one tries out living. ... (Silence, 139)

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---------. "The Pursuer." In Blow-Up and Other Stories (originally published as End of the Game and Other Stories). Trans. Paul Blackburn. New York: Collier Books, 1963. This first person narrative--actually a novella, written from the position of a jazz critic, who is sensitive enough to know that alto saxophonist Johnny (a stand-in for Charlie Parker) is "the mouth" and "[e]very critic, yeah, is the sad-assed end of something that starts as taste"--is virtually a catalog of received bebop truths (especially pp. 183-85) as well as a critique of jazz mythology.

* * * *

Giving up Beethoven, the emotional climaxes and all, is fairly simple for an American. But giving up Bach is more difficult. Bach's music suggests order and glorifies for those who hear it their regard for order, which in their lives is expressed by daily jobs nine to five and the appliances with which they surround themselves and which, when plugged in, God willing, work. ... Jazz is equivalent to Bach (steady beat, dependable motor), and the love of Bach is generally coupled with the love of jazz. Jazz is more seductive, less moralistic than Bach. It popularizes the pleasures and pains of the physical life, whereas Bach is close to church and all that. Knowing as we do that so many jazz musicians stay up to all hours and even take dope, we permit ourselves to become, sympathetically at least, junkies and night owls ourselves: by participation mystique. Giving up Bach, jazz, and order is difficult. ... For if we do it--give them up, that is--what do we have left? (Silence, 262-63)
It all became a jumble in Byron's mind, a jumble of meaningless phrases accompanied by the hard, insistent, regular beating of the drum, the groaning of the saxophone, the shrill squealing of the clarinet, the laughter of the customers and occasionally the echo of the refrain, Ef you hadn't gone away! A meaningless jumble. Like life. Like Negro life. Kicked down from above. Pulled down from below. (Van Vechten, 278)

Davis, Arthur P. and Redding, Saunders, eds. Cavalcade: Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971. Robert Hayden's poem "Homage to the Empress of the Blues" (p. 387), the stanza from Gwendolyn Brooks poem "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith" that includes the phrase, "Since a man must bring / To music what his mother spanked him for / When he was two" (p. 519), and Sterling A. Brown's "Slim in Atlanta" (p. 407) should be included in a jazz anthology.

Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man. New York: New American Library, 1947. Ellison, as is commonly known, worked for a time as a jazz musician. Interestingly though, when he writes of jazz, it is frequently of jazz on record. For instance, the Invisible Man says:

I moved with the crowd, the sweat pouring off me, listening to the grinding roar of traffic, the growing sound of a record shop loudspeaker blaring a languid blues. I stopped. Was this all that would be recorded? Was this the only true history of the times, a mood blared by trumpets, trombones, saxophones and drums, a song with turgid, inadequate words? (p. 383)

This passage, which serves as a preface to the novel's final, apocalyptic scene, is vaguely reminiscent of the
argument Benjamin advances in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." It suggests that jazz signifies an art form revolutionized by technique and technology. What makes this thesis doubly interesting, though, is the fact that Benjamin's argument uses film as the grand example of how mechanical reproduction makes possible the politicization of art and its subsequent emancipation from a "parasitical dependence on ritual," and Adorno, in "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," uses music, and specifically jazz, as a counter example to oppose his cousin's pipe dream. Adorno states flatly: "It is illusory to promote the technical-rational moments of contemporary mass music . . . because the technical innovations of mass music really don't exist." 18

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One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later. The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form. . . . Every fundamentally new, pioneering creation of demands will carry beyond its goal. ("The Work of Art," 690)

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Percussion music is revolution. Sound and rhythm have too long been submissive to the restrictions of nineteenth-century music. Today we are fighting for their emancipation. Tomorrow, with electronic music in our ears, we will hear freedom.

Instead of giving us new sounds, the nineteenth-century composers have given us endless arrangements of the old sounds. We have turned on radios and always known when we were tuned to a symphony. The sound has always been the same, and there has not been even a hint of curiosity as to the possibilities
of rhythm. For interesting rhythms we have listened to jazz. (Silence, 87)

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----------. Shadow and Act. New York: Random House, 1965. This book does not qualify as "literature," in the narrow sense of the word. Nonetheless, Ellison frequently writes of jazz in this collection of essays. Early on --eg., in the Introduction--he makes it clear that, as a boy, he sought "examples, patterns to live by" and that "the jazzmen, some of whom we idolized, were in their own way better examples for youth to follow than were most judges and ministers, legislators and governors" (pp. xv, xiv). For Ellison, like Foucault, institutions play--actually try to create symphony--with peoples' bodies (Invisible Man, 499).

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. A Coney Island of the Mind. New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1958. "Junkman's Obbligato," the only poem from Coney Island that halfway interests me, is found in Section 2 of this collection of poems. Of this section, entitled Oral Messages, Ferlinghetti wrote:

These seven poems were conceived specifically for jazz accompaniment and as such should be considered as spontaneously spoken "oral messages" rather than as poems written for the printed page. As a result of continued experimental reading with jazz, they are still in a state of change. (p. 48)

When I first read this statement, my response was spontaneous laughter. How are we to take this mini-manifesto, this command to ignore writing?
When I was studying with Schoenberg one day as he was writing some counterpoint to show the way to do it, he used an eraser. 

Composing, if it is writing notes, is then actually writing, and the less one thinks it's thinking the more it becomes what it is: writing. (Silence, 34)

Gass, William. A Philosophical Inquiry: On Being Blue. Boston: David R. Godine, 1976. Gass never mentions Billie Holiday's version of "Am I Blue," which I take to be a major oversight, but in his "five common methods by which sex gains an entrance into literature" (p. 10), he does offer a potential means of theorizing a jazz aesthetic.


I was explaining at the New School that the way to get ideas is to do something boring. 

We know two ways to unfocus attention: symmetry is one of them; the other is the over-all where each small part is a sample of what you find elsewhere. In either case, there is at least the possibility of looking anywhere, not just where someone arranged you should. (Silence, 12, 100)
The following passage reads like a lyric to a song by Louis Jordan (I am thinking, especially, of the rhythm and parlando effect established by the repetition of "was" and "were" in the third paragraph). It constitutes a typical instance of jazz as a seme or signifier of primitivism:

Grave Digger flashed his badge at the two harness bulls guarding the door and pushed inside the Dew Drop Inn.

The joint was jammed with colored people who'd seen the big white man die, but nobody seemed to be worrying about it.

The jukebox was giving out with a stomp version of "Big-Legged Woman." Saxophones were pleading; the horns were teasing; the bass was patting; the drums were chatting; the piano was catting, laying and playing the jive, and a husky female voice was shouting:

"... You can feel my thigh. But don't you feel up high." (p. 57)

With Hughes, I often get the feeling that jazz is less an object of study, and more a trusted signifier invoked for some overarching program or purpose, but this is not so much the case here in his most complete integration of jazz music and poetry.

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Joans, Ted. Black Pow-Wow: Jazz Poems. New York: Hill and Wang, 1969. Reflecting on the literature of jazz, Bourjaily notes, "A fair amount of jazz fiction--and nonfiction as well--was written in musicians' jargon: even at its most authentic, the vocabulary had dated very quickly." This is certainly the case with Joans's poems. And yet, it is their very datedness that raises a crucial question. What makes a poem a "jazz poem"? What criteria must be met before a piece of writing can qualify as "jazz writing"? Must it refer to some aspect of jazz? Should it affect syncopation? Should it call forth privileged signifiers--zoot suits, Conn saxophones with reeds as hard as flint, back-lit cigarette smoke, narcotics and reefer, half-mumbled jive talk, the sound of a bass played pizzicato, etc.--the cultural codes of jazz? Should it repeat The Story?

These questions, of course, will not be resolved here. They are, in fact, larger than this study, because they arise whenever one seeks to delimit writing, pair it with a modifier: What is American writing? Jewish writing? Women's writing? Cinematic writing? Poetic writing? Good writing? Nevertheless, one point needs to be emphasized. It is the same point I hinted at earlier when I cited Hollier. Once one begins to speak of (whatever-kind-of) writing, one cannot, without a certain violence, stop speaking. For instance, the moment one claims, "Jazz is structured by images of embellishment
(obbligato), conjunction (satura), weaving (rhapsody), and disjunction (charivari)," all writing potentially becomes "jazz writing." Once the metaphorical vehicle starts, who is to stop it? The answer to this question, however, brings us back to Joans, for, more than anything else, the jazz poet (whether of the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat era, or the militant 1960s) represents an institutional attempt to halt or freeze the signifiers of jazz.

Four poems in this collection could make it to my imagined anthology of jazz: "Passed on Blues: Homage to a Poet" ("the sound of black music / the sad soft low moan of jazz ROUND BOUT MIDNIGHT . . . That was the world of Langston Hughes. . . ."); "Stormy Monday Girls" ("THEY ALL CAME OUT THAT STORMY MONDAY / WHITE BOYS THAT COLLECTED JAZZ RECORDINGS / WHITE MEN THAT WROTE ABOUT JAZZ PLAYERS / WHITE MIDDLE AGED MARRIED COUPLES WHO DANCED TO JAZZ / AND OF COURSE WHITE WOMEN THAT COLLECTED BLACK JAZZ MUSICIANS AT / THESE STORMY MONDAY EVENING SESSIONS. . . ."); "Jazz Is My Religion" ("JAZZ is my religion / and it alone do I dig / the jazz clubs / are my houses of worship. . . ."); and "Jazz Must Be a Woman."

Jones, (Everett) LeRoi (Imamu Amiri Baraka) and Neal, Larry, eds. Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing. New York: Morrow, 1968. Any good jazz reader must have some radical '60's raps (conterminous with the death of
John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, and Eric Dolphy). Poems by the following would work for starters: Stanley Crouch ("Chops Are Flyin" and "The Revelation"), Jayne Cortez ("How Long Has Trane Been Gone?"), Walter K. Dancy ("Jazz Coltrane Sings"), and Al Young ("A Dance for Militant Dilettantes"). Cortez, by the way, was, for a time, the wife of Ornette Coleman.


Old bald-headed four-eyed ofays popping their fingers . . . and don't know yet what they're doing. They say, "I love Bessie Smith." And don't even understand that Bessie Smith is saying, "Kiss my ass, kiss my black unruly ass." (pp. 34-36)

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A man named Buzz Green worked with me years ago at the Boeing Company. He had once been a jazz musician and along with a man named Lu Waters had founded a jazz band well known in its day. Buzz once said of Lou McGarrity, a trombone player we both admired, "He can play trombone with any symphony orchestra in the country but when he stands up to take a jazz solo he forgets everything he knows." So if I seem to talk technique now and then and urge you to learn more, it is not so you will remember it when you write but so you can forget it. Once you have a certain amount of accumulated technique, you can forget it in the act of writing. Those moves that are naturally yours will stay with you and will come forth mysteriously when needed.19 (Richard Hugo, 17)

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Kerouac, Jack. On the Road. New York: New American Library, 1955. Three of the greatest passages in bop prosody are in this book: (1) Dean meets Slim Gaillard (Part Two, Chapter 11); (2) Sal hips the world on "the great
jazz of Frisco" (Part Three, Chapter 4); (3) Sal, patriarch that he is, tells the story of "the children of the great bop innovators" (Part Three, Chapter 10).

MacKey, Nathaniel. Bedouin Hornbook. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986. This is an epistolary novel written by a professor in the Board of Studies in Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. It manifests a "somewhat French-inflected sense of African drumming" (BH, 144).


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Noises, too, had been discriminated against; and being American, having been trained to be sentimental, I fought for noises.

A cough or a baby crying will not ruin a good piece of modern music.

We can tell very easily whether something we're doing is contemporarily necessary. The way we do it is this: if something else happens that ordinarily would be thought to interrupt it doesn't alter it, then it's working the way it now must. (Silence, 139, 161, 238-39)

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Mezzrow, Milton, with Wolfe, Bernard. Really the Blues. New York: Random House, 1946. If Mezzrow, a Jewish clarinet player and sometimes opium addict from Chicago,
faithfully lived out the narrative his autobiography details, then he should be regarded as the original White Negro. In any event, Really the Blues is a treasure trove of jazz mythology—the flip side of the Benny Goodman story. A jazz anthology should excerpt the passages on Bix Beiderbecke (pp. 77-83, 120-128).

Mingus, Charles. Beneath the Underdog. New York: Penguin Books, 1971. Mingus cast his autobiography as an extended session with his psychoanalyst. Thus, when the narrative is pornographic—as it frequently is—one wonders if Mingus didn't merely decide to improvise in the (expected) key of Freud. Chapter 21, on trumpeter Fats Navarro, is frequently singled out as the best moment in the book.

Ondaatje, Michael. Coming Through Slaughter. New York: Penguin, 1976. Perhaps I have written enough about this, my favorite, book on jazz. Nevertheless, the following passage could function as a metacomment, stating the goal of this section on the satura. Bolden is philosophizing about the band of John Robichaux:

Did you ever meet Robichaux? I never did. I loathed everything he stood for. He dominated his audiences. He put his emotions into patterns which a listening crowd had to follow. . . . When I played parades we would be going down Canal Street and at each intersection people would hear just the fragment I happened to be playing and it would fade as I went further down Canal. They would not be there to hear the end of phrases, Robichaux's arches. I wanted them to be able to come in where they pleased and leave when they pleased and somehow hear the germs of the start and all the possible endings at whatever point in the music that I had reached then. Like your radio without the beginnings or endings. The right ending is an open door you
can't see too far out of. It can mean exactly the opposite of what you are thinking. (CTS, 93-94)

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If at any moment we approach that moment with a pre-conceived idea of what that moment will provide, and if, furthermore, we pre-sume that having paid for it makes us safe about it, we simply start off on the wrong foot. (Silence, 136)

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Parkinson, Thomas, ed. A Casebook on the Beat. New York: Crowell, 1961. Ginsberg claimed that many of his poetic forms, as he put it, "developed out of an extreme rhapsodic wail I once heard in a madhouse" (p. 29). Here are the only lines from Howl that I (sort of) like:

the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown,
yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death,
and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn shadow of the band and blew the suffering of America's naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma lamma sabachthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to the last radio
with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies good to eat a thousand years. (11. 75-77)

Parkinson's book also contains Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" (pp. 65-68) and his essay, "The Origins of the Beat Generation" (pp. 72-74, "When I first saw the hipsters creeping around Times Square . . .").

* * * * *

The distinguishing characteristic of the Beat Generation is, it seems to me, the fact that they have a myth. The myth follows authentic archaic lines, and goes something like this. The hero is the "angelheaded hipster." He comes of anonymous parentage . . . He has received a mysterious call--to the road, the freights, the jazzdens, the "negro streets." (Dorothy Van Ghent, in Parkinson, p. 213)

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Pynchon, Thomas. "Entropy." In Slow Learner: Early Stories. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1984. In this story, information theory meets jazz when the Duke di Angelis quartet go "through the motions of a group having a session, only without instruments," play with perfect redundancy (flawlessly communicate), and, hence, experience a statistically improbable moment when entropy is reduced to zero.


Reed, Ishmael. Mumbo Jumbo. New York: Avon Books, 1971. For now, let us put it this way. Mumbo Jumbo is a history of jes grew, and, as Reed puts it, "Jes Grew was the manic in the artist who would rather do glossolalia than be 'neat clean or lucid'" (p. 241).

* * * * *

Coming back from an all-Ives concert we'd attended in Connecticut, Minna Lederman said that by separating his insurance business from his composition of music (as completely as day is separated from night), Ives paid full respect to the American assumption that the artist has no place in society. (Silence, 264)

* * * * *

is a record (the found notebooks of Antoine Roquentin); it often skips.

   * * * * *

I write in order to hear; never do I hear and then write what I hear. (Silence, 169)

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Skvorecky, Josef. The Bass Saxophone: Two Novellas. New York: Washington Square Press, 1977. In "Red Music," the Preface to this work, Skvorecky gives a brief history of Slavic jazz under the Third Reich and the Soviets. He argues that the essence of jazz, "no matter what LeRoi Jones says to the contrary . . . is not simply protest," but "an elan vital, a forceful vitality, an explosive creative energy" and so on and so forth (p. 4). Skvorecky even goes so far as to claim that jazz is "a faith without ideology, indeed a faith which cancels ideologies" (pp. 151-54).

   * * * * *

Counterpoint is the same proposition as harmony except that it is more insidious. I noticed in 1938 that some young people were still interested in it. (Silence, 164)

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Van Vechten, Carl. Nigger Heaven. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1926. Two passages—a detailed account of the Negro's "primitive birthright" (pp. 89-90) and the scene at the world's most primitive night club (pp. 252-56)—represent everything America hoped (and feared) jazz could be.

Towards the end of this story, based on Fats Waller's appearance in a Southern town, the narrator asks, "And who could ever remember any of the things he [Powerhouse] says?" How are we to understand this question, coming as it does, after almost eight full pages of dialogue? Is the narrator joking, lying, being coy, playing dumb, or has she heard and written and immediately forgotten what she wrote? Is the story a rapp?

* * * * *

My point is this: various techniques can go together all at the same time. (Silence, 164)

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Wright, Richard. Native Son. New York: Harper and Row, 1940. Wright understands jazz in terms similar to Adorno: i.e., as a means of social control. In his Introduction, "How 'Bigger' Was Born," he ponders why the majority of Negroes, living under the same social conditions as Bigger Thomas, did not revolt. "Some," he wrote, "got religion." "Others . . . employed a thousand ruses and stratagems of struggle to win their rights. Still others projected their hurts and longings into more naive and mundane forms--blues, jazz, swing--and, without intellectual guidance, tried to build up a compensatory nourishment for themselves" (p. xiii). Later, in the novel, Bigger feels "an urgent need to hide his growing and deepening feeling of hysteria" and longs "for a stimulus powerful enough to focus his attention and drain off his energies." Wright writes: "He wanted to run. Or
listen to some swing music. Or laugh or joke. Or read a
Real Detective Story Magazine. Or go to a movie. Or
visit Bessie" (p. 30).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"Madeleine, would you put the record back? Just once, before
I leave." (Nausea, 176)

Notes

1Statement made by "an ex-slave on one of the Georgia
Sea Islands to a white folklorist in 1984" (BH, p. 39); Josef
Skvorecky, The Bass Saxophone: Two Novellas By Josef Skvorecky
Kerouac, On the Road (New York: New American Library, 1955),
p. 72; Michael Ondaatje, Coming Through Slaughter (New York:

2Whitney Balliett, "Panassié, Delaunay et Cie," American
Musicians (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), p. 3. Sub-
sequently cited as AM.

3Skvorecky, p. 121.

4Panassié's reasons for dismissing bop were: "(1) its
players have abandoned the classic instrumental jazz tradition.
Instead of making their instruments sing like the human voice
with inflections, vibrato, sustained notes and phrases full
of contrast, the boppers play according to the European instru-
mental tradition; (2) because the bop rhythm section breaks
the continuity of the swing . . . (3) because boppers systemat-
ically use chords and intervals adopted from modern European
music and destroy the harmonic atmosphere of jazz." Hugues
Panassié, Guide to Jazz (1956), in AM, p. 4.

5MacDonald Smith Moore, Yankee Blues: Musical Culture and
American Identity (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1985),
p. 92. Moore states that these men "committed a kind of class
treason against the old-stock families from which they sprang."
Their importance in shaping American's music cannot be under-
estimated. For example, Hammond--whose mother was a Vander-
bilt--discovered Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Teddy Wilson,
Charlie Christian, Benny Goodman (who later married Hammond's
sister), Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Aretha Franklin, and
George Benson. Subsequently cited as YB.


8Houston A. Baker, Jr., pp. 74-78.

9Gridley, p. 56; Sargeant, p. 211; Feather, p. 24.

10Hollier, p. 3.

11Throughout this section I follow a history of Menippean satire found in James Thomas Gresham, "John Barth as Menippean Satirist," Diss. Michigan State University 1972, pp. 10-19. He includes this note on the etymological literature discussing the word satura. "Van Rooy's study [listed in the note below] analyzes the origins of both (1) the term and (2) the genre, utilizing (1) the list of four etymologies in Ars Grammatica, by the 4th century grammarian Diomedes, and (2) Quintilian's famous dictum about the origin of the genre, "Satura Quidem Tota Nostra Est." An earlier critical study of the subject is G. L. Hendrickson's "Satura Tota Nostra Est," reprinted in Ronald Paulson's anthology, Satire: Modern Essays in Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: 1971), pp. 36-60. Numerous other critics deal with the origins and etymology of satire, including Mary Claire Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory," reprinted in Paulson's anthology, pp. 135-170 (she, for example, comments on Milton's adherence to the satire-satyr etymology in his Apology against Smectymnuus); Highet; Robert and Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven, Conn., 1959)--here Kernan links Elizabethan satire with the satyr-etymology. Casaubon exposed the satyr-satire fallacy in his Graecorum poesi et Romanorum satira.


16 Comments on "What Are We Eating? And What Are We Eating," as well as the dining/dinning pun, from Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," p. 103.

17 Vance Bourjaily, "In and Out of Storyville: Jazz and Fiction," The New York Times Book Review, 13 Dec. 1987, p. 44. Subsequent references to jazz literature in this chapter are found in the body of the essay.


Jazz is not a "form" like, let us say, the waltz or the fugue, that leaves the composer's imagination free within the form; it is a bundle of tricks--of syncopation and so on.

--Ernest Newman

I often think of my playing as a crap game--sometimes I get real lucky.

--Jess Stacy

And here is the thing that made King Bolden Band be the First Band that played Jazz. It was because it did not Read at all. I could fake like 500 myself; so you tell them that Bunk and King Bolden's Band was the first ones that started Jazz in the City or any place else.

--Willie G. "Bunk" Johnson

[T]he jazz fan, however knowledgeable, is fundamentally a lover.

--E. J. Hobsbawm

All glamor is bound up with some sort of trickery.

--Theodor W. Adorno

Counterfeit

After characterizing the body of writing which accumulated around the signifier jazz as "little more than an amalgam of well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion," Schulmer (a designation which, at this point, refers more to the logic of the trope than to the demonstrable logic of an identifiable consciousness) takes his poetic vehicle--the amalgam (an alloy of mercury with another metal)--to its destination. He writes that it "was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis."
An alloy passing for refinement: this is the trope of the counterfeit. By a twist or a trick, jazz writing—an ornament and an amalgam—signifies an impoverished or bankrupt economy where an imitation (a simulacrum or double) may pass for the genuine.

Watch my words closely, though. I am not suggesting that Schuller regards all writing about jazz as counterfeit. Clearly, that is not the case. Instead, I am arguing that Schuller represents jazz writing—and here again we shall see that his representation of jazz writing repeats an image conventionally employed when conceptualizing jazz music—as the site of an elaborate confidence game. With this metaphor, jazz writing becomes less a thing and more a space—a place or *topos*—where counterfeits pose real threats, by consistently passing for, contesting, that which is genuine. Schuller aims, therefore, to distinguish the authentic from the spurious by presenting his readers with an example of "genuine musicological research"—"a systematic, comprehensive history dealing with the specifics of the music." That task completed, the reader should be able to measure jazz writing against an established standard. Fraudulent imitations of "scholarship and serious analysis" will be seen for what they are.

But what are they? Schuller avoids words I have used, adjectives like fraudulent, counterfeit, and spurious. He prefers "fascinated," "well-meaning," and "amateur." And even when he details the shortcomings of books about jazz—"critical gaps or misjudgments," falling "prey to basic misconceptions,"
an attendance to the "general descriptive or impressionistic," and a failure "to capture the elusive essentials of jazz"—he never lists counterfeiting—imitating serious scholarship with an intention to defraud—as one of the jazz author's nefarious practices. His point is more subtle. "Well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion" may have passed "for scholarship and serious analysis," but they did so, not through artfulness (for they had none), but by permission. Bias prompted tolerance. Since jazz lacked "academic credentials"—it had a "humble, socially 'unacceptable' origin" and was produced "by self-taught, often musically illiterate musicians"—it "did not warrant genuine musicological research." Therefore, what writing jazz happened to elicit, although it counted for very little and was "hardly sufficient to produce a serious interest," "was allowed to pass for [i.e., 'in place of'] scholarship."

This writing, Schuller's "amalgam of well-meaning amateur criticism and fascinated opinion," had exchange value—it passed as currency but accrued little interest—within a particular, aesthetic economy, one which defined musical legitimacy and musical literacy (and whose genealogy is given in Weber's *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*). And like a coin, it had two sides; jazz was simultaneously assimilated and marginalized. One side signified the provisional acceptance of jazz ("Jazz is great fun!" "It's culturally relevant; great newspaper copy too!"). The other side signified a refusal or reluctance to grant jazz full
admittance into middle-class, American culture ("Jazz is hardly worthy of serious consideration!"). Both sides are readily apparent in this passage from Sargeant's Jazz: Hot and Hybrid, a book which, interestingly enough, Adorno called "the best, most reliable and most sensible book on the subject":

The attendant weakness of jazz is that it is an art without positive moral values, an art that evades those attitudes of restraint and intellectual poise upon which complex civilizations are built. At best it offers civilized man a temporary escape into drunken self-hypnotism. . . . It is a far cry from the jazz state of mind to that psychology of human perfectability, of aspiration, that lies, for example, behind the symphonies of a Beethoven or the music dramas of a Wagner.  

Little perspicacity is required to read the economy of ambivalence warranting jazz writing in exactly the same manner that Hebdige reads the dress, dance, and music of post-war British youth: as a symbolic attempt to "accommodate and expunge the black presence from the host community"—which in the case presently under examination means white America (Sub, 44-45). Indeed, if this double-coded, racialist subtext is barely latent in Sargeant's statement, it is woefully manifest in three selections by Gilbert Seldes. In 1923-'24, he wrote:

[I]f jazz weren't itself good the subject would be more suitable for a sociologist than for an admirer of the gay arts. Fortunately . . . [jazz has] qualities which cannot be despised; and the cry that jazz is the enthusiastic disorganization of music is as extravagant as the prophesy that if we do not stop "jazzing" we will go down, as a nation, into ruin.

. . .

I say the negro is not our salvation because with all my feeling for what he instinctively offers, for his desirable indifference to our set of conventions of emotional decency, I am on the side of civilization.
To any one who inherits several thousand centuries of civilization, none of the things the negro offers can matter unless they are apprehended by the mind as well as by the body and the spirit.

Nowhere is the failure of the negro to exploit his gifts more obvious than in the use he has made of the jazz orchestra; for although nearly every negro jazz band is better than nearly every white band, no negro band has yet come up to the level of the best white ones, and the leader of the best of all, by a little joke, is called Whiteman. 4

Interestingly and, I think, most tragically, when Dodge cites this passage in his 1939 survey of jazz critics, he chides Seldes, not for racist presuppositions, but for what he sees as an inexcusable critical lapse--an admiration for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Dodge declares that Seldes's concluding remark, "admittedly slight in witty intent, will ever strike back at its author as a more humorous error in art judgment!" (Jazzmen, 312-13). In Dodge's eyes, Seldes commits an aesthetic, not an ethical, faux pas. Dodge agrees with Seldes, at least to a point. He, too, accepts the amorality of black people and states that "the Negro may have been indifferent to our emotional decency," but he adds an addendum, "the vital part of our centuries of musical experience" has gone into "Negro jazz." Although Dodge and Seldes's use of the pronoun "our" scarcely needs a gloss, we would do well to digress briefly and recall the following passage from George Washington Cable's The Grandissimes (1879), a novel set in New Orleans at the time of the Louisiana Purchase. Agricola Fusilier, a Creole patriarch, speaks:

"H-my young friend, when we say, 'we people,' we always mean we white people. The non-mention of color always implies pure white; and whatever is not pure white is
to all intents and purposes pure black. When I say the 'whole community,' I mean the whole white portion; when I speak of the 'undivided public sentiment,' I mean the sentiment of the white population. What else could I mean?" (p. 59)

Indeed, this is the narrative position assumed by most jazz criticism. Unlike Seldes, though, Dodge refuses to accept the formula amoral people yield uncivilized music. Instead, he opts for another solution. Jazz is valuable to the extent that it exhibits "our [Western] harmony and musical form"; it is interesting to the extent that it is "indifferent to our emotional decency." "Popular music," writes Adorno,

must simultaneously meet two demands. One is for stimuli that provoke the listener's attention. The other is for the material to fall within the category of what the musically untrained listener would call 'natural' music: that is, the sum total of all the conventions and material formulas in music to which he is accustomed and which he regards as the inherent simple language of music itself, no matter how late the development might be which produced this natural language. ("On Popular Music," 24)

Taking this argument one more step, we reach an astounding conclusion, one that reverses the conventional way jazz is perceived. According to Dodge and Seldes, Negro jazz is worthy of attention--it will be allowed to pass for music--precisely to the extent that it recuperates white musical experience (or in Adorno's reading, standardized modes of production). Taken to its logical conclusion, this argument reads jazz as a quaint/threatening counterfeit of "real music," part of a feedback loop. White people create Music, black people--like children--imitate it (play around with it), and, then, white people consume this refracted representation of themselves.
Mark how this process is employed to represent the development of the cakewalk, a 19th-century dance:

There is a theory that the plantation cakewalk originated when colored servants imitated others doing the minuet. Whether or not that's true, the cakewalk gravitated right back to white folks by way of minstrel shows. Even high society behind their cloistered doors "kicked up high" for fun without the incentive of a simple cake for a prize.⁵ (emphasis mine)

"The negro," wrote George Jean Nathan in 1919, "with his unusual sense of rhythm, is no more accurately to be called musical than a metronome is to be called a Swiss music-box."⁶ Thus, the Negro becomes the archetypical mimic, a Yahoo capable of aping the motions of civilization (one will recall that the Houyhnhnms, in Book IV of Gulliver's Travels, contend that Yahoos do not "speak" so much as imitate "speech"); his music becomes a simulacrum of Music.

"Music," Kerman reminds us, "may come from below or be imposed from above, musicology always comes from above" (CM, 159). Broadly speaking, writing about jazz functioned within two aesthetic economies that, while distinct, even competitive, were founded on the image of jazz as a simulacrum. One group, as we have just seen, pointed to the dependence of jazz on European harmony and form, and while it readily admitted and frequently emphasized the indispensableness of African contributions to the music, it measured the worth of jazz against musical standards established by "several thousand centuries of civilization." Jazz was imputed value as it replicated particular representations of classical music (notice also that "classical music," like jazz, is never outside a system..."
of representations). Thus, a wide variety of writers, many of them composers, with widely divergent opinions on the subject of "musical standards" or "classical music," employed jazz—a arbitrary sign posing as a motivated sign—as a way to make their own representations of Music seem highly constrained or motivated. For instance, if a composer, say Darius Milhaud, represented jazz as "an influence of good," then his approbation not only supported jazz, through a kind of self-reflexive feedback loop, it bolstered his own composition, Création du Monde, and created the effect that his pronouncements about music were ontologically stable.\(^7\) In a similar fashion, if a writer represented jazz as antagonistic to established musical ideals, he did so not only to disparage jazz but as a means of bolstering his musical-ideological agenda (i.e., his representation of Music).

Another group, however, represented the musical and cultural value of jazz as inversely proportional to its adherence to established musical standards (here again, "standards" is an intentionally unilateral designation). It emphasized the dependence of jazz on African and Caribbean rhythms, and while it readily acknowledged that jazz and classical music shared European conceptions of melody and harmony, it frequently called attention to the harmonic-melodic tendencies that distinguished jazz from classical music (e.g., the blues scale or microtones). It assumed that "Negroes assimilated only those harmonic-melodic tendencies that permitted the integration of their African traditions," or it assumed that
the European musical elements employed by jazz either did not adversely affect the music (civilize or domesticate it) or that they were successfully perverted by the music (EJ, 39). This group represented jazz as a parody of "civilization," and it imputed value to jazz to the extent that it replicated or reinforced privileged, cultural representations (stereotypes) of the Negro. My example of a writer from this group is Carl Van Vechten.

Van Vechten, "the undisputed impresario of the Harlem Renaissance," an aesthete who practiced a kind of cultural one-upmanship by making "approving critical judgments about the very new and the very off-beat," in typical bohemian fashion, delighted in challenging what James Weldon Johnson called "the Nordic superiority complex." As one might expect, this Des Esseintes from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, did everything in his power to invert Victorian values and protect what he perceived as exotica from the encroachments of the vulgar. Although his aesthetic judgments were wildly inconsistent, capricious, subject to the fluctuations of an over-developed palate—for example, he championed the Aeolian Hall premier of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue and at roughly the same time asserted that whites had no business singing spirituals—his lapses from conventional standards of felicity could not have been more calculated or more consistent.

His infamous novel, Nigger Heaven, took its title from an old term for the topmost gallery of the theater, a term Van
Vechten employed as a metaphor for Harlem. In it he has his protagonist, a "New Negro," Byron Kasson, exclaim:

We sit in our places in the gallery of this New York theatre and watch the white world sitting down below in the good seats in the orchestra. Occasionally they turn their faces up towards us, their hard, cruel faces, to laugh, or sneer, but they never beckon. It never seems to occur to them that Nigger Heaven is crowded... that we sit above them, that we can drop things down on them and crush them, that we can swoop down from this Nigger Heaven and take their seats.  

The image could not be any more striking. It is as memorable and disturbing as any passage from Melville's *Confidence Man*. With one hand, Van Vechten points to the seal-brown face of his character. With the other, he points to his own face, a face as white as that of any of his Dutch forebears. And with utmost confidence, this Janus-faced fop quips, "What did I do to be so black and blue?" Like the novel as a whole, this image of a counterfeit black man talking about the prejudices of white men underscores its own duplicity. It simultaneously critiques and exemplifies the exploitation of blacks by whites with an ambiguity that will remain unmatched until Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, bohemians cut from the same bolt as Van Vechten, record "Brown Sugar."  

But more than that, in exaggerating the radical separation of what is claimed (or imagined) and what is seen--intent and effect--this passage functions to loosen "fixed" convictions, test conventions, and invert the ideology (the aesthetic and moral economy) that backed statements such as those by Seldes and Dodge. In order to conclude this discussion of writing which represented jazz as a symbolic inversion of "civilization,"
consider one, final citation from Nigger Heaven. The narrator describes Mary Love, a light-skinned Negro who could have easily "passed for white":

She [Mary] admired all Negro characteristics and desired earnestly to possess them. Somehow, so many of them, through no fault of her own, eluded her. . . . How many times she had watched her friends listening listlessly or with forced or affected attention to alien music, which said little to the Negro soul, by Schubert or Schumann, immediately thereafter losing themselves in a burst of jazz or the glory of an evangelical Spiritual, recognizing, no doubt, in some dim, biological way, the beat of the African rhythm. 

Savages! Savages at heart! And she had lost or forfeited her birthright, this primitive birthright which was so valuable and important an asset, a birthright that all the civilized races were struggling to get back to--this fact explained the art of a Picasso or a Stravinsky. To be sure, she, too felt this African beat--it completely aroused her emotionally--but she was conscious of feeling it. This love of drums, of exciting rhythms, this naive delight in glowing colour--the colour that exists only in cloudless, tropical climes--this warm, sexual emotion, all these were hers only through a mental understanding. (pp. 89-90, emphasis mine)

Mary "lost or forfeited her birthright" not when she lost "natural rhythm," when she no longer found joy in loud colors or when her steamy sexuality froze in the more temperate climes of Harlem--for she had lost none of these stereotypical Negroid characteristics. She lost her primitiveness when she found or developed self-consciousness.

To Van Vechten, consciousness is a nonbeneficial mutation or adaptation, and Mary, at least at this point in the novel, is a counterfeit. She is a fake Caucasian (a Negro who can pass for white); she is a fake Negro (a primitive who has lost her birthright), and it becomes one her author's major tasks to define and restore genuineness to her. But who
could be more self-conscious, more of a fake, than Van Vechten?--in his fiction, a narrator signifying and yet depre-cating self-consciousness; in life, a dandy plotting every social move, obsessed with aesthetic sensation--tiny details of refinement--and yet affecting nonchalance? And this is my point. Van Vechten and Nigger Heaven call attention to--they parade--their own inauthenticity. They are counterfeits that admit that they are counterfeits. (And, thus, are they counterfeits?) If readers allow them to pass, then they have accomplished precisely what they set out to do. They have destabilized the dominated majority's definition of genuine and counterfeit.

Without stretching the point too far we can say that Van Vechten's texts (seven novels and five books of music criticism), as well as those by other authors who linked jazz with primitivism, could be read as nascent "comparative musicology" or, as it has been called since Jaap Kunst introduced the term in 1950, ethnomusicology. By the same token, books and articles written by well-meaning amateur critics who connected jazz with "civilization" could be read as nascent jazz musicology. From this latter source grew Schuller's study.

In summarizing his comments on Charles Seeger, whom he calls "the guiding spirit of modern American ethnomusicology," Kerman singles out "middle-class antagonism towards conventional middle-class culture" as "the typical factor in the ideological makeup of ethnomusicology" (CM, 11, 159). Alan P. Merriam, who, in a famous phrase, defined ethnomusicology
as "the study of music in culture," accused post-war ethnomusicology as being motivated by what he dubbed the "White Knight Concept" and the "Dutiful Preserver Concept" (CM, 13, 159). Indeed, if Seeger and others, for instance, Alan Lomax, were progenitors of the "Dutiful Preserver Concept," often identifying with the conditions of "poor whites," then Van Vechten and others, for instance, John Hammond, were classic "White Knights," who admired the Negro's mythic ability to transcend poverty and oppression through music. Of Hammond, Count Basie said:

He's been a hell of a man. And he has never asked for a nickel from me or any of those other people he's done so much for. And there have been quite a few of them. All he wanted to see was the results of what was supposed to be happening.12

Seeger seemed motivated by opposing urges. His life evidenced great sympathy for the disenfranchised (e.g., at one point, "he took his family in a homemade automobile house-trailer to rural North Carolina, so that he could play free sonata recitals in churches and Grange halls") and a desire to "look at things from below up," and he espoused predictable, leftist/liberal political affiliations (a flirtation with communism in the 1930s, and, then, administrative posts in "Roosevelt's programmes to combat the Depression") (CM, 156-59). Van Vechten and Hammond, on the other hand, also seemed motivated by what would appear to be mutually exclusive desires: an egalitarian desire to popularize jazz (share it with the middle class) and the hipster's desire to keep jazz untainted by the masses (protect jazz from the middle class and the
effects of conventionalization). As one might expect, in both cases attempts to mediate irreconcilable values, to live out a workable response to conflicting motivations, served to produce enormous amounts of energy. These men accomplished much. The stories of their lives read like melodramas, scaled-down, hyped-up versions of the conflicts that charged the musics they loved.

Seeger, Lomax, Van Vechten, and Hammond, to borrow a phrase from Kerman, pictured "the Americas as an ethnomusicologist's dream laboratory for the study of musical acculturation" (CM, 159). Undoubtedly, this is what interested them most. But their work, the texts they produced in response to their interests, even when their authors did not adequately appreciate (or even denied) the fact, functioned as a critique of musicology. They employed the American vernacular tradition to unsettle Music (question its authenticity or properness). Seeger, the theoretician of this quartet, wrote "Tractatus Esthetico-Semioticus" ("a comprehensive synoptic theory of human communication in which music plays one part among many"—CM, 157) and spoke of what he called "the linguocentric predicament" or "the musicological juncture": in Kerman's words, "the incommensurability of verbal and musical communication" (CM, 158). Lomax compiled The Folksongs of America, did extensive field work in ethnomusicology, and wrote the definitive biography of Jelly Roll Morton. Hammond produced numerous records and concerts. In the liner notes to From Spirituals to Swing, a recording of the December 23, 1938
concert that brought black American music to Carnegie Hall, he quoted Van Vechten and in one word unwittingly wrote a definitive epithet of the life message of this man:

It is doubtful where [sic] the concert could have started less auspiciously. The plan had been to have me make some opening remarks, and then play an excerpt from the recordings of the Turner expedition in Africa, showing a kind of ethnic relationship between African tribal music and American jazz and folk music (something I would never venture today). I was so nervous that my voice couldn't be heard, and I remember Carl Van Vechten yelling "louder" from his front row perch, whereupon I gave a signal to the sound man to increase the amplification. He misread the cue and instead put on the record of wild African chanting, while I was still talking to the audience. Everybody broke up, of course, but from then on it was a continuous ball, beginning with the three boogie-woogie pianists and ending some three and a half hours later with the first concert presentation of Count Basie's big band.13

A few things should now be evident. One, the most elemental sort of recuperation--appropriation or co-optation--takes place at the level of the metaphor, at the level of words, not things. The images which bring jazz into language signify the appropriation of music by ideologically motivated systems of discourse. Two, at least two groups sought to define themselves and possess jazz in one, easy motion, by filling jazz (or the signifier Negro) with meaning--i.e., by linking or associating it with preferred signifiers--and reading back this meaning onto their own systems of representation. In this self perpetuating system, identity was manufactured by the representation and subsequent possession of the sign jazz. Three, although we may read the discourse of jazz as a coded dialogue between blacks and whites, Victorians and Modernists, civilization and the Other, we should be
wary of comprehending jazz as a musical echo of *racism* or *modernism*, if by *racism* or *modernism* we imagine signifieds that are not themselves signifiers. Four, *jazz*, to repeat a claim I have already stressed, functions as a sign. For all its "actuality" anterior to sense, it enters discourse (in Lacanian terms moves from the Imaginary to the Symbolic Realm) as a projection or objectification of warring systems of representation. Five, *jazz* marks a place, a *topos*, where the question of authenticity (legitimacy and literacy) is broached, the notion of counterfeit problematized.

Looking again at Schuller's text, we can now see that what "was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis" actually determined what would later count as *genuine*. Genuineness was not some foreknown quality possessed by texts. It was a byproduct, or better yet, a spoil of war in the battle that determined the meaning of the term *jazz*.

The war was waged in this manner. Someone made a statement of definition about jazz by pairing it with, or referring it back to, a cultural code already established as genuine (i.e., part of a linguistic chain or matrix). For example, Virgil Thomson wrote:

Jazz, in brief, is a compound of a) the fox-trot rhythm, a four-four measure (alla breve) with a double accent, and b) a syncopated melody over this rhythm. . . . The combination is jazz. Try it on your piano. Apply the recipe to any tune you know.14

If this statement "was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis," that is, if it was repeated, became conventionalized, then a particular representation of jazz was
authenticated, and the cultural code warranting the statement was strengthened. Subsequent statements, if they were to count as genuine, would have to refer back to this statement or the system that lent it credence in the first place.

Traditionally, conventionalization—the "process by which innovative, unconventional codes gradually become adopted by the majority"—has been understood as an aesthetic equivalent of the second law of thermodynamics: energy tends towards a state of equilibrium. The dissemination of jazz is frequently put forward up as a historical example of this process. Fiske uses it in Introduction to Communication Studies, and as does Hebdige. This process, these descriptions declare, like its counterpart in physics, is in itself neither negative nor positive, good nor bad; it just is. A good description, they seem to at least tacitly argue, merely indicates; it does not seek to establish a norm. If we perceive conventionalization as a "lowering of quality," writes Fiske, "we should be aware that it [such a judgment] is made from within a particular value-system, one that values elaborated, narrowcast codes and the expression of individual differences." All the same, though, descriptions of conventionalization typically, if not always, employ a rhetoric of degeneration; they represent conventionalization as a downward movement (and they expect that readers will decode "downward" Platonically, as a deviation from The Good). The rhetoric of such descriptions, I suspect, seeks ultimately to establish the legitimacy
of what Basil Bernstein called elaborated codes, the rights of narrowcast audiences. Hebdige writes of jazz:

As the music fed into mainstream popular culture during the 20s and 30s, it tended to become bowdlerized, drained of surplus eroticism, and any hint of anger or recrimination blown along the "hot" lines was delicately refined into inoffensive night club sound. White swing represents the climax of this process: innocuous, generally unobtrusive, possessing a broad appeal, it was a laundered product which contained none of the subversive connotations of its original black sources. These suppressed meanings were, however, triumphantly reaffirmed in bebop, and by the mid-50s a new, younger white audience began to see itself reflected darkly in the dangerous, uneven surfaces of contemporary avant-garde, despite the fact that the musicians responsible for the New York sound deliberately sought to restrict white identification by producing a jazz which was difficult to listen to and even more difficult to imitate. (p. 47)

Hot jazz turns to swing, bop turns to cool, eroticism turns to lassitude, black bleaches to white, the dirty becomes laundered, and the uneven gets smoothed: this model--ultimately a jazz version of a model based on a 19th-century view of entropy as heat death--adequately accounts for the degradation of a code imagined as original. It explains the translation of narrowcast codes into the broadcast codes necessary for communicating with a wide audience. But it cannot explain how original, so-called pure codes arise.

The discourse of jazz suggests another, nonlinear or nonteleological, way to read the process of conventionalization. Although I shall not fully elaborate this model, readers should be able to organize writing about jazz, as well as jazz music, by the following pattern--a kind of elaborate spiral--of innovation and popularization.
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Step One. As we have seen, people generate statements about a phenomenon (one demarcated by the culture) by referring back to cultural codes previously established as genuine. Since all such statements constitute bids for legitimacy, they must be couched in terms at once acceptable to the hoi polloi and "passable" by culturally sanctioned institutions.

Step Two. Groups of people with, let us say, vested interests pick up on, buy into, pass certain statements around as genuine imitations, which means they accept them as ideologically sufficient, but linguistically deficient (i.e., composed of restricted codes and, therefore, subject to misreading).

Step Three. The counterfeitiness of the statements merely passing for legitimate becomes apparent. Because they rely on previously established codes, these statements are regarded as obviously metaphorical, working by means of analogy.

Step Four. Representations begin to bid for legitimacy by soliciting institutional credibility. Elaborated codes are devised to fill out the restricted codes which brought the phenomenon into representation. Because they are codes perceived as motivated, specific to the phenomenon represented, they tend to squelch nonapproved or aberrant readings; they feel less arbitrary than the restricted codes.
Step Five. The statements which are transformed into institutionally ratified, narrowcast codes are deemed genuine by the culture (the bid for legitimacy is completed). The elaborated language spoken by institutional spokesmen is read back as genuine, as an original or pure code.

Step Six. To maintain its hegemony, the institution validating a particular representation will have to popularize itself (validate its system of representation) by encouraging the transformation of its narrowcast codes into broadcast codes. This process of conventionalization, communicating with a wider, more heterogeneous audience, however, will allow aberrant decodings. In fact, they are "necessary to fit the message into the varieties of convention or cultural experience of the mass audience" (Fiske, 87).

Step One Revisited. The process begins again. The aberrant decodings which accompany conventionalization will refer back to cultural codes previously established as genuine. These perverse readings of past codes constitute new bids for legitimacy; any aberrant reading which the institution sanctioning the pure code cannot suppress will have to be accepted (or, at least, accommodated) as genuine.

Without going into extensive detail we shall see that this model accounts for innovation in jazz, and not only that. It accounts for jazz as a musical innovation. To take a conveni-
ent but arbitrary starting point for what will be a short history of jazz music, it suggests that the conventionalization (cultural assimilation) of black music came about as a direct result of the realization that the products of the musical labor of black American ex-slaves had exchange value, a realization that was, to a great extent, and speaking only of conditions at the level of production, an effect of the establishment of the music publishing industry, the rise of an American, vernacular, musical theater, and the invention of radio and the phonograph. At this time, which I am conveniently compressing for the sake of illustration, many types of Afro-American musics (all aberrantly reading--referring back to--African and European musics) began to compete for a share of the market. Jazz, blues, and spirituals won that struggle. Aided by written representations such as those we have already examined, these musics were able to differentiate themselves from other competing musical forms and situate themselves as the legitimate music of the American Negro.

Immediately, though, jazz, or hot jazz as it came to be called, had to immediately conventionalize, its codes. To maintain its viability in the marketplace and merit middle-class respectability (actually, two sides of the same coin), it had to restrict its musical language and appeal to a broadcast audience. In this bid for cultural acceptance, jazz was "cooled" down. Even its name was conventionalized. Lyons writes:

Linguistically the word swing went through a curious evolution from a verb form to a noun. The music did not
simply swing--it was swing. The transformation occurred during the mid-1930's, when "hot jazz," as it was first called, spread overseas. The music was played frequently on the radio in England. However, the BBC believed the phrase "hot jazz" to have sexual connotations not in keeping with its image. Announcers were instructed to use the phrase "swing music" instead, alluding perhaps to Duke Ellington's song title of 1932 "It Don't Mean a Thing, If It Ain't Got That Swing." Thus the music was labeled almost a full decade after it had begun stylistically.17

As one might expect, devotees of hot jazz, claimed that swing (especially the "sweet" variety) was not real jazz (it was a counterfeit), or they damned it as a particularly degraded form of the real item. Nevertheless, it attained enormous popularity, for, finally, it represented not so much a cooling down of hot jazz (which continued to be recorded) as a catch-all term denoting a plethora of musics vying for a toe hold in the burgeoning music market. Swing, above all, signified the dissemination of jazz.

To supply an index of its mass acceptance, one might note that, in 1940, the Glenn Miller Orchestra grossed $630,000 (roughly the equivalent of $5,016,000 in 1987) and played in the following contexts:

1. Commercial radio programs, 52 solid weeks.
2. Hotel engagements, 26 weeks.
3. Theaters, 10 weeks.
4. An average of two record dates a month, with four to six sides cut on each date, for Victor's Bluebird label.
5. Sixteen weeks of one-nighters throughout the nation.

Commenting on these figures, supplied by Miller himself, Downbeat added that they did not include "additional incomes from the publication of original songs, folios, books, methods 'and various other side-profits that roll in to those who
play in the top-flight big bands in America today."

Or, to take another example that predates (and, to a great extent, precipitated) Miller's success, Benny Goodman--following what drummer Gene Krupa described as his leader's "first great triumph at the Palomar [Theater] in Los Angeles and the Congress in Chicago"--returned to New York to play the Paramount Theater as well as his regular job at the Pennsylvania Hotel. The clarinetist remarked, "[W]e had a pretty good idea that the public for real jazz was a big one, and growing all the time. . . . But I don't think that any of us realized how strong a hold it had on the youngsters until a certain day early in March, 1937." Of that day, his first at the Paramount, Goodman recalled:

By three o'clock in the afternoon, eleven thousand, five hundred people had paid their way into the theater, and the total for the first day's attendance was twenty-one thousand. Another thing about that first day which caused talk around the theater was this: The total for the day's sale at the candy counter was nine hundred dollars—which is some kind of a record, too.19

So then, as Hebdige and others observe, swing was conventionalized hot jazz, a broadcast music (palatable even for children), but as such it was especially subject to, it even depended on, aberrant decodings in order to fit into the wide variety of cultural experiences represented by a mass audience. In other words, for jazz to succeed (which at this time meant sell) it had to broaden its base (e.g., it had to be able to accommodate musics as diverse as that produced by, say, Paul Whiteman and Jimmie Lunceford) and restrict its language (e.g.,
limit improvisation, emphasize standard song form, regulate tempos for dancing, and avoid dissonances).

Bebop--modern jazz--was an unintended or accidental effect of the dissemination of swing: a perverse, aberrant, or institutionally unsanctioned reading made possible by the slackness of the broadcast codes of swing. Like the modernist music of Schoenberg or Stravinsky, it decisively cut itself off from the bourgeoisie, and if we take the word of Thelonious Monk, it was to be an unco-optable, immanently authentic jazz. He said, "We're going to create something that they can't steal because they can't play it." Dick Hyman, a contemporary musician still playing hot jazz, explains the bop revolution in the following terms:

Until be-bop . . . jazz still played by the rules of songs. It was improvisations on themes people knew, and people could pick up on them, even if they had never thought songs could be done this way. In the newer music, you don't quite know what's going on until you learn the new language--it's a different repertory, a different length of solos and a different goal in performance. . . . Not to be too blunt, but the music takes itself too seriously now.

In the struggle for what we could call the relegitimation of jazz, bop, perhaps more than anything else, represented a bid for intellectual respectability. Its main competition--the traditional jazz of the New Orleans Revival--represented a bid for historical authenticity, in the narrowest sense of the word. Whereas bop sought to pass itself off as the single, authentic style of jazz, by renewing the musical language of jazz and by changing the social perception of jazz from entertainment ("a barroom atmosphere music") to art, trad jazz
hoped to remotivate the restricted musical language of hot jazz (by, in effect, resurrecting some of its hoariest players, like trumpeter Willie G. "Bunk" Johnson) (JT, 139, 152). Both sides generated plenty of highly polemical rhetoric. Panassié, author of The Real Jazz, championed le jazz hot, and a group of younger critics--Leonard Feather, Martin Williams, and Ross Russell--gambled and won careers betting on the legitimacy of bebop. Most importantly, though, at the very time jazz was seeking intellectual respectability, emphasizing technical facility like it had never done before, and incorporating classical devices of harmony and melody, the discourse of jazz began to rigorously employ the language of musicology; it, too, began to bid for intellectual respectability. "The first book to look closely at the materials and grammar of jazz," Sargeant's Jazz: Hot and Hybrid, was published in 1946, the very same year Charlie Parker recorded his first session for Ross Russell's Dial Records (EJ, viii).

To complete this brief history of jazz, one need only note that Monk was both wrong and right. He was wrong because the cycle of conventionalization and legitimation continued. Cool jazz and hard bop conventionalized bebop, and the so-called free playing of Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, and Cecil Taylor and the modal improvisations of Miles Davis and John Coltrane --perverse readings of the materials of bop--relegitimated jazz. Then jazz bifurcated. Miles Davis conventionalized modal jazz by placing it in an electric context and assigning it a rock beat. The result received the appellation jazz
fusion. The jazz avant garde, although Ornette Coleman and others began to employ electronics, resisted conventionalization; it remained vehemently modern and, therefore, maintained legitimacy. At the present date, although mediations are constantly attempted, it seems likely that this rift (like similar ones in painting, architecture, film, drama, and literature) will remain unreppaired, that the avant garde and popular sectors of jazz will continue to renew themselves through independent cycles of conventionalization and legitimation.

But Monk was also right. "Bebop is," as novelist Xam Wilson Cartié r puts it, "the threat of black music turnin back outsider-black, leavin white wallflowers all over the place." It was not readily imitated, and because it was difficult to listen to, few people wanted to "steal" it. It marked the end of the availability of jazz for mass ownership or mass consumption. Jazz had won a Pyrrhic victory. In becoming a modern music it had successfully thwarted conventionalization, raised its aesthetic value, and effectively ended its popularity. Jazz composers—Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy, Anthony Braxton, and others—cultivating musical ground broken by bebop, faced a dilemma similar to the one which confronted Boulez, Cage, Babbitt, and Stockhausen: whether to cease being modern (i.e., popularize one's art), seek patronage from the wealthy (as did Monk and Parker from the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter) or the State (e.g., a university
position), or, through incessant recording and performing, develop a narrowcast audience large enough to support one's efforts. Of course, no consensus was reached; all three solutions were applied (sometimes by the same musician). Jazz became, and still is, a fragmented music, riven with contradictions, at once disdainful of the masses (but ever anxious to increase and maintain its hard-earned legitimacy) and bitter over its lost popularity. It remains a creation and casualty of modernism, as well as one of its most accurate metaphors.

To summarize, we find that what would later qualify as genuine or legitimate jazz hinged on misreadings made possible when an already legitimated form of jazz was conventionalized. Plus, we observe that, in its emphasis on creative misreading, this interpretation of the history of jazz--accurate or not--provides a model for invention; it suggests that artistic renewal arises with, not before, popularization, co-optation, and conventionalization. Unlike nonfiction writing about jazz, which sought to stabilize its discourse by modeling itself after musicology, and thereby shut down alternative representations, jazz music seemed less interested in, or less capable of, achieving such hegemony. Although successfully legitimated forms of jazz certainly suppressed aberrant or innovative interpretations (bop is the classic example of this), jazz seems particularly acceptant or susceptible to misreadings of its basic materials. Pianist Cecil Taylor claims, "Jazz is the only art form in which you can see four
different generations working together, and see how they're growing." Clearly, this model needs to be generalized and applied to critical writing.

Returning to Sculler's text, we find ourselves in a quandary. Should we accept his writing—a musicological study of early jazz—as an example of the genuine? Obviously, he says we should, and we could certainly find others to agree with him. For instance, Nat Hentoff writes:

As for jazz music criticism as such, the situation appears to me much improved since I first began reading such impressionistic, Old Testament-like oracles of jazz as Hugues Panassié when I was a boy. In the past decade particularly, a nucleus of technically trained critics has finally been developing a durable body of analytical jazz criticism. "I am tired," a Swarthmore professor and jazz collector said recently, "of jazz being treated as metaphor rather than music." The sentimental, semi-mystical, vehemently contentious approach to jazz criticism is outdated... There is also, however, a growing number of listeners who want particularly to know how the music is actually made. The criticism of such musician-writers as Gunther Schuller in America, André Hodeir in France, and Max Harrison in England, among others, has begun to fill this need.

Given our observations about the process by which a system of representation comes to count as genuine, should we accept the testimony of Hentoff? Why not dismiss him as Schuller's accomplice or dupe? Dare we suspect that Schuller's text might be a counterfeit—an imitation of "genuine musicological research," merely passing for "scholarship and serious analysis"? How do we know that Schuller is not deceiving us, perhaps even deceiving himself? Perhaps, without believing in musicology, he is merely playing with it, simulating it, in order to seduce readers. Could he be an amateur passing
for a professional? Is he so overwhelmed with love for jazz, that his desire compels him to pose as, affect all the signs of, a serious scholar?

Strictly speaking, there is no generally accepted name for the study of jazz. "Ethnomusicology," Kerman notes, "is popularly understood to mean the study of non-Western music" (CM, 13). Musicology—which "was originally understood (as Musikwissenschaf still is) to cover thinking about, research into, and knowledge of all possible aspects of music"--

in academic practice, and in broad general usage . . . has come to have a much more constricted meaning. It has come to mean the study of the history of Western music in the high-art tradition. . . . Furthermore, in the popular mind--and in the minds of many academics--musicology is restricted not only in the subject matter it covers but also in its approach to that subject matter. (I say "restricted" rather than "constricted" here, for this approach is not the result of any paring down of an earlier concept.) Musicology is perceived as dealing essentially with the factual, the documentary, the verifiable, the analyzable, the positivistic. (CM, 11-12)

Schuller's text, then, can only imitate the motions of "genuine musicological research." It can cast out or conceal its metaphorical basis, disguise discourse which is generally descriptive or impressionistic, and, thereby, force the merely rhetorical to submit to the authority of science. And it can employ the discourse of science--the dialectic of positivism (liberal humanism)--to define the field of jazz as a rigorously structured system. But it cannot be musicology, precisely because jazz has not been institutionalized as Music; it is not part of the high-art tradition of Western music.

When Schuller states that his "book is directed particularly to the 'classically' trained musician or composer, who
may never have concerned himself with jazz and who cannot respond to the in-group jargon and glossy enthusiasm of most writing on jazz," he necessarily accepts a definition of musicology that labels his own text a counterfeit. If *Early Jazz*, or any other utterance about jazz, is "allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis," it must play the part of discourse that is playing the part of musicology. It must mark itself as a counterfeit of a counterfeit in order to be allowed to pass as genuine. Hence, Schuller faces a mandate which cannot be carried out (except through a trick, by faking). His text must ultimately exclude classical music, for it must demonstrate how jazz differs from classical music. But at the same time, for his text to be taken seriously, it must employ a discourse system which would exclude his object of study, one which was devised for the express purpose of representing classical music.

Schuller has made a deal with jazz. If it will permit musicology to adopt it, colonize it, make love to it, dress it up, etc. (choose or invent a metaphor), then the nagging question of its legitimacy and literacy can be amended. Jazz will gain the analytical language of science and, thereby, order its credentials and increase its desirability. Feather states it well when he wrote:

Many have tried to explain jazz in words; all have failed. But the more persuasive writers and lecturers, impressing their audiences with the subject's validity as material for serious discussion, have drawn into the orbit of jazz appreciation a number of potential converts, willing to listen with a broader mind, a more receptive ear. (p. 19)
By feigning musicological discourse—the representation of music warranted as truth in this episteme—jazzology, a term I label following the example of Cortázar, aims to seduce. It hopes to lure receptive ears. Like all writing about jazz, like all writing, it produces desire. As Stephen Longstreet remarks, in a passage Kennington and Read use as the epigraph to The Literature of Jazz,

There were a raft of books published about jazz history, a lot of them bad, some of them very good as to facts and dates and names; a few were readable, the rest mostly for the fanatics and so packed with names, dates and written either in professors' English or reporters' prose that you had to love the stuff a lot to wade through it. But it all helped, it all made the subject serious because people are impressed by the printed word about anything.27

In a similar vein, Hobsbawm observes that "relatively few [jazz] fans write poetry to or about the beloved," but "when they do, it tends to rely excessively on the magic of names which vibrate only for other lovers."28 Most interesting, proper names, like musical sounds, lack any apparent semantic content. As Eco explains: "The semantic universe of proper names is simply a linguistically poor universe in which there are many cases of homonymy" (TS, 86-87). Strung throughout a text, proper names form a kind of secondary structure. They pose a test, situate the reader vis à vis jazz (or any other object of desire). If he knows the precise reference code to establish who a person is (e.g., can conjure an image: "Oh yeah, Bird and Diz recorded 'Ko Ko' for Savoy on November 26, 1945."), then he passes the test; if the proper name is unknown, the "correct" or normative code unproducible (e.g., "Who's that? Some guy you slept with?"), then the name
connotes but does not denote. Therefore, depending on one's position relative to a particular discourse, the proper name can reinforce cultural ties or effectively designate a barred entrance to a culture or subculture; navigating the proper names in a text becomes analogous to listening to music (navigating musical signs or codes).

In the next chapter, I shall look at the means by which jazzology sought to attain legitimacy, establish a name for itself: which is to say, I shall examine the effect of the conjunction of musicology and jazz. For now, though, I conclude this section by remarking the image which initiated it. We notice that through the machinations of a complex economy, a surprising but inevitable logic from which even Schuller's text could not escape, the body of jazz literature is treated as a counterfeit, or, better, it is conceived as a hermaphrodite: an amalgam of amateur criticism which has passed as (i.e., carries the marks of) both "general descriptive or impressionistic" writing and "scholarship and serious analysis."

Hermaphroditus, one may recall, was the son of Hermes and Aphrodite. One day, while bathing in a fountain, the local nymph, Salmacis, saw him and, immediately, fell in love. He rejected her. At her prayer, however, when she embraced him, the gods united them in a single body.

Although we may question the subsumption of the name Salmacis by the name Hermaphroditus, we could consider the nymph as a precipitant in the metamorphosis of Hermaphroditus,
for the offspring of Hermes and Aphrodite is always already an indeterminable. In his or her name, Hermaphroditus bears an image of duality; differance is played out (created and exhausted) in its space.

By an interesting twist, Hermaphroditus' father--Hermes or Mercury--is associated with the amalgam (an alloy of mercury with another metal), and as the inventor of the lyre (which he fashioned from a tortoise shell and exchanged with Apollo for the caduceus, a symbol of the medical profession), Hermes is also associated with music. He is the messenger of the gods, the trickster, the patron of prose and rhetoric, thieves and lying, and philosophy and "hermetic" knowledge (he is identified with Theuth, the god of writing, and Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, cf. *Diss*, 84ff). His union with Aphrodite (by definition, the goddess of amateurs, and by means of a pun, the goddess of things Afro-), produced an archetypical counterfeit (a word which derives from the French *contrefaire*, to imitate). Hermaphroditus could pass for either male or female, both male and female, and neither male nor female. He should be the god of jazz.

I suspect that I have done violence to Schuller's intentions. I have certainly taken his metaphor places where he would not have it go. By means of a trick, I have twisted it, prompted it to behave improperly, jazized it up. Salmacis is, after all, a literary theorist.
Listen to the beginning of "Folk Forms No. 1," a composition The Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop recorded for Nat Hentoff's Candid record label on October 20, 1960, and one will hear the leader reeling off phrases in rapid-fire bursts, sounding not a little bit harried, giving the following introduction:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. We'd like to remind you that we don't applaud here at the Showplace, or wherever we work. So restrain your applause, and if you must applaud wait 'til the end of the set. And it won't even matter then. The reason is that we are interrupted by your noise. In fact, don't even take any drinks or no cash registers ringing, et cetera. Like to introduce the musicians in the Jazz Workshop: Dannie Richmond, drums; Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone, clarinet, bassoon, oboe, flute, Did I miss anything? Ted Curson, trumpet.

Like to open this set with a composition that's based on a folksong form. Has no title yet, so it'll probably appear on a record someplace titled something like...ah... What could replace opus? Like Opus...Oh, New Series One--Folk Series.29

Do not be deceived, though. The composition introduced, like Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus, the recording on which "Folk Forms No. 1" and three other tunes appeared, was not recorded "live." In the liner notes, Hentoff writes that this album, recorded right after Dolphy and Curson had decided to leave the band, was not even made at the Showplace. He explains:

Location recordings are hazardous, particularly in terms of sound, and so we tried a studio that both Mingus and I feel is perhaps the warmest for small jazz combos in New York--Tommy Nola's Penthouse in the Steinway building. Mingus also decided to set a mood that might resemble a night in the club. That's why his announcements are on
the record, and that's why he wanted the lights turned out during the recording.

Thus, if we trust a record producer's written explanation over an artist's recorded assertion (rendered above as a transcription), and, perhaps most of all, if the reader trusts this now absent writer, then Mingus (whose ashes were poured into the Ganges in 1979), on one of his very best recordings, played to "ladies and gentlemen" who never appeared, much less applauded, at a place where no money was ever rung up on any cash register.

*Mingus Presents Mingus*, pressed and distributed on vinyl discs shaped like large, black coins, manifests every characteristic that postmodern literary theorists assign to records --writing in the broad sense--but normally (as I shall continue to do) discuss only in terms of "records"--writing in the narrow sense--inscribed on rectangular sheets of white paper. Indeed, this particular recording qualifies as exemplary precisely because it so evidently makes apparent the normal functioning of all records, which is to say, by extension, "every species of sign and communication" ("SEC," 314). I shall label it--Mingus' record and the normal functioning of writing--rapsody.

Rapsody, as one might expect, is a variant spelling of "rhapsody," a word Samuel Johnson defined as "any number of parts joined together, without necessary dependence or natural connection." Therefore, it speaks, albeit in an interesting manner, of what are by now two of the most frequently visited
commonplaces of semiotics, the arbitrariness and the iterability of the sign.

Hamlet, for example (III.iv.46-49), back home in Denmark after studying in Germany, speaks to his mother of those who of "sweet religion" make "a rhapsody of words." He, thereby, recalls Luther's criticism of Catholicism as empty ritual or vain repetition. Precocious (and conservative) semiotician that he is, Hamlet calls attention to--he actually accuses his mother of--promulgating that linguistic practice which turns ultimate, metaphysical reality into empty letters, chains of signifiers without transcendental signifieds, strung together like rosary beads to make mere syntax.

Rhapsody combines ῥᾳπτεῖν ("to weave or stitch together") with οἶδε ("song"). Thus, it literally means "the stringing together of poems" (NED) and to "rhapsodize" "basically means in Greek 'to stitch songs together'" (O&L, 13); we would also do well to remember that the English word text comes from textus, fabric, the plural of texere, to weave.

Rhapsody, as Rogers observes, has three main semantic layers. Originally, as one might expect, it referred to an epic poem or part of one "suitable for recitation at one time" (NED). Later it came to signify an omnium gatherum, a miscellany or literary medley "pieced together without close or integral connection" (Rogers, "Shaftesbury," 247). This is the sense implied in Johnson's definition of the term and in his definition of "rhapsodist": "one who writes without regular dependance of one part upon another." Here, though,
with a little imagination one may also sense a diversion in the flow of semantic currency and detect the third meaning of rhapsody as an "effusive outpouring of sentiment" or "uncon- trolled fervour." Holman, synthesizing or, better, fusing all three meanings of the word, states that rhapsody is marked by emotional intensity and "free, irregular form, suggesting improvisation."

In his study of Shaftesbury's *The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody*, Rogers notes that shifting attitudes towards rhapsody provide a register of aesthetic norms throughout literary history, and he credits Shaftesbury with remotivating the term, even with precipitating "the admiring tone which the word picked up in the wake of Romanticism." Of course, in order to argue this point Rogers establishes the negative connotations that Augustans attributed to the term (and which persist in modern usage in the pejorative overtones accorded the epithet rhapsodic). In the subtext of Johnson's definition and in Steele, Pope, and Swift's disparaging employment of the term, he recognizes "'the basic principle of classicism in design,' defined by Sir John Summerson as 'that the design shall be an indivisible unity, so that nothing can be altered or subtracted without destroying the whole, every part being dependent on every other part'" (p. 248). Rhapsody, Rogers declares, is "the direct antithesis of 'a frame,' defined as a fabric made up of 'various parts or members' which support one another." Even though this is highly debatable, a tempting subject for discussion, we shall not pursue this contention
because in his study of Swift's "On Poetry: A Rhapsody,"
Rogers makes a more important discovery, one which he mentions
only in passing--perhaps because it threatens to upset the
very notion of rhapsody itself, to disrupt the economy which
conveniently differentiates rhapsody (always linked with
orality) from its other (always associated with writing).

By means of a pun noticed by Swift, rhapsody suggests a
"rap," that is, a knock on the head (from rhepo, to slap or
smite with the palm of the hand) and, most important, a "rapp,"
that is, "a counterfeit coin, worth about half a farthing,
which passed current for a halfpenny in Ireland in the 18th
century, owing to the scarcity of genuine money" (OED).
Rapsody is, thus, a trope highly appropriate for conceptual-
izing jazz. It signifies the rapp of writing, the placing
into question of concepts such legitimacy and literacy, the
confusion of the genuine and the counterfeit, and the interro-
gation of order.

Towards the end of Young Man with a Horn, Dorothy Baker,
with a dead-pan face that could match Buster Keaton's, has
one of her characters, Amy North, the high-society, girl friend
of the trumpet-playing protagonist, say, "[T]here's nothing
in the world so beautiful and so astonishing as the spectacle
of a really disordered mind."31 One of the funniest passages
in the book (but no match for the sentence where the narrator,
assessing Amy's crumbling relationship with Rick, muses, "If
she did stick it out and become a psychiatrist, it was almost
certain that they'd never go shopping again"--p. 197), it,
nevertheless, typifies a modern reinvestment in, perhaps the ultimate popularization of, the aesthetics of rhapsody. In what we, following Perloff, might call a cool or disillusioned version of the Romantic myth of the individual, modernism associated rhapsody with jazz. *Rhapsody in Blue* is, of course, the most convenient and, arguably, the best example of this pairing, for regardless of its actual ties to "real" jazz of whatever stripe, Gershwin's title announced to the world the congruence of two aesthetics. Plenty of other examples, though, could be produced. For instance, Satie said of jazz, "It shouts its sorrows."32 Or to move ahead in time over half-a-century, Michael Harper, in *Dear John, Dear Coltrane*, included a poem entitled "Rhapsody: Ours." Or dipping back to the Beat Generation, Ginsberg ("Holy the groaning saxophone!") stated of *Howl* and other poems written at about the same time, "A lot of these forms developed out of an extreme rhapsodic wail I once heard in a madhouse," and Kerouac, in *On the Road*, wrote (as always, in the exclamatory mode): "It was remarkable how Dean could go mad and then suddenly continue with his soul . . . calmly and sanely as though nothing happened."33

Indeed, it would be easy to continue in this mode myself, to weave one example after another or show how one author--Kerouac would suit my designs perfectly--stitched "songs" together. But this approach would avoid what needs to be done here: write out (of) the trick of rhapsody, by writing with a text that has employed what we shall call *rapsody*.
(always indeterminable) as a generative trope, a model for writing. Therefore, in order to accomplish my goal, in the next section, I employ parts of three novels by Ishmael Reed to investigate the possibility of rapsodic writing. My analysis takes as its point of departure a pair of references to several contemporary jazz musicians found in the Reed's first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers*. It also, but much later in the essay, examines Barthes's comment that the readerly narrative is comparable to a musical score. A text doubled over, the following section should be taken as an example of one way to do rapsodic writing. It weaves together two argumentative lines, which can be read either together or separately. The comments in brackets, one might notice, serve as a kind of "semi-independent" embellishment of a melody line, or as an improvisation on a standard. Or, if one prefers, I constantly cue up the stylus of one text in order to interrupt brazenly a rather mechanical performance.

Rapsody in Read:
Reed's "The Free-Lance Pallbearers" and Barthes's "S/Z"

When Bukka Doopeyduk, protagonist of Ishmael Reed's first novel, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers*, becomes a star in the "big not-to-be-believed out-of-sight, sometimes referred to as O-BOP-SHE-BANG or KLANG-A-LANG-A-DING-DONG" world of Harry Sam (i.e., in the U.S.A.), a jazz critic from the
Deformed Demokrat--one J. Lapp Swine--writes the following headline:

AFTER BEING STUMPED BY CECIL TAYLOR AND ARCHIE SHEPP, IT DID THIS CRIPPLED MIND SOME GOOD TO SEE OL BONES

Later, several months after playing "to standing-room-only crowds in the Hamptons, Provincetown, Woodstock, and Fremont, Ohio," Bukka receives HARRY SAM'S ultimate accolade--an invitation that makes him turn "somersaults over its contents" (FLP, 83). It reads:

YOU ARE INVITED TO A BAD TRIP
AT THE HARRY SAM MOTEL. MUSIC BY CHET BAKER
FUN, STROBOSCOPIC LIGHTS, HOOPLA HOOPS AND FRANK PRANKS (SMILE)
a driver will call for you at 12:00 A.M.
August 6th, 1945 (FLP, 83)

Swine's headline and Sam's invitation name three actual, historical jazz musicians: a pair of black, East coast musicians and a white, West coast trumpet player. Taken together, they constitute a coded reference to the opposition free jazz versus cool jazz, and if read as ironic, meta-comments on the novel and the political milieu the novel portrays, they reveal Reed's aesthetic. He satirizes Baker (any entertainer who performs at the Harry Sam Motel, that is, at the author's version of the White House, is part of the novel's satiric target) and identifies his artistic aims with two of the leading exponents of what was variously called "avant-garde jazz," "the new thing," or "free jazz," and which in 1967, the year The Free-Lance Pallbearers was published, included such other notables as Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, and Bill Dixon.
[1. Con abbandono. But what if Swine's headline and Sam's invitation merely present readers with a case of homophony? After all, there are plenty of names in FLP which match up with names one can actually find in the phone book of any large city. The reader may even have friends or acquaintances who share these names. Plus, on the book's copyright page there is an anonymous statement that declares: "All of the characters in this book are fictitious and any resemblance to . . ." etc. Perhaps, the indisputable fact that three names within the space of two pages coincide with three actual names listed on the rolls of the musician's union is too good to be true: a remarkable fluke, a fortuitous accident, a magical—homorhythmic or isometric—moment where one set of textual voices and rhythms perfectly synchronize with the voices and rhythms of another set. Textuality, thou art so dadgum exciting! Supreme of the Corporeal World! Thy Being is boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable.

Consider the parenthesis above and the parentheses below—numbered, titled, and set off in brackets for your convenience—as rhapsodic raving, a recurring emotive moment sending shutters of rapture—that is, rupture—throughout this analysis. Sweet felicity! They can be read with the other, non-bracketed line of text; they can be ignored; they can be read instead of the non-bracketed text.]

Admittedly, two rather oblique references to specific musicians in a novel does not establish a moral or an
aesthetic norm, and an ironic reading of those references does not necessarily warrant broad theoretical speculation. More evidence is needed if we are to connect The Free-Lance Pallbearers with free jazz. That evidence is readily available.

[2. Con amabilità. To entertain the notion that three names--Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, and Chet Baker--could not allude to three jazz musicians might seem frivolous, a pedantic, hermeneutical game. But it is far from that, for it touches upon a much larger question which affects our reading, not only of FLP, but of absolutely any text. Namely, if words refer, by what means do readers determine--stop and start--reference? It is a serious question: the rapsody of reading.]

As early as 1952, Reed (born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1938) wrote a jazz column for the Empire State Weekly (Shrovetide, 5), and throughout his career he has alluded to jazz and jazz musicians, as a casual glance through his poetry, his fiction, or his collection of essays, Shrovetide in Old New Orleans, will reveal. He has also written articles specifically about jazz: for example, "Bird Lives" (1973), a review of Ross Russell's biography of Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, Music: Black, White and Blue (1972), a review of Ortiz Walton's work on "Classical American Music" (i.e., jazz), and "The Old Music" (1975), a treatment of
New Orleans music, that draws parallels between early jazz and Voodoo rites.

In addition to manifesting a general knowledge of jazz, when Reed lived in New York, he was well acquainted with the major innovators of free jazz. He writes:

Walking down St. Mark's Place in New York's East Village I was often able to observe key members of several generations of the American "avant-garde," before breakfast, or chat with Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Bill Dixon, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and members of a splendid generation of young painters. (Shrovetide, 111)

Indeed, it is important to emphasize that Reed associated with a large number of artists—musicians, painters, actors, dancers, film-makers, and writers—while in New York (before moving to the San Francisco Bay area), but it is also important to note the particular group of musicians he singles out for specific mention and support. Little more than five months before the publication of FLP, Reed wrote an article for Arts Magazine, entitled "The Black Artist: Calling a Spade a Spade," in which he comments on the Black Arts movement in New York. Here, he discusses the work of LeRoi Jones (later Imamu Amiri Baraka), Joe Overstreet, and Chester Wilson, but fully one-third of this piece is devoted to the observations about the work of Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, and Albert Ayler. He compliments Shepp's staging of a "Jazz allegory Junebug Graduates Tonight" for its hilarious "debunking of Marxist clichés." He recommends "Arkestra" leader, Sun Ra, for his "interstellar bopping," and "his not-to-be-believed theater: costume changes,
monologues, poetry, madness and spell-weaving." And he singles out Ayler—a tenorman whose brief career ended in a mysterious death by drowning in 1970—for praise most redolent of FLP's style. He writes:

Then there's Albert Ayler whose band sounds like a psychedelic Salvation Army troupe. But they ain't begging for nickels or brandishing no tin cups baby, 'cause them cats is hard. Got blood in their eyes as they 'spit up craziness,' honk eschatologically and do the hymnal violin sawing of American broadside music. Their music signals the smoke of eastern cities, the last days of the American empire with freakish fourth of July sounds and scatological street madness. ("Black Artist," 49)

There should now be no doubt that Reed intimately knows and admires jazz and specifically the type of jazz associated with Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp. Couple this with his observation that one of the "glaring problems" facing "recent black poetry," and by extension black writing in general, "is that there isn't as much variety among the critical approaches as there is in the writing the critics are examining" (Shrovetide, 140), and we practically have a challenge to approach his work through a more "experimental" approach.

[3. Con anima. For instance, let us assume that the three proper names in question, like the names on the front covers of recordings currently in print, really do refer. Then what? FLP, as a satire—a referential text supposedly self-conscious and critical of its own referential status—collapses. Here are several reasons. First, we are in the midst of a classic double bind, similar to the one
where the Cretan says, "All Cretans are liars." If we assume the fictiveness of the text, take the disclaimer printed on the copyright page seriously, then there is no satire because the text does not refer. But if we assume that FLP does refer, then it begins with the out-and-out truth that it lies. Someone, told us that all its characters are fictitious, but this is clearly not the case. The book, as promised, cannot be trusted. Its satire is unreliable, undercut by its own (dis)honesty.

Therefore, in the following pages I shall employ a frame such as that provided by commonly accepted ways of organizing free jazz to write about Reed's approach to writing. Throughout this analysis I use FLP as my tutor text, for although Mumbo Jumbo has more explicit references to jazz, it is set in the 1920s. Several cautions, however, are in order. First one from Reed—he asks:

how could somebody look at the black poetry of the last twenty years . . . and say that black poetry is . . . based upon "black speech and music" when an examination would show that the majority of language material is American or English and that the poets and novelists have been influenced by not only music but graphics, painting, film sculpture—all disciplines and all art forms—and write about all subjects?

They [the critics] say music because they are socialist realists and music is the most popular art form of the masses. You can be influenced by music while you're asleep but reading is hard work. Of course listening to Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, and others is hard work, too, but when these critics talk about "music" they don't mean those musicians. (Shrovetide, 140-41)

This statement constitutes both a caution to, and a validation of, this type of investigation. On the one hand, it
validates because it further substantiates what we have already witnessed. Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, and others are, to Reed, musicians wholly set apart from the mass of musicians championed by "socialist realists." On the other hand, this statement also cautions. It reminds us that any work of art results from multiple determinations. For example, it would be just as risky to aver that Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures* (1967) caused Reed to create *FLP* (1967) as it would be to say that Reed caused Taylor's music. Causal factors or influences are simply not the issue here (even though it seems obvious that the relationship between music and fiction is reciprocal, trends in music influencing trends in fiction and *vice versa*). We cannot speak of *FLP* as the literary equivalent of free jazz, or of free jazz as the musical equivalent of Reed's fiction or poetry.

[4. Con ardore. Suppose that we bracket off the statement on the copyright page, assume that someone, a kindly editor perhaps, put it there to protect the ever-contentious Reed. Then, certainly, the names in the book could refer to other names outside *FLP*. If these names were not ambiguous (but how could they not be?), "Cecil Taylor" would be a coded reference to a specific pianist (who never, ever changes) named Cecil Taylor, and "Bukka Doopedyduk" would, of course, refer to Bukka Doopedyduk, someone with whom I have not made an acquaintance. In this version of *FLP*--actually a inconceivable, textual universe--words would
have one and only one referent. There would be a word for every thing (at every moment, in every conceivable presentation), a thing for every word; no slippage of signification would be allowed, no generalization would be possible and, obviously, there would be no writing, much less satire.]

We can, however, imagine the possibility of a poetic shared by FLP and free jazz as a way to talk about Reed's fiction. And because no hierarchical or hegemonic relationship between the making of music and the writing of literature can be demonstrated, we may assume that the discourse of Reed and free jazz may be used to mutually illuminate one another; if texts written about free jazz can be employed to illuminate Reed's texts, then Reed's texts can also be used to talk about (or bring into language) free jazz. Therefore, in the first half of this study I shall look at the form of free jazz (what it is said to be) and employ a list of its commonly accepted characteristics to structure my observations about Reed. In the second half, I shall examine the sociopolitical implications of the free jazz-Reed aesthetic (i.e., what both may be said to signify). Along the way I shall employ Reed's texts as a way to potentially theorize the scene of jazz music.

[5. Con brio. On the other hand, the possibility of ambiguity or multiple signification (one signifier serving multiple signifieds) would also keep FLP from functioning
as a satirical text. For instance if "Chet Baker" can refer to any number of Chet Bakers now living, dead, or soon to be born, then the text cannot possibly have any semblance of a stable, satirical target.}

It may rightly be said that free jazz had its gestation in the early work (mid 1950s) of Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra, but it was the white plastic saxophone of Ornette Coleman that gave it birth. Pynchon certainly fictionalizes this event in V. when he describes McClintic Sphere's debut at "the V-Note":

He blew a hand-carved ivory alto saxophone with a 4 1/2 reed and the sound was like nothing any of them had heard before. The usual divisions prevailed: collegians did not dig, and left after an average of 1 1/2 sets. Personnel from other groups, either with a night off or taking a long break from somewhere crosstown or uptown, listened hard, trying to dig. "I am still thinking," they would say if you asked. People at the bar all looked as if they did dig in the sense of understand, approve of, empathize with: but this was probably only because people who prefer to stand at the bar have, universally, an inscrutable look.

The group on the stand had no piano: it was bass, drums, McClintic and a boy he had found in the Ozarks who blew a natural horn in F. . . . Horn and alto together favored sixths and minor fourths and when this happened it was like a knife fight or tug of war: the sound was consonant but as if cross-purposes were in the air. The solos of McClintic Sphere were something else. There were people around, mostly those who wrote for Downbeat magazine or the liners of LP records, who seemed to feel he played disregarding chord changes completely. They talked a great deal about soul and the anti-intellectual and the rising rhythms of African nationalism. It was a new conception, they said, and some of them said: Bird Lives. 39

Indeed, the term free jazz took its name from Ornette Coleman's landmark album of 1960. Free Jazz, a thirty-six
minute continuous and simultaneous improvisation by two quartets, has been called "perhaps the boldest album in the history of jazz" (101, 391). Martin Williams describes its uniqueness in the album's liner notes:

[N]ot only is the improvisation almost total, it is frequently collective, involving all eight men inventing at once. And there were no preconceptions as to themes, chord patterns or chorus lengths. The guide for each soloist was a brief ensemble part which introduces him and which gave him an area of musical pitch. Otherwise he had only feelings and imagination--his own and those of his accompanists--to guide him.40

Paradoxically, the only fixed requirement of free jazz was free playing. Coleman said, "There is no single right way to play jazz." Reed, for all intents and purposes, could be seconding him when he has the protagonist of Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down declare:

No one says a novel has to be one thing. It can be anything it wants to be, a vaudeville show, the six o'clock news, the mumblings of wild men saddled by demons. (p. 36)

It is hardly shocking, therefore, that both Reed and Coleman have been accused of being, in Reed's words, "crazy dada niggers" (Yellowback, 35), who create "anti-art"--"anti-novels" and "anti-jazz."

[6. Con calore. Is Reed referring to the Chet Baker born Chesney H. Baker on December 23, 1929, in Yale, Oklahoma, or to my next-door neighbor when I used to live in Atlanta? Is he referring to the Chet Baker that Charlie Parker actually admired and chose as his trumpet player, the Chet Baker who played in Gerry Mulligan's piano-less quartet in 1952, or the Chet Baker who entered Rikers Island
Prison to serve time for possession of narcotics in the late 1950s? Or is he, perhaps, not referring to a person at all, but to a received representation of a person. Then, which texts should the reader ignore and which should be taken as especially important?]

For example, when FLP was first published, it was variously called, "another piece of self-indulgence," "impossibly bizarre and wholly directionless," "unsettling and decidedly exhausting," and "diarrhea of the typewriter." Someone in a prescient bit of criticism even wrote, "Ishmael Reed makes poor music--perhaps just practicing--putting down screeches and grunts," with the result being "a very self-indulgent piece of prose that reads as if the author didn't care whether anybody could like or understand it." Someone in a prescient bit of criticism even wrote, "Ishmael Reed makes poor music--perhaps just practicing--putting down screeches and grunts," with the result being "a very self-indulgent piece of prose that reads as if the author didn't care whether anybody could like or understand it."43

[7. Con carita. I might add, calling Reed on the telephone and asking him what he meant by his Chet Baker reference would not stand the reader in any better shape. This would have to be repeated for every word in the book, and it would assume (1) that the functioning of FLP is dependent on Reed's intentions and (2) that his intentions are locatable, retrievable, and transmittable, an assumption now under question.]

Compare the response to Reed's work with the following excerpt from a Down Beat review of an album Coleman recorded prior to Free Jazz:
I have listened long and hard to Coleman's music. . .

have tried desperately to find something valuable in it, something that could be construed valuable. I have been unsuccessful. . . . Coleman's music, to me, has only two shades: a maudlin, pleasing lyricism and a wild ferocity bordering on bedlam. . . . "Beauty" from the Atlantic recording *This Is Our Music* descends into an orgy of squawks from Coleman, squeals from (trumpeter) Cherry, and above-the-bridge plinks from (bassist) Haden. The resulting chaos is an insult to the listening intelligence. It sounds like some horrible joke, and the question here is not whether it is jazz, but whether it is music. (quoted in 101, 374)

The similarity of these dismissals indicates a host of biases (everything from preconceived ideas about what writing and music are, and should be, to rejections that are grounded in ethnocentrism), but it emphatically demonstrates a critical inability (or refusal), to grapple with the central issue of privileged and non-privileged forms. Whether intentionally or not, free jazz and FLP tease out critical assumptions that normally remain unexpressed, if not repressed.

[8. Condolce maniera. The fact is, if one knew all the referents Reed had in mind when he wrote FLP, one would have the mind--be a simulacrum or perfect replica--of Reed; there would be no need for his book.]

As Cecil Taylor argues, free jazz is not just a negative freedom from traditional ideas of harmony and time, but also the positive freedom to structure music in new ways. He states, "This [music] is not a question of freedom as opposed to non-freedom, but rather a question of recognizing different ideas and expressions of order" (101,
The real question, then, is not whether Coleman's "molten, unchained improvisations" are "music," or whether Reed's HooDoo conjurings are "literature." The question is, what kind of music, what kind of literature have these men created, and how can we describe their accomplishments? Answers to this question yield the following outline, which details structural characteristics of the texts of free jazz and Reed.

First, free jazz reworks and extends the language of bebop. In his socio-political analysis of Afro-American music, Blues People, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) reminds his readers that free jazz uses "the music of the forties [bebop] . . . as an initial reference." And Ornette Coleman, discussing his composition "Bird Food," writes the following of Charlie Parker, the patron saint of bebop:

Bird would have understood us. He would have approved our aspiring to something beyond what we inherited. Oddly enough, the idolization of Bird, people wanting to play just like him, and not make their own soul-search, has finally come to be an impediment to progress in jazz.
Reed acknowledges certain references as well. We have already witnessed some of these, but we would not be far off the mark to perceive Mumbo Jumbo, ostensibly a mad-cap detective story about a conspiracy to Knock, Dock, Co-opt, Swing, Bop, and Rock the creative spirit of black people, as one long homage to intellectual and spiritual forebearers. One should also note that in the Introduction to Yardbird Lives, Reed writes that Charlie Parker's formidable creativity and eclecticism inspired his and Al Young's editorial philosophies.  

(10. Con espressivo. Or to say the same thing in a different way, take another tack. Given referentiality, FLP becomes a hopelessly complex web of signifiers which ceaselessly signify. For instance, we must now assume that two words "Chet Baker" refer to a trumpet player named Chet Baker (let us imagine a set of texts representing the man at a given point in his career). But if this is an allowable assumption, then Chet Baker might, among a host of other possibilities, signify cool jazz; cool jazz, in turn, might signify political disengagement; political disengagement might signify a black aesthetic which values engagement; this aesthetic might take us to Cecil Taylor ... and so on and so forth. The point is, for the text to mean anything it must signify and keep signifying (other texts or things --take your pick). When we read phrases like "Chet Baker" or "HARRY SAM," we are prompted to treat them, to employ Barthes's term, as codes. The text cues us to link these
references to culturally received chains of signification.

Once begun, however, this referential process cannot be stopped or easily governed. The text can come to mean—that is, refer to or signify—absolutely anything.

Second, free jazz posits "the liberation of melody from preset chord changes and fixed tempo" (101, 374). If bebop signals the triumph of improvisation based on an eighth note pulse and the chord sequence of a standard popular song, then free jazz signals the abandonment of fixed pulse and chord sequences in favor of improvisation based upon melodic feeling. In it the "right note" is "not the one possible within theoretical limits, but rather the one which sounds right to the individual" (101, 377). Coleman claims, "It was when I found out I could make mistakes that I knew I was onto something," and composer George Russell said, free jazz is first and foremost a music that "poses no rules, no dos and don'ts, but instead offers a limitless variety of possibilities."46

Applied to FLP, this aesthetic of freedom allows for a reading of the novel that views it [actually hears it] as an improvisation. Stated concretely, this means that the novel's first two and one-half pages, a kind of compressed myth of HARRY SAM, an alternative portrait of America in the 1960s, constitute a keynote, tonal center, or melody upon which Reed improvises. The novel's structure arises from the satisfaction of its own internal logic, not from criteria imposed from without (as in theme and
variation). Gunther Schuller, in an article entitled "The Future of Form in Jazz," wrote of this notion from a musical point of view in 1957:

It has become increasingly clear that "form" need not be a confining mold into which tonal materials are poured, but rather that the forming process can be directly related to the musical material employed in a specific instance. In other words, form evolves out of the material itself and is not imposed upon it. We must learn to think of form as a verb rather than a noun. (quoted in 101, 379)

[11. Con fuoco. Hence, to coin something of a tautology, if referentiality is not started, one cannot read, but if referentiality is not stopped a text cannot, in truth, be read; it becomes a mass of over determined codes. To know, then, exactly where to stop and start the text, what signifier to link with another, what reading to legitimate, what reading to deem counterfeit, then, is the real question. It is the question of rhapsody: which seme, which thread, should be pulled or followed?]

Third, free jazz constantly searches for new song structures. The repertory of bebop, with certain notable exceptions, consisted largely of standard popular songs (the stuff of Tin Pan Alley) or, more properly the chord changes to those songs. Thus, when Coleman and Taylor first "loosened up" jazz, there was an accompanying expansion of song structures suitable for jazz treatment. The result was that jazz music began to assimilate African, Indian, classical European, and other "foreign" influences. By the same token, the variety exhibited by Reed's œuvre also indicates a
constant search for new, workable (which is often to say, subvertable) structures of discourse.


For example, take this following passage from *FLP*. It describes the frieze which adorns the hood of Nancy [Cardinal] Spellman's Rolls-Royce. It presents Reed's version of the Christian, or as he calls it, the Nazarene apocalypse.

It showed HARRY SAM the dictator and former Polish used-car salesman sitting on the great commode. In his lap sat a businessman, a Nazarene apprentice and a black slum child. These figures represented the Just. Standing on each side of the dictator were four washroom attendants. In their hands they had seven brushes, seven combs, seven towels, and seven bars of soap, a lock of Roy Rogers' hair and a Hershey bar. Above the figures float Lawrence Welk champagne bubbles. Below this scene tombstones have been rolled aside and the nazarene faithful are seen rising in a mist with their hands reaching out to the figure sitting on the commode. (pp. 45-46)

This parody of a scene from the Book of Revelation, like all parody, like a parasite, feasts off a found or received form. In this case, to use a phrase from *Mumbo Jumbo*, it opposes "2,000 years of probing classifying attempting to make an 'orderly' world" (p. 175). We shall return to this notion.
[13. Con grandezza. Vance Bourjaily summarizes the Mumbo Jumbo:

The book presents jazz as triggering recurrent outbreaks of liberation of the human spirit, coming to us through history from Africa and then from Haiti to New Orleans, always opposed and dreaded by the establishment. It reaches, in the establishment view, a virulence so dangerous to stability in America in the decade between 1920 and '30 that it is necessary to manipulate the country into a financial depression in order to suppress all that joy. Traditional servants in fighting jazz (or "jes' grew," as Mr. Reed called it), the Knights Templar, fail their masters; the Atonists are then willing to support the repressive efforts of a crazy house painter who turns up in Germany. On the side of liberation and magic are voodoo men like Papa LaBas. . . . Mr. Reed hopes that the era of Vietnam and civil rights activism was a rebirth, after long suppression, of "1920-1930. That 1 decade which doesn't seem so much a part of American history as the hidden After Hours of America struggling to jam."47]

Fourth, free jazz extended the emotional palette of music to its logical extreme. It recognized music's potential for expressing the entire gamut of human (and, sometimes, seemingly nonhuman) emotions. Thus, its musicians, according to Baraka,

rely to a great extent on the closeness of vocal reference that has always been characteristic of Negro music. Players . . . literally scream and rant in imitation of the human voice, sounding many times like unfettered primitive shouters. (227)

The free jazz aesthetic, then, is (to the extent that it still functions) not exclusively committed to the production of "beautiful" music. It frequently sounds like a person crying, talking, or laughing, and it frequently sounds ugly, angry, or hostile. Cecil Taylor says:

Anybody's music is made up of a lot of things that are not musical. . . . Hostility's a genuine emotion. Why shouldn't jazz have hostility in it? That should be
the one thing that would make everybody in the United States dig it. Most people in the United States shield their hostility with smiles. Jazz musicians don't bother.48

His attitude echoes Reed's, who in the Introduction of Shrovetide in Old New Orleans, a collection of essays, writes:

I lose fans and friends too because I'm blunt. A heathen, basically, I have cultivated as many enemies as friends. . . . So, unlike many black writers who write autobiographies of the spirit, the body, or the mind, I don't love everybody . . . these people who go around loving everybody say I write out of hurt. I do. Sometimes, maybe. I'm a heathen. A one-man heathen horde. When it hurts I say so and when it feels good I say so, too. (pp. 3-4)

Some of FLP is written out of hurt, like the image of SAM eating children (a satire on the U.S. destroying its youth in Vietnam), some is written out of anger, like Nancy Spellman censoring non-Nazarene world views (Cardinal Spellman's damning "Vodou"), and some is written out of a sense of playfulness ("dem terrible, man-eating Latin roots"), or as Reed puts it in Mumbo Jumbo: "The dazzling parodying punning mischievous pre-Joycean style-play of your Cake-walking your Calinda your Minstrelsy give-and-take of the ultra-absurd" (p. 174).

[14. Con gravità. Mumbo Jumbo, then, could be described as an attempt to represent "jes' grew," a term which we, amending Bourjaily's definition, might call, not jazz, but the spirit which animates jazz, the yeast that made the Jazz Age rise (Mumbo Jumbo, 23). Reed states as much at the beginning of the novel. He writes, "So Jes Grew is seeking
its words. Its text. For what good is a liturgy without a text?" (Mumbo Jumbo, 9.)

Fifth, free jazz attends to the creation of "sound structures." Recognizing that words such as "difficult," "dense," or "intense" are, at best, relative terms, it is, nevertheless, safe to say that free jazz is difficult, dense, and intense. Some call it the "squeak, squawk, and squeal school of jazz." Others say, "It sounds like an orchestra warming up." And even sympathetic critics are apt to write descriptions like the one which labeled John Coltrane's Ascension, "the most powerful human sound ever recorded," or The Great Concert of Cecil Taylor "90 minutes of unrelieved intensity" (101, 380, 358).

[15. Con grazioso. A couple of pages earlier, though, he had declared:

You see, it's not 1 of those germs that break bleed suck gnaw or devour. It's nothing we can bring into focus or categorize; once we call it 1 thing it forms into something else. (p. 7)

Mumbo Jumbo is, therefore, something of a rapsody.]

This inclination to density finds its expression in FLP with Reed's tendency to overwhelm with verbal pyrotechnics. Throughout the novel, verbiage is heaped upon verbiage, and the result gives the impression that Reed effortlessly luxuriated in his ability to spin out words—to rap or to jive. Yet, paradoxically, perhaps because satiric targets give focus, the novel also produces the impression
that Reed was in control, even when in the midst of what feels like fever pitched improvisation.

[16. Con gusto. Through this thesis I intend to make two broad points about Reed's fiction which I shall only sketch out here. One, it has all the features of rhapsody. Two, it demonstrates writing with the trope of rhapsody. Rhapsody signifies writing which supposes and consequently maintains the opposition genuine/counterfeit as well as the closely associated opposition orality/literacy. Its homophone, rapsody, signifies writing which problematizes or calls into question the oppositions assumed by rhapsody. Rapsodic writing, then, represents one way to employ jazz as a model for writing.]

Sixth, free jazz "refunctions" the old music of New Orleans, that is, it remotivates an old form—the music of Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton—"'produced' in answer to certain social needs," and makes that old form serve new social needs. More specifically, by deemphasizing solos and by emphasizing collective improvisation, free jazz marks the development of a music which has consciously investigated its own past, but, at the same time, one which consciously addresses the issues of its present (especially those issues associated with the term "civil rights").

The term "refunction," which is a translation of Brecht's term "umfunktionierung," accurately describes Reed's stated intention to treat "tradition as a contemporary
function" (Shrovetide, 64). Viewed from a specifically literary perspective, FLP refunctions the satiric tradition, that begins with Archilochus and runs through Rabelais and Sterne, for use in an urban, technological society. (Reed explains that FLP began as a political satire on Newark but quickly expanded). Generically it revises Candide. Yellow Back Radio revamps the western. And as I have already mentioned, Mumbo Jumbo reworks the detective story. Viewed from a more idiomatic perspective, though, FLP and Yellow Back Radio and Mumbo Jumbo refunction the discursive materials of voodoo to produce fiction (and poetry). That is, by employing the language of Vodou or Vodoun (a word with Dahomean and Togo origins meaning "the unknown"), Reed remobilizes a system of signification which literally gives him a voice (Shrovetide, 9).

[17. Con lancio. To prove that Reed's fiction shares the characteristics of rhapsody one would, of course, have to produce the characteristics of rhapsody and then show how these are present in FLP, Mumbo Jumbo, or Yellow Back Radio. I do not plan to do this, for the simple reason that such a demonstration would tend to be as mechanical, as facile, and as boring as showing that Reed's fiction manifests all the features of free jazz.]

Incidentally, to bring this point full circle, it could also be claimed that both Reed and jazz appropriate and transvalue exactly the same source materials. Jazz also
refunctions voodoo. As Reed and others have stated, Vodoun "is based upon the belief that the African 'gods,' or loas, are present in the Americas and often use men and women as their mediums." In the United States, however, Vodoun became known as "HooDoo," "a word which appeared in about the 1890s, when Marie Laveau, the First HooDoo Queen, held power in New Orleans" (Shrovetide, 10).

In New Orleans, one of the forms it [HooDoo] took was what we call "Jazz." . . . The HooDoo shrines and the jazz shrines are in the same neighborhood, suggesting a possible connection. The "HooDoo" guide book says that "jazz" is based upon VooDoo ritual music. I'm thinking of all of the Musicians called "Papa" [Louis Armstrong was nicknamed "Pops"]; it was the one ritual in which the "papa" or the "King" told people when to stop playing. (Shrovetide, 10, 28)

In another passage, Reed writes, "The instruments in the old music substitute for the spirits who possess the human hosts in a ceremony" (Shrovetide, 65). This suggests one reason why Albert Ayler and Sun Ra employed album and song titles like the following: Spirits Rejoice, "Ghosts," Witches and Devils, and Angels and Demons at Play. It seems that neo-HooDoo jazz and the neo-HooDoo literature of Reed paradoxically learned the lesson of moving forward in time by going backwards in time.

[18. Con alcuna licenza. Nevertheless, since I am not sure that you trust me, I have listed some characteristics of rhapsody. They are taken from two articles: Pat Rogers' aforementioned "Shaftesbury and the Aesthetics of Rhapsody" and Frederick Erickson's "Rhetoric, Anecdote, and Rhapsody: Coherence Strategies in a Conversation Among
Black American Adolescents," an article which, by the way, is dedicated "to the memory of Alan P. Merriam." Rhapsody, then, has these features:

1. Contains passages of emotive, highly wrought, utterance.

2. If oral, then an interactional construction produced through a close engagement between performer and audience, often through a dialogue of call and response. If written, then an overtly dialogical effect of polynarration. A tendency towards one of two extremes:
   a. Slickness: studied insincerity and manipulation which dazzles by brilliance and wit.
   b. Soul: apparently unstudied, heart-on-the-sleeve sincerity in self-disclosure or pathetic evocation, which moves the reader to empathy, pity, or moral outrage. (Erickson, 87)

3. Narrational or performance units often consist of episodes built in "a crescendo of pacing, volume, and emotional force toward a culminating climax," after which a new episode begins at a lower level of intensity.

4. Sentence structure tends towards a staccato pattern.

5. Direct invocation and apostrophe is common.

6. Frequent repetitions: "parallelism and listing devices abound."

7. Neologisms employed.
8. Argumentation by anecdotes.

9. Organization by topoi (commonplace topics which function as resources for solidarity between author and audience) stitched together.
   a. Semantic connection--metaphorical hinge points--of similarity and contrast from one anecdote to the next.
   b. Connections of semantic and rhetorical function across sets of utterances. (p. 97)

10. The underlying point of prosographic narration is not stated explicitly and does not seem to have been a full-fledged proposition. Absence of framing devices.]

Seventh, free jazz emphasizes group improvisation. My last point stated that free jazz refunctions the music of old New Orleans, but only in passing did it mention collective improvisation--the means by which this is accomplished. This point should not be passed over lightly, though, for as Baraka notes, it is this stylistic innovation that "restored improvisation to its traditional role of invaluable significance" (p. 225). In his liner notes to Change of the Century, Coleman puts it thus:

Perhaps the most important new element in our music is our conception of free group improvisation. The idea of group improvisation, in itself, is not at all new; it played a big role in New Orleans' early bands. The big bands of the swing period changed all that. Today, still, the individual is either swallowed up in a group situation, or else he is out front soloing, with none of the other horns doing anything but calmly awaiting their turn for their solos. Even in some of the trios and quartets, which permit quite a bit of group improvisation, the final effect is one that is
imposed beforehand by the arranger. One knows pretty much what to expect.

When our group plays, before we start out to play, we do not have any idea what the end result will be. Each player is free to contribute what he feels in the music at any given moment.\(^2\)

[19. Con malinconia. Suffice it to say, I could now (but will not) go on to show how these characteristics of rhapsody function in Reed's fiction. The purpose of such an exercise would be to valorize rhapsody, invert the opposition that conventionally structures it. This is exactly what Rogers and Erickson do in their respective essays. Erickson concludes with the following paragraphs:

In conclusion, then, we have shown that the conversation of the black teenagers in the discussion presented, which at times appeared disconnected, illogical, and difficult to follow to the white American group leader . . . in fact evidences a most rigorous logic and a systematic coherence of the particular, whose internal system is organized not by literate style linear sequentiaity but by audience/speaker interaction. In addition, consistent aesthetic criteria in persuasion are apparent in patterned verbal reactions of the audience to successive main speakers.

One can see the present analysis as doing for vernacular black American discourse structure what Labov (1971) did for vernacular black English grammar. This analysis demonstrates that in this discourse style we are confronted not with a substandard variant of American middle class discourse but with a fully developed, internally coherent, and (in in-group communication) entirely effective rhetorical system. (pp. 151-52)]

Admittedly, this all important innovation cannot find its purest expression in the context of a solo performance by a musician or novelist, unless, for instance, one admits the collaboration of author, editor, publisher, and printer as a "group improvisation." But a knowledge of the primacy
of group improvisation in free jazz should make one doubly aware: first, of the essentially oral quality of Reed's fiction (it seems designed to be read aloud, performed), and second, of the novel's frequent use of double-voiced discourse (which often approximates a call-and-response type effect). Both qualities are observable in this selection from FLPe:

At the foot of this anfractuous path which leads to the summit of Sam's Island lies the incredible Black Bay. Couched in the embankment are four statues of RUTHERFORD BIRCHARD HAYES. White papers, busted microphones and other wastes leak from the lips of this bearded bedrock and end up in the bay fouling it so that no swimmer has ever emerged from its waters alive. Beneath the surface of this dreadful pool is a subterranean side show replete with freakish fish, clutchy and extrasensory plants. (And believe you me, dem plants is hongry. Eat anything dey kin wrap dey stems around!!) (pp. 2-3)

There are two easily identifiable narrative voices here, and it should be noted that they play off each other. The voice that speaks a word like "anfractuous" (one of those words with "terrible Latin roots") sets us up for an antiphonal voice that says words like "hongry." Or, to choose another example, Bukka has at least three voices that are constantly in a state of dialogic tension: (1) the voice of the ingenue (the "square" who is always "the last one on the block to know"), (2) the voice of a "hip" Bukka, able, when he wills, to do "the whole crying-the-blues repertory" (p. 26), and (3) the voice of the narrator--Reed's persona or the voice of a mature, post-apocalyptic Bukka. The point is, one may regard FLPe as a collective improvisation after all--one in
which Reed generates different voices to sometimes clash and
sometimes harmonize with one another.

[20. Con malizia. Take my word for it. I could do
this for Reed! I could play the open-minded liberal, demon-
strate how at first glance his texts appear fragmented, the
incoherent ravings of a black man mad at the whole death-
dealing-white-world, but upon closer analysis reveal them-
selves (in all splendor) as fully developed, internally
coherent, and entirely effective as a rhetorical system.
I could show how his rhapsodies are as subject to analysis
as any composition improvised by Cecil Taylor and Archie
Shepp.]

Heretofore, I have discussed the major structural
elements of free jazz and attendant expressions of those
elements in Reed's work. We now turn to the sociopolitical
implications of the free jazz aesthetic. In outline form,
the music signifies the following: (1) a rejection of the
"cool" aesthetic, (2) a rejection of Western ideas and
values (specifically the "American way of life"), (3) a
restoration of Afro-American art to "its valid separation
from, and anarchic disregard of, Western popular forms,"
and (4) a return to ancient and pre-Christian rituals
(Baraka, 225). Naturally, these points, like the others I
have made, overlap. Plus, they can be illustrated by re-
course to any Afro-American art of the '60s. But the partic-
ular way these trends received their expression, that is,
the way they are encoded, in free jazz and Reed's fiction merits consideration.

[21. Con moto. Fact is, any time a critic coins a thesis in the form "X is like Y" (A Reed is like a rhapsody), you can rest assured that evidence, whether convincing or not, will be produced. Trust me, I will always say I have found exactly what I claim I was looking for.]

Frank Kofsky writes of the change that occurred in jazz when the '40s became the '50s (when bop became cool) and, thus, describes the background from which free jazz would vividly emerge in 1959. His portrait of cool jazz goes a long way towards accounting for Reed's antipathy for Chet Baker.

The jazz style that began to emerge as bebop went under was entirely in keeping with the character of the early Cold War period. Even the name of the style itself—cool—reflected the change. . . . As a style, cool was anything but that [i.e., engaged]; it was the quintessence of individual dis-engagement. If you want to hear the difference, compare a solo by the father of bebop trumpet, Dizzy Gillespie, to one from the cool period by the then-idolized but now almost forgotten trumpeter Chet Baker.53

Consequently, when Reed satirizes Baker (in 1967), one of his targets is most likely socio-political dis-engagement, the notion that one can extricate oneself from ideology. Cool jazz—which was ultimately a redaction of the basic materials of bop, a more or less conscious attempt to legitimate, "whiten," or "bleach out" an essentially black musical form—was, above all, a music of detachment. It, not bebop,
correlates most readily with attitudes expressed in writings of the "Beat Generation."

Both [cool jazz and beat writing] celebrated the virtues of passivity and withdrawal—we should today call it dropping out—over those of active engagement. To display emotion within either the cool or beat milieus was at once to brand oneself as hopelessly square. (Kofsky, 32)

Therefore, to coin an analogy, cool was to the beats as free jazz was to Reed.

[22. Con rapine. In S/Z Barthes observes, "The area of the (readerly) text is comparable at every point to a (classical) musical score," and a little later he declares that "the readerly text is a tonal text (for which habit creates a reading process just as conditioned as our hearing . . .)"] (S/Z, 28, 30).

The unity of the readerly text, he maintains, "is basically dependent on two sequential codes: the revelation of truth and the coordination of the actions represented." For Barthes the hermeneutic (revelatory) code corresponds to melody: to "what sings, what flows smoothly, what moves by accidentals, arabesques, and controlled ritardandos through an intelligible progression" (p. 29). Like a melody, the hermeneutic enigma, which urges the reader to keep reading (decoding), is predicated on "suspended disclosure" or "delayed resolution," and like a fugue, the classic or readerly narrative contains "a subject, subject to an exposition, a development (embodied in the retards, ambiguities, and diversions by which the discourse prolongs the mystery),
a stretto (a tightened section where scraps of answers rapidly come and go), and a conclusion." The proairetic (action) code corresponds to harmony. It sustains the narrative by bringing "everything together" in "the cadence of familiar gestures."

But Reed not only satirizes the stance of cool, he satirizes the whole Western-Christian-technological world view represented by HARRY SAM; he wants to "humble Judeo-Christian culture" (Shrovetide, 133) by creating disruptivist fiction. He writes, "I think that the Western novel is tied to Western epistemology, the way people in the West look at the world."

[23. Con slancio. Barthes declares: "to unlearn the readerly would be the same as to unlearn the tonal" (p. 30). We might add, apropos of S/Z, interrupting the hermeneutic and proairetic codes is the discourse equivalent of interrupting (undoing) tonality. If Balzac's Sarrasine is analogous to classical music, say, Mozart's The Magic Flute, then Barthes's S/Z is analogous to atonal music, say, Boulez's Pli selon pli. By interrupting the two codes which syntagmatically unfold according to a "logico-temporal order" and emphasizing the semic, cultural, and symbolic codes--the paradigmatic codes which "establish permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraint of time"--Barthes produces, out of Sarrasine, a modern, which is to say, a nonvectorized, tabular text. He writes:
The five codes mentioned, frequently heard simultaneously, in fact endow the text with a kind of plural quality (the text is actually polyphonic), but of the five codes, only three establish permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraint of time (the semic, cultural, and symbolic codes); the other two impose their terms according to an irreversible order (the hermeneutic and proairetic codes). The classic text, therefore, is actually tabular (and not linear), but its tabularity is vectorized, it follows a logico-temporal order. It is a multivalent but incompletely reversible system. What blocks its reversibility is just what limits the plural nature of the classic text. These blocks have names: on the one hand, truth; on the other, empiricism: against—or between—them, the modern text comes into being. (p. 30)

If Barthes is correct, then the modern narrative, and Reed's fiction is as good an example of this as any, could be conceptualized as a classic narrative coming apart—unravelling—at the semes. A rapsody: between truth and empiricism, it works the signifiers of the classic text to show (1) how they are stitched together (by reading) and (2) how they, to create a pun by using Black English Vernacular, always mean more than they semes.]

Accordingly, Reed opts to create a literature—neoHoo-Doo fiction and poetry—incommensurate with Western ideology. In addition to this, he interprets free jazz as anti-classical, oppositional music congruent with his own program.

[24. Constrepito. Hawkes writes: "This art—an art of signifiers, not signifieds, can be said to be truly modern, whether its modernity manifests itself in jouissance or jazz (and leaving aside the question of a philological or semantic connection between the two terms)" (Structuralism and Semiotics, 121).]
Reed is not alone in this reading of jazz. Baraka, discussing jazz musicians' utilization of European classical music, declares:

Taylor and Coleman know the music of Anton Webern and are responsible to it intellectually, as they would be to any stimulating art form. But they are not responsible to it emotionally, as an extra-musical catalytic form. The emotional significance of most Negro music has been its separation from the emotional and philosophical attitudes of classical music. (Baraka, 229-30)

This desire for (or reading of) separation is grounded upon a belief that certain musical structures are inherently bound up in Western ideology. Rejecting Webern is, therefore, tantamount to a symbolic rejection of, the ideology which produced and institutionalized him (and, by implication, the entire Western, musical tradition).

[25. Con tenerezza. To be a little more specific, the rhapsodic text, like the rap, the indeterminable coin, actually owes its existence to the scarcity of signifiers; it makes something of shared signification, the fact that there are fewer words than things. Jonathan Swift, as we have seen, did this in the title of his poem, "On Poetry: A Rhapsody." Indeed, satire, Reed's fiction not withstanding, has always done this, capitalized on ambiguity. From Archilochus to the present day, satirists have assumed—even emphasized—the arbitrariness of the sign; they have relied on words functioning as codes: codes "not in the sense of a list, a paradigm that must be reconstituted," but as "a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures"
which venture "out of the text" (S/Z, 20). They have banked on the possibility of remotivating words, making them turn or trope in directions their users never intended.]

Free jazz's "anarchistic disregard of Western forms" signals an increased awareness of the workings of the marketplace and a willful refusal to be assimilated into mainstream culture. If bebop, as pianist Thelonious Monk says, can be described as music "they can't steal because they can't play it," then free jazz could be described as music they wouldn't steal because they wouldn't listen to it.54 Bebop waged war with HARRY SAM by attempting to seize the means of musical production, but as Archie Shepp acutely observes—when he says, "You own the music and we make it"—this tactic was ultimately misguided and politically ineffectual (Kofsky, 12). The only solution is to "own" the music, or art, one makes, and to do that one must not only wage war with HARRY SAM at the level of production, but on the levels of distribution and consumption as well.

[26. Con tutta forza. Still, I am somewhat uncomfortable with this formulation. Given all the evidence I have been able to gather, Reed, like Lucian, Rabelais, Sterne, Swift, Wyndham Lewis, and all those other crazy satirists, has a point he hopes to convey. He is not just rapping, drifting on some logic of the signifier. In Mumbo Jumbo, as Bourjaily notes, he wants to say something about the Civil Rights Era, and he does so by interpolating images
from that period into the seams of a loosely structured detective story set in the Jazz Age, which satirizes white America's attempts to co-opt black American joie de vivre. Along the way, we get hilarious portraits of Carl Van Vechten (Hinckle Von Vampton), jazz magazines, black nationalists, and so on. But here—as in FLP when he writes "Cecil Taylor," "Archie Shepp," or "Chet Baker"—Reed expects that his words will be decoded "properly," not that some smart-ass critic will come along and mess around with his words.

On the level of production and consumption, free jazz and Reed battle SAM (Western ideology) by talking in code. Both set up situations (eg., a concert or novel) where there is the possibility of scandalizing a "square" audience--either through assaultive techniques or through laughing behind the backs of the naive--and getting through to—that is, communicating or communing with—a "hip" audience. Of course, this is common fare for satire and jazz.

[27. Con vaghezza. Wait a minute, though! If Reed has a point, so do I! It is the same point I made earlier regarding Mingus Presents Mingus. It goes like this: rhapsody turns on the possibility of rhapsody. For Reed's texts to function in the way he intended, they have to be able to function in ways he did not intend. Finally, the fact that Reed cannot control readings, delimit his semes, makes reading possible.]
On the level of distribution and consumption, free jazz and Reed battle SAM by establishing networks for the dissemination of products with limited commercial appeal. These networks parallel, and hence, bypass the censorious capitalist circuit (Noise, 138-40). Lyons states that the precursors of these quasi-union groupings "were the brotherhoods and 'secret societies' of early New Orleans, which yielded the first era of musical collectivism" (101, 384). The two major examples of such cooperatives in jazz are the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), founded in Chicago in 1965, and the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association (JCOA), first organized in New York in 1959 as the Jazz Composers' Guild (charter members were Bill Dixon, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Paul Bley, Carla Bley, George Russell and Archie Shepp), and later reorganized, by Carla Bley and Michael Mantler, as the JCOA (1966). Carla Bley describes her organization as a "Wildlife Preserve protecting . . . possibly extinct music." A similar claim could be made for Yardbird Publishing company, a corporation founded by Reed in 1972, "to serve as an outlet for Afro-American writers and the growing number of Asian and Chicano poets" (Shrovetide, 113).

[28. Con velocità. Or stated differently, for Mumbo Jumbo to function as a text, it has to be able to function in the absence of both author and audience, addressee and addressees. Writing, whether on vinyl, paper, or any other medium, supposes absence. "A written sign," Derrida explains
in "Signature Event Context," "is proffered in the absence of the addressee" ("SEC," 315). But he adds, this absence is not an extension of "the field and powers of a locutionary or gestural communication," a presence merely distanced or delayed, since in order for the structure of writing to be constituted "this distance, division, delay, différence must be capable of being brought to a certain absolute degree of absence" ("SEC," 311, 315). In other words, Mumbo Jumbo has to remain "legible despite the absolute disappearance of every determined addressee in general for it to function as writing, that is, for it to be legible. It must be repeatable--iterable--in the absolute absence of the addressee or of the empirically determinable set of addressees."

Thus, this literature and this music was and is wildly syncretistic, representing a blending (but not, necessarily a reconciliation) of multifarious elements. Both resist prescriptions that would dictate their movements. Reed makes this position explicit when he states his opposition to "the Axis," which he describes as

that tacit alignment between "black nationalists," "black revolutionaries," "white radicals," and "white liberals" which views the Afro-American writer as a kind of recruiter for their rather dubious political programs. (Shrovetide, 72)

Finally, then, Reed and free jazz collect and chronicle "cultural icons that were stolen, spirited, and transplanted from Africa to the Carib and the U.S." Both return to ancient, pre-Christian sources, ultimately African in origin --but which found unique expression in the culture of old
New Orleans—in order to refunction them—make them American.

And both create unique Afro-American art, with the emphasis on the American part of that phrase. Cecil Taylor says:

What any musician must do, and this is why most white musicians fail in jazz, they never come to grips with themselves and their own musical traditions. They always get involved in competing. What they should do is recognize the function that they have in a jazz group and to function out of it with the whole history of America which is theirs. That's what America is. All these people. And to know what to do with all these things, blend them and make them go on, that's what creating the new music is about. (Goldberg, 222-23)

[29. Con wrapping. Reed states the case well when he writes, "This is the country where something is successful in direct proportion to how it's put over; how it's gamed."]

Notes


3Sargeant, in Jazzmen, p. 339. This passage from Jazz: Hot and Hybrid was deleted in the 1964 edition of this work. Adorno, "Perennial Fashion--Jazz," p. 121.


John Alan Haughton, "Darius Milhaud," *Musical America*, January 13, 1923, in *Jazzmen*, p. 310. Schuller notes: "I am certain that this particular recording of 'Aunt Hagar's Children' [one made in 1921 by the Original Memphis Five] was one of several jazz records Darius Milhaud took back with him to Paris in 1922. It was as a result of his encounter with jazz during his visit to America (to be guest conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra) that Milhaud composed his famous jazz-influenced masterpiece, *La Création du Monde*" (EJ, 186). In the 1950s, pianist Dave Brubeck studied composition with Milhaud, and thus the composer's influence fed back into American jazz.


Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (New York: Penguin, 1976), in *Sub*, 149. Hebdige notes Nochlin's characterization of the fin-de-siecle dandy "as being obsessed with the small details rather than with large sartorial gestures."


Fiske, p. 87. Subsequently cited by author's name in the text.

Basil Bernstein, in Fiske, pp. 74-78. My study is obviously implicated by this statement, since, for it to receive the sanctions of an academic institution or the approbation of scholars, it must validate--legitimate--the elaborated codes of my discipline.

Lyons, p. 94. Subsequently cited as 101.


20 To envision bebop as a willful misreading of swing, one need only recall the case of Lester Young, an icon of aberrance: the way he held his tenor saxophone, the ease with which he navigated the transition to bop, and the enormous influence he exerted on the young Charlie Parker.

21 Shapiro and Hentoff, p. 341.


24 De Koenigswarter, who took her title from her marriage to Baron Jules de Koenigswarter, a hero of the French Resistance, is the daughter of Nathaniel Charles Rothschild, the British banker. According to a Time cover story on Monk, she "abandoned the aseptic, punctual world of her family for the formless life of New York's night people. In 1955 she acquired undeserved notoriety when Charlie Parker died in her apartment. . . . From then on though, Nica cut a wide swath in the jazz world." n.a., "Music: Jazz," Time, Feb. 28, 1964, pp. 84-88.


26 Hentoff, The Jazz Life, p. 250.

27 Kennington and Read, p. iii.

28 Hobsbawm, p. 12.

29 Charles Mingus, "Folk Forms No. 1," Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus, Candid, 9005, n.d.

the HCDM, and the OED. I note specific citations parenthetically in the text.


35 Chet Baker died while this chapter was in revision.

36 101, 373-74. Although free jazz is sometimes called "avant-garde jazz" or "the new thing," I exclusively employ the term "free jazz" because it readily distinguishes this music from the work of musicians who could rightly be considered avant-garde but not "free," eg., Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, most Charles Mingus and Herbie Hancock, Eric Dolphy, or John Coltrane (excepting his late work and, especially his free jazz opus Ascension). Also, as a point of information, it should be mentioned that Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, and Bill Dixon are considered as constituting the "first wave" of New Thing players; Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders, and others form the "second wave."

37 In musical terminology, homophony refers to "music in which one voice leads melodically, being supported by an accompaniment in chordal or a slightly more elaborate style. Also music in which all the voices move in the same rhythm" (HCDM).

38 Ishmael Reed, "The Black Artist: Calling a Spade a Spade," Arts Magazine, 41 (May), 48-49.


40 Martin Williams, liner notes to Ornette Coleman, Free Jazz, Atlantic, SD-1364, 1960.
41 Ornette Coleman, Change of the Century, Atlantic, AT-1327, n.d.

42 The first citation is from Andrew Fetler, "Three First Novels: Contrasts," Boston Globe, 25 January, n.p.; the next two are from "1985," Times Literary Supplement, 9 January, p. 31; the last quotation is from "The Free-Lance Pallbearers," Kirdus Reviews (15 September), 1163.


44 The seven points of my outline represent a reworking of Jones (Baraka), pp. 224-27; and 191, pp. 373-74. In this paragraph I quote Baraka, p. 225; JT, p. 235; and Coleman's liner notes to Change of the Century. Baraka subsequently cited parenthetically in the text.


47 Bourjaily, p. 45.

48 Taylor, in Goldberg, pp. 213, 217.


50 Margaret A. Rose, Parody (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 4-5.


52 Coleman, Change of the Century.

53 Frank Kofsky, p. 31. Kofsky subsequently cited parenthetically in the text.

54 Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, p. 341.

The word jazz in its progress toward respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music.

--F. Scott Fitzgerald

"Now, Mingus, here's how to save yourself from depending on what rich punks think and critics say about jazz, true jazz, your work. By my reckoning a good jazz musician has got to turn to pimpdom in order to be free and keep his soul straight. Jelly Roll Morton had seven girls I know of and that's the way he bought the time to write and study and incidentally got diamonds in his teeth and probably his asshole. He was saying, 'White man, you hate and fight and kill for riches, I get it from fucking. Who's better?'"
--Fats Navarro to Charles Mingus

Militant memories: For months, years after his passing Double would appear through my sleep to bump a lesser dream, still bopping with the armed resistance of his dedication to "jazz" --which he said was "two, say three broad crooked jumps off to the side of the mainstream straight and narrow, out to where sound becomes sight, as it should be!"

--Xam Wilson Cartiér

I was a dandy, oh, yes, I was; it had its political significance too--foppery is always a calling card of the opposition --but not only that: it also had something to do with the myth, the myth of youth, that myth of myths.

--Josef Skvorecky

True creativity lies with the foreigners, and culture is on the side of those who live on the margins of culture without living with it . . . the metics.

--O. Revault d'Allones

Chasse Beaux

We should not be surprised that the entry of jazz into written language--one example of its passage from the Imaginary realm (the realm of undifferentiated images) to the
Symbolic Order (which functions according to the structuralist principle of difference)—marked a site where the work of amateurs (love's labors) "was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis." Lacan states that the phenomenon of love operates precisely at the junction of the Imaginary and the Symbolic," and Ulmer, following Lacan's lead, notes "that in ordinary criticism the critic (unconsciously) ... relates to the object of study as to a love-object." This being the case (and working off Lacan's much discussed theory of the mirror stage of child development), it follows that amateur criticism identified with jazz and brought it into the vocabulary of this culture by projecting or transferring its own image-system onto its object of fascination. What amateur criticism loved in jazz was in fact its own image; what this culture saw reflected in amateur representations of jazz was ultimately itself. This is why amateur criticism "was allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis." It actively participated in reinforcing (perhaps even in determining) what Althusser called the ideological formations by which a culture recognizes itself. By accurately mirroring back cultural perceptions of jazz, amateur criticism (unconsciously) focused in on (or, rather, gave voice to) the very set of images this culture used to define itself. Contrary to what Schuller maintains, then, the relative success—the acceptability—of "well-meaning amateur criticism" was attributable not to the "humble, socially 'unacceptable' origin
of jazz" or "to the widely held notion that a music improvised by self-taught, often musically illiterate musicians did not warrant genuine musicological research," but to the fact that amateur critics accepted, usually without question, a system of discourse which functioned according to the structuralist principle of difference: more particularly, a system which, finally, assumed that the meanings of words such as "amateur," "humble," "unacceptable," "self-taught," and "illiterate" were self-evident and essentially unchanging. "Success," Barthes says, "requires a complicity of institutions" (GV, 130). Amateur criticism—like musicology and ethnomusicology—grounded its discourse on the very binary oppositions which enabled the dominant ideology to maintain its hegemony. Its complicity in upholding key, naturalized metaphors—the result of a shared system of discourse not a conspiratorial act of some semi-conscious, collective will—insured that its descriptions of jazz would be countenanced by "genuine musicology"; however, its inability or, in some cases, its unwillingness to mask love and speak the language of science insured that its descriptions would not be equated with "genuine musicology."

As we saw in the last chapter, the machinations of love implicate Early Jazz just as surely as they entangle and empower the efforts of critics that Schuller labels amateur. Yet, introducing love into Schuller's discourse—identifying how his desire to share "the excitement and beauty of this [jazz] music" (EJ, ix) leads him to pass off his discourse
as an example of "genuine musicological research"—probably arises resistance (or, as the case may be, delight) in many readers, for it unsettles or subverts the conventions of traditional scholarly—that is, musicological—discourse. It introduces "into the Symbolic Order of meaning and law the pre-social or extra-social energies of the Imaginary" ("Discourse of the Imaginary," p. 67).

Jazz is always conceptualized by this trope of illicit conjunction. It is always understood as the place, the juncture—this next clause can almost be sung to the tune of "Basin Street Blues"—where the imaginary and the symbolic meet ("way down in New Orleans, the land of dreams").

Recalling Barthes declaration "that the scholar's choice is finally between two styles—the plain (ecrivance—'clarity, suppression of images, respect for the laws of reasoning'), or the rhetorical, that is, writing (écriture). . . 'the play of the signifier!'"—we reach an obvious conclusion regarding Schuller's text: one I have coyly forestalled. Like Hermaphroditus rebuffing Salmacis, Early Jazz resists all my attempts to embrace it, portray it as a labor of love, "the play of the signifier," because Schuller opts to write in, to feign, a plain style; his work succeeds by employing what Barthes calls "the regular discourse of research," "the scientific code, which protects but which also deludes."  

A similar claim could be made for theoretical analyses which "look closely at the materials and grammar of jazz":
studies by Winthrop Sargeant, André Hodeir (Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence, not The Worlds of Jazz), Martin Williams, and Max Harrison (EJ, viii). Harrison, the author of the jazz entry in The New Grove, decries listeners who are "much affected by inessentials such as the personality or reputation of a performer," declares, "Most habitual jazz listeners are quite primitive in their responses, which are too rudimentary to bring them a satisfaction of equal intensity to that of auditors more consciously and acutely involved in musical experience and better informed," and states that jazz is a "music that would be worthless if it bore much relation to its popular image." Sargeant writes that the aims of his study "are scientific," an attempt "to analyze jazz as a distinct musical idiom, to trace its origins and influences, to take apart its anatomy and to describe those features that distinguish it from other varieties of music." And Gary Giddins describes Williams, the director of the jazz program of the Smithsonian Institution and with Nat Hentoff the founder the Jazz Review (1958-1961), as

a born pedagogue who seemed obsessed with locating masterpieces, pinpointing their significance, and demonstrating precisely what made them tick. He wrote in an unadorned style, authoritative and concise, with a minimum of local color and personal asides; yet his every sentence resonated with earnestness. Noting that this encomium could apply equally to Brooks, Warren, Ransom, and Tate, that Sargeant's goals and Harrison's critical posture virtually duplicate those of the New Critics, or that jazzology's success in analyzing short
(approximately three-minute long) compositions recorded on 78 r.p.m. phonograph records finds a perfect analogy in the New Critics affinity for the lyric poem hardly rates as a significant critical insight, but it does go a long way in suggesting the type of discourse about jazz still valued by musical institutions (academia and the jazz community).

Stated bluntly, nowhere is formalism more firmly entrenched than in the field of music studies, and, perhaps, nowhere in music studies is formalism less contested than in the field of jazz studies. This contention is born out by even the most cursory glance through the literature of jazz. Or taking a representative sample, consider Larry Gushee's analysis of Duke Ellington's "Ko-Ko"--one of twenty-eight such "explications" found in the liner notes to *Duke Ellington 1940*--chosen because of its brevity and because I think it demonstrates the powerful effect formalism can achieve even with a description written for a general audience. It begins with a schematic "over-all plan" of the piece. The capital letters indicate Introduction, the main harmonic points of division (including variations), and the Tag; the numbers indicate measures.

Ko-Ko

18 A12 B24 A'12 A''12 B'8 A'''12 T[18 +4]

It's odd that two quite distinct major landmarks in jazz--this along with Charlie Parker's reworking of Cherokee--should have the same title. Here the emotional vein exploited is that of primitivism and savagery, and it does not surprise to learn (via Barry Ulanov) that Ko-Ko is an excerpt from a projected...
opera on an African theme, Boola. The work is mostly minor blues, but that says nothing about the symmetry of form . . . or the climactic plan. After the first chorus mixing Tizol [on trombone] with the reeds, the second is a gangly 24 measures consisting to my ears of an initial four bars and seemingly endless extensions for Nanton [on trumpet] and the brass. Matters are brought to a preliminary peak in A', with the saxes in G-flat major against the basic E-flat minor and Duke splattering chords and runs all over the keyboard. A'' retreats to convention, and then is followed with a compressed restatement of the alternating harmonies of B, and finally the climactic fourth blues chorus with a concentration of dissonant brass writing such as had never been heard in any "dance" band.7

This type of analysis dominates the study of jazz, just as it dominates the study of classical music. Only Leonard Meyer, Emotion and Meaning in Music (1956), Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, A Generative Theory of Tonal Music (1983), and, among jazz scholars, David Sudnow, in Ways of the Hand (1978) and Talk's Body (1979), have managed (or desired) to emphasize what Meyer calls a "referentialist" position—the role of the auditor in the musical experience (which includes cases where the auditor is also composer or musician)—and, thereby, challenge a methodology (the "absolutist" or "absolute expressionist" view) which assumes that musical form and meaning inhere in the musical text.8 Addressing the issue of sign recognition as performance, these theorists start "not with composer strategy but with listener psychology" and cultural conditioning (CM, 109). For instance, Ways of the Hand gives an account of Sudnow's initiation into the "mysteries" of jazz improvisation. He states, "My concern is description and not explanation, a phenomenologically motivated inquiry into
the nature of handwork from the standpoint of the performer" (p. xiii). Talk's Body generalizes the field-specific descriptions of Ways of the Hand and theorizes the place-, keyboard-, and improvisatory-knowing hand. It begins with the thesis: "I submit that improvised music-making and ordinary talking are deeply alike" (p. 3).

The majority of those who study music subscribe to a much more circumscribed methodology than that suggested by Meyer, Lerdahl, Jackendoff, and Sudnow, however. Kerman, defining what theory, analysis, and criticism mean to the contemporary student of music, writes:

we might say theory deals with those aspects of music that might be thought analogous to vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and rhetoric in the field of language. And musical analysis as a technical procedure might be thought analogous to parsing, linguistic reduction, and explication du texte.

... What I would call serious music criticism--academic music criticism, if you prefer--does not exist as a discipline on par with musicology and music theory on the one hand, or literary and art criticism on the other. Semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology are being drawn upon only by some of the boldest of musical studies today. Post-structuralism, deconstruction, and serious feminism have yet to make their debuts in musicology or music theory. (CM, 13, 17)

As this passage intimates, the philosophical presuppositions of musicology are beginning to be scrutinized and, occasionally, challenged from within the discipline.

For example, in "Evidence and Explanation," an essay that became something of a musicological credo for many in the 1960s, Arthur Mendel could declare with impunity, "Apart from the fascination of establishing facts, and relations between facts, we [musicologists] are interested in the
musical works themselves—as individual structures and as objects of delight" (CM, 33). But twelve years later, in 1974, one of his students, Leo Treitler, who, according to Kerman, "has carried the critique of traditional musicology to a more radical extreme than any other writer in English" (CM, 134), argued that the observation of musical-historical facts (the so-called "objective" side of musicology) could not be separated from the uses (interpretations) to which those facts are made to serve (the so-called "subjective" side of musicology).

While writing about early plainchant, his field of specialization, Treitler contested the practice whereby scholars, in the "factual" stage of research, established the text of the oldest repertory in a critical edition. Chant, he maintained in the essay "Homer and Gregory," existed in an oral tradition like that theorized by Parry and Lord (music writing, "invented in or before the ninth century," merely recorded "one singer's improvisation or realization of shared, memorized rules for producing melodies in such a tradition"). Hence the proscription, gather "facts" before beginning the scholarly process of textual criticism (what Treitler tagged the "virgin territory" argument), is not only impossible, it is based on a faulty premise: the idea that musical "facts" somehow exist prior to, or apart from, interpretation, "the idea that categories as diverse as the symphony, sonata form, and 'the Baroque' are absolutes, absolutes whose evolution is in effect
pre-ordained and can be traced through successive embodiments" (CM, 133-34, 130). In the final analysis, therefore, the very concept of a repertory becomes an effect of literacy. Or as Gary Tomlinson (who employs the anthropological theories of Clifford Geertz in his study of Monteverdi), citing R. G. Collingwood, writes: "There is no past, except for a person involved in the historical mode of experience; and for him the past is what he carefully and critically thinks it to be" (CM, 172).

Treitler's work is directly applicable to the study of jazz. First, by applying Parry and Lord's theories of orality to the study of the Gregorian chant, it suggests that a similar approach to jazz would call into question the "widely held notion" that jazz is "a music improvised by self-taught, often musically illiterate musicians," by politicizing the issue of musical literacy (the ability to "read off" a musical score) and seeking to come to terms with a practice of improvisation in an electronic age: an age where "self-taught" signifies learning primarily by imitating solos heard on phonograph records (and other types of recordings) and secondarily through oral instruction given by experienced players (secularized griots). Next, in its attack on the evolutionary (teleological) model which has informed, not to mention imbued, musicology since the early years of the twentieth century, it necessarily criticizes the deterministic, diachronic historiography which informs most "objective" accounts of jazz:
"an alliance between quasi-scientific musicological methodology, with its fetish of causal explanation, and deterministic history, with its fetish of 'inevitable' development" (CM, 130).

Clearly, what I have labeled jazzology—musicological methodology applied to the study of jazz—needs to become more accountable for its own presuppositions, for like musicology, it comes under exactly the same criticisms that poststructuralism leveled at positivism and its literary counterpart, formalism. It conceals or is totally oblivious of proceeding on the basis of what Hawkes refers to as, "a whole world of mediating presuppositions of an economic, social, aesthetic and political order," which intervene between it and its object of study. In its stated concern for the autonomous work of art, it assumes that (recalling Heidegger's notion of the hand as a philosopheme for "concept") one can seize or grasp alembicated essences and "deal with the music itself" (EJ, vi). And like New Criticism, which provided it with a rhetorical model if not a rationale, it appears totally unaware of (or cavalier about) its participation in the creation of a network of inclusions and exclusions—definitions—that created what Martin Williams called "the jazz tradition," or what literary theorists would designate as the jazz equivalent of the canon.

So then, we might ask (even if we suspect the answer), what could Schuller mean when he states that "the early
writings of sympathetic composers . . . failed to capture the elusive essentials of jazz"? or when he adds, "After 1930, however, there appeared a number of books that . . . revealed an understanding of the essential nature of jazz"?

To repeat a question asked earlier, how can one create the effect of "dealing with the specifics of the music"? (EJ, vii-viii, my emphasis). Speaking directly to this issue, John Corbett, in his description of musicology as a "determinant metalanguage," calls attention to the basis of musicology in "writing." He states:

The seeming transparency of terms such as "tension," "resolution," "harmony" and "cacophony" is a result of their origin as words: that is to say that they are theoretical terms to begin with which are subsequently given legitimacy in their enunciation as music, a process which then erases the writing through which it was produced. Thus, we have a coded system which is given a semantic level through a complex system of denial. Meaning is metalinguistically "pasted on"; music theory fills the position of "semantic referent" in the musical language; the words of theory speak through its music.12

Ultimately, the discourse of jazz, like any other discourse, can never fully comprehend its object, because that object ends up being the discourse of jazz itself (which either takes us back to Lacan or prompts a recollection of Gödel's theorem). By assigning a history to jazz (i.e., the possibility of speaking its name, naming jazz jazz, differentiating it from non-jazz) or by assuming a "hip" group cognizant, and a "square" group ignorant, of its codes, it precludes any possibility of a final word even as it holds forth such a promise (a condition that both makes it impossible and sustains it). Less abstractly, the jazz book--
like any other book--has a double signification. It simultaneously extends and revokes knowledge; it is doubly committed to revelation and obfuscation. First, it holds forth the promise that jazz is comprehensible: "You, too, can move from squareness to hipness." Second, it reneges on its promise; the book marks a barrier; it demarcates: as long as there are books on jazz, there will be squares--and hipsters.¹³

Nevertheless, jazzology continues to exhibit a quasi-theological concern with getting things right: grounding its discourse ontologically; disguising its rhetoric. For example, Martin Williams, in "A Matter of Fundamentals," the Introduction to The Jazz Tradition, writes, "The life of an art, like the life of an individual, resists schematic interpretations, and the interpreter who proposes one risks distorting his subject to suit his theories. It should go without saying that I hope that my view of jazz history does not involve distortions" (JT, 4, emphasis mine).

Among other symptoms, Williams' attitude suggests an uneasiness with the conventional perception of music as the most ephemeral of arts and a corresponding desire (dating all the way back to Pythagoras) to ground discourse about music upon a foundation of "natural law" or "hard" science: i.e., a non-self-reflexive science perceived as especially "hard" (the scientific paradigm--of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton--that held sway during the interconnected development of equal temperament, the canon, modern notation,
and the orchestra). But more importantly, it suggests that Williams—like other jazz writers—is uneasy about the status of jazz (and jazz studies). Hoping to establish the validity of his object of study, as well as the discourse system which he employs to represent that object, he refuses to break with referentiality (mimesis) and accept a 20th-century, interpretive-theoretical framework based on internal coherence. This decision places his discourse in a peculiar position.

David Lewin states that, "in attempting to formulate 'general sound-universes' of various kinds of music," theorists appeal to any of three authorities: divine or natural law, the intellectual consistency of a system, or the practice of great composers." We may notice that the musical theorists of the first phase of modernism—Satie, Debussy, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky (some of whom recruited jazz for their programs)—typically favored theoretical arguments based on the internal consistency of systems and eschewed overt appeals to ontology or natural law (although their interest in jazz may, in its reliance on connotations such as childlike or primitive, qualify as a concealed appeal to nature). Schoenberg's break with what Barthes referred to as "the authority of the fundamental code of the West, tonality" is exemplary in this respect (IMT, 152). And we may notice that even when the artistic productions of musical modernism (like the literary products of Joyce, Pound, and Woolf) proved scandalous, alienating large portions of the
population, its arguments—which called for internal coherence instead of mimesis), intellectual rigor, and what mathematicians call elegance—were found to be as tenacious and compelling as the mathematics of Whitehead and Russell or the physics of Einstein. In the main, people may have continued to prefer Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to Schoenberg's Pierrot lunaire, but it was Schoenberg's "science" (the way his internally consistent theories on dodecaphonic music seemed to exclude any reliance on transcendence or past precedence), not Beethoven's "rhetoric" (the way his appeal to natural law seemed to exclude arbitrariness and chance), that carried the day. The point is, the art of modernism may have aroused suspicion; the theories of modernism felt consistent and were, therefore, disseminated as truth.

The popularizers and, later, the analysts and theorists of jazz were not so consistent in their arguments. They spoke a rhetoric of duality or contradiction. Employing what we could call a discourse of "traditionalism," they appealed to the authority of natural law and the practice of great composers in order to legitimate their positions: "Jazz is based on established [read European] systems of harmony"; "Its rhythms are as old as Africa"; "Stravinsky digs it!" And they also employed an anti-Victorian discourse of modernism as a wedge to pry their way into the Western repertory: "Jazz is hot!"; "It's modern"; "It's the only completely new musical form devised in this century."
Thus, from the start, the language of jazz simultaneously helped define, and was characterized by, a fundamental ambivalence towards modernism and traditionalism (or classicism). Not surprisingly, critics perceived this ambivalence in the "musical language itself." Jazz became a conjunction of mutually exclusive attributions (or, if one prefers, mutually exclusive perceptions), a collage of connotations or, better, a clamor of contradictions. Contrary to what one might initially assume, however, this rhetoric of contradiction could hardly retard the acceptance of jazz. Instead, it actually stimulated interest, for it brought jazz into the Symbolic Order and participated in the construction of the modernist/traditionalist opposition. Jazz, to formulate a thesis I have already intimated, reached its highest point of popularity precisely when it was most generally perceived as a music riven with contradictions. Once its modernist/traditionalist contradictions were reconciled or, more accurately, once a group gained the power to define themselves by suppressing one of these terms and clearly privileging another—for example, when, starting in the mid-1940s, boppers and figs drew lines and divided the music into modernist and traditional camps—jazz lost its mass audience. Modern or progressive jazz—bebop—like Modern Music (i.e., the music of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, et al.), alienated large portions of people. Cab Calloway dubbed it "Chinese music"; Louis Armstrong called it "modern malice" (101, 165). Trad jazz and its popularized version,
Dixieland, on the other hand, quickly became quaint, a
period piece, or historical relic resurrected for display
on 4th of July picnics and political campaigns. Arguably,
though, modernist/traditionalist contradictions continued
to imbue both of these styles of jazz, but, owing to the
success with which each found closure (marked off a defini-
tion of itself) by suppressing the very term that the other
privileged, these contradictions were rarely detected except
by specialists (a designation I shall leave ambiguous and
hopelessly tautological), who were most often delighted
with compositions they perceived as riddled with contra-
dictions or obsessed with casting out or exorcising the
putatively absent term.

Nevertheless, there is a problem with my argument, with
the above assessment: one which should be posed, even though
I will not seek to develop any kind of full solution at this
juncture. Namely, I run the risk of adopting exactly the
same scientific attitude towards my object of study—the
discourse of jazz—that I accuse my object of taking in its
analysis of jazz music. Barthes writes: "No doubt the moment
we turn an art into a subject . . . there is nothing left
but to give it predicates; in the case of music, however,
such predication unfailingly takes the most facile and
trivial form, that of the epithet" (IMT, 179). My anal-
ysis of the discourse of jazz tends to become a recapit-
ulation or, at best, a parody of what it criticizes: the
kind of reading that manifests an assumed position outside
discourse where demystification can proceed according to fixed laws of sound reasoning. Redolent of any number of arguments calculated to demystify (or demythify), it is not so much inaccurate (for instead of Truth, it proffers an alternative, easily-summonable mythology), as entirely predictable.

Charles Mingus once wrote a composition with the cautionary title "If Charlie Parker Were a Gunslinger, There'd Be a Whole Lot of Dead Copycats." With a little imagination, my close reading of the machinations of jazzology could be conceived as the literary equivalent of Mingus' satirical target (the stolen jazz lick or the solo full of overworked, stock phrases), a compositional methodology—hyperformalism—easily shot down by "Gunslinging Barthes" when he suggests that demystification—laying bare the codes by which the myth de la Science constructs itself—has become (like bebop became) an occasion for the tour de force, yet another means of displaying technique, not to mention a new mythology, itself in need of defamiliarization.17

Once more, we see that the scholar who would write about music (or theorize the discourse which brings a music into language) is faced with a choice of styles: écrivance or écriture. The former, as we have seen and as Barthes observes in his essay "The Grain of the Voice," describes "the normal practice of music criticism (or, which is often the same thing, of conversations 'on' music)" and involves translating "a work (or its performance) . . . into the
poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective" (IMT, 179). The goal of such criticism is "both a mathesis ['the closure of a homogeneous body of knowledge'] and a mimesis" (GV, 238, 237). Here, through the aegis of reflection, the critic seeks to fashion, out of institutionally dictated predicates, an utterance that readers will count as at once original (a genesis) and definitive (an apocalypse). Avoiding sets of predicates (the reference codes of musicology) that readers would perceive as entirely predictable (redundant) or completely ineffable (entropic), he or she seeks an utterance which will be perceived as a mediation between convention and originality. Donald Barthelme parodies this type of criticism in his short story "The King of Jazz," when he has a jazz fan--responding to the query, "What's that sound coming in from the side there?"--describe the inimitable, signature sound of Hokie Mokie, "the most happening thing there is," by improvising the following series of clarifying questions:

"You mean that sound that sounds like the cutting edge of life? That sounds like polar bears crossing Arctic ice pans? That sounds like a herd of musk ox in full flight? That sounds like male walruses diving to the bottom of the sea? That sounds like fumaroles smoking on the slopes of Mt. Katmai? That sounds like the wild turkey walking through the deep, soft forest? That sounds like beavers chewing trees in an Appalachian marsh? That sounds like an oyster fungus growing on an aspen trunk? That sounds like a mule deer wandering a montane of the Sierra Nevada? That sounds like prairie dogs kissing? That sounds like witchgrass tumbling or a river meandering? That sounds like manatees munching seaweed at Cape Sable? That sounds like coatimundis moving in packs across the face of Arkansas?"
There is, however, another way to write. Attali, speaking especially of the production of music, calls it composition. He states, "To compose is to take pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication, in use-time and exchange-time as lived and no longer as stockpiled" (Noise, 135). Barthes calls it, among other things, écriture; it "brings into play a knowledge of signs." He explains, "Today the text is a semiosis; that is, a mise en scene of the symbolic [of signifiance], not of content but of the detours, twists, in short the bliss of the symbolic ['des jouissances du symbolique']" (GV, 238). In another passage—employing a distinction between lisible and scriptible (perhaps the most famous version of the ecrivance/écriture distinction)—he contrasts this alternative way of writing ("the generation of the perpetual signifier . . . in the field of the text") with reading (always founded on "the unnameable signified," i.e., "some idea of the ineffable"), and most importantly, at least for our purposes, he associates writing with playing and, explicitly, with playing music (IMT, 158).

In fact, reading, in the sense of consuming, is far from playing with the text. 'Playing' must be understood here in all its polysemy: the text itself plays (like a door, like a machine with 'play') and the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it, but, in order that that practice not be reduced to a passive, inner mimesis (the Text is precisely that which resists such a reduction), also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term. The history of music (as a practice, not as an 'art') does indeed parallel that of the Text fairly closely: there was a period when practicing amateurs were numerous (at least within the confines
of a certain class) and 'playing' and 'listening' formed a scarcely differentiated activity. (IMT, 162)

Writing as "playing with the text"—or the "scarcely differentiated activity" of reading as production—does not struggle against adjectival tyranny ("diverting the adjective you find on the tip of the tongue towards some substantive or verbal periphrasis"—IMT, 180). It neither promises the exorcism of music criticism nor liberation "from the fatality of predication." Rather, in rupturing what Marjorie Perloff calls "the mimetic pact between artist and audience," it, in Barthes words, changes "the musical object itself," alters our "perception or intellection" of the way music "presents itself to discourse," and, thereby, displaces "the fringe of contact between music and language" (FM, 117; IMT, 180–81). This is exactly what happens with Barthelme's parody. Commentary on music becomes an occasion for play: play in the sense of a game (a search for a practice which will re-produce, fake, one's object of study) and, in order that the text not be reduced to a mimesis, play also "in the musical sense of the term."

At the conclusion of "The Grain of the Voice" Barthes admits that his "discussion has been limited to 'classical music'" (IMT, 189). Nevertheless, his comments there have tremendous implications for the study of popular music, for even the most casual cultural observer will recognize that popular music, of whatever sort, continues to define a space where practicing amateurs are still numerous and "playing" and "listening" form scarcely differentiated
activities. Insofar as this is the case, popular music actually provides us with a model for writing in Barthes's sense of the term, and jazz, because it is one of the oldest forms of popular music developed in America, provides us with an excellent test case for trying out this theory. But there is a hitch, one which eventually makes jazz even more attractive as an object of study. Compared to rock and roll or country and western music, jazz is no longer popular. According to Francis Davis, it is a music that accounts "for less than 4 percent of all disc and tape sales," "a music long ago banished to the no man's land between popular culture and fine art."^19 Its history, to oversimplify the matter, represents the story of a music where the number of practicing amateurs steadily decreased and where "playing" and "listening" became increasingly differentiated activities. In short, it is as if jazz, in a highly compressed, updated version, recapitulated the two-thousand-year-old history of classical music. The "player" became the professional performer, "the interpreter to whom the bourgeois public (though still itself able to play a little--the whole history of the piano) delegated its playing"; the "listener" became "the (passive) amateur," who consumes music "without being able to play (the gramophone record takes the place of the piano)" (IMT, 163). As Barthes notes, "The history of music . . . does indeed parallel that of the Text fairly closely" (IMT, 162). All this being said, though, I will state what I have neither
the intention nor the means of demonstrating here. Even after jazz ceased being "popular" music, when it attained quasi-status as "black classical music," it remained a musical example of semiosis; it could still be played with, made into a space where one could begin to desire (GV, 238). More to the point, like the classic realist texts of literature (which, in becoming a commodity, also separated the activities of production and consumption), jazz (scored, recorded, or performed) can still be played (with); it can be destabilized—its closure disrupted—by the playful impulses ("bref des jouissances du symbolique") which made it culturally audible ("a mise en scene of signifiance") in the first place.

A similar claim can be made regarding jazzology, for had jazzologists really mimed the motions of the metaphors they gave to jazz—played out, in their own texts, the images (the figures) they assigned to the music—then the writing they would have produced would have disrupted not only the mimetic and mathetic goals which came to motivate their own endeavors, but the already sanctified metalanguage of musicology. Instead, they chose to pattern their discourse after musicology (although this was, perhaps, no choice, since they wanted to be heard), suppressed "the stereographic plurality" of "the weave of signifiers" which produced their texts ("etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric") (IMT, 159), and would not countenance—actually
they sought to control—the possibilities suggested by the encounter between music and language.

This fact may be readily seen by, once again, returning to Schuller's text. In stating, with complete accuracy, that books concentrating on "the legendry of jazz" were "allowed to pass for scholarship and serious analysis," he not only evokes what I have called the image of the counterfeit (an image which, as we have already observed, problematizes Schuller's text as well), for all intents and purposes, he declare...
on the body of jazz and the language of musicology. I refer to this image of indeterminacy, noise, and marginality as \textit{chasse beaux}, but I could have called it simply \textit{jazz}, and the next section I shall call it by the name \textit{charivari}.

Merriam and Garner mention \textit{chasse beaux} in their catalog of the etymological theories produced to account for the word \textit{jazz} ("Jazz," p. 380), but regardless of its feasibility as the linguistic germ from which \textit{jazz} grew, as hard evidence clearing up the mystery of jazz's paternity and explaining its "socially 'unacceptable'" origins, \textit{chasse beaux} is important to us because it names a trope which is always used in conceptualizing jazz. In one short phrase it designates an image (suggests a \textit{symbolic code}) which conceives of jazz as that which combines amour, style, and marginality.

Dating back to "New Orleans during the 1830s" when the term "was a popular French expression denoting a dandy, or a hip Gallic Don Juan," \textit{chasse beaux}, according to one account, became, by means of an macaronic pun, the title Mr. Jazzbo (the winner of the Cake Walk), and subsequently, "in vaudeville and on the circus lot," the common noun "jazzbo" came to mean "the same as 'hokum,' or low comedy verging on vulgarity," and the phrase "put in jaz," meant to "add low comedy, go to high speed and accelerate the comedy spark" ("Jazz," 380). Additionally, Jasbo, a folk character, always something of a \textit{chasse beaux}, figures prominently in a group of tales that locate the origin of
the word jazz in "the change or corruption of personal names" ("Jazz," 373). One such story—the earliest on record—appeared in the *Music Trade Review* on June 14, 1919, and goes as follows:

Chicago, Ill., June 9. Roger Graham, Chicago music publisher, has his own pet theory of the origin of jazz music and firmly believes it to be the true one. Five years ago, in Sam Hare's Schiller Cafe on Thirty-first Street, "Jasbo" Brown and five other alleged musicians, members of what might have been called, with the aid of imagination, an orchestra, dispensed "melody" largely for the benefit of Sam Hare's patrons.

Jasbo doubled with the piccolo and cornet. When he was sober Jasbo played orthodox music, but wrapped around three or four glasses of gin Jasbo had a way of making his piccolo produce strains of the wildest, most barbaric abandon. Strange to say, though, Mr. Hare's patrons, if they could help it, never allowed Jasbo to maintain sobriety while on the job. They liked the thrilling sensation of the piccolo's lawless strains, and when Jasbo put a tomato can on the end of his cornet it seemed as if the music with its strange, quivering pulsations came from another world.

Patrons offered Jasbo more and more gin. First it was the query "More, Jasbo?" directed at the darky's thirst; then the insistence, "More, Jasbo!" directed at the darky's music, and then just plain "more jazz!" ("Jazz," 374)

Alternate versions of this hilariously implausible account substitute James (or its abbreviation, Jas.), Jasper, Jack, Jess, Razz, or Chaz (from Charles) for the name of Jasbo Brown, but they all retain the basic structural characteristics of this tale—namely a movement from the proper name to the common noun—leading Merriam and Garner to the rather questionable conclusion that all versions derive from "a single source, probably the 1919 issue of *Music Trade Review*" ("Jazz," 379).

In any case, what we could call the actual, historical plausibility of chasse beaux or the Jasbo Brown story as the
etymological point of origin of the word jazz is, of course, precisely the issue here, not because it can be proven or disproven, but because it is so completely beside the point. The importance of the chasse beaux-Jasbo-jazz nexus turns on (that is, arouses) the question (actually the questioning) of referentiality by prompting the fascinating discovery that, from playing around with chasse beaux ("I," to lift a phrase from Derrida's homage to Francis Ponge, "no longer let you know with any peaceful certainty whether I designate the name or the thing"), we could generate materials sufficient to reproduce the discourse of jazz. That is to say, if I had the capacities of, say, Borges's Pierre Menard and my readers had the patience of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, I would demonstrate how--breaking completely with any illusion of mimesis or referentiality--I could (had we but world enough, and time) produce the entire corpus of jazzology, word for word, by simply ringing the changes on chasse beaux, "a repeatable, iterable, imitable form" ("SEC," 328). For example, just to give a hint of what could be done, I would probably begin by extrapolating a group of terms: show how chasse beaux infers certain keys, point out that the notion of swinging (the rhythms of copulation), an emphasis on personal or idiomatic style (which disrupts the "proper"), or an ambivalence towards "what Nietzsche called the 'gregarity' of society" (the dandy's assumption of an extremely marginal position as a form of ideological combat) are all derivable from chasse
beaux (GV, 335). Next, I would improvise on--play with the signifying possibilities of--these concepts (being careful to show how play and improvisation are themselves terms which may be generated from chasse beaux, not transcendental signifieds) and elaborate a list of predicates which, forming a grid or matrix, could be employed as an "overlay" to mark off and organize the field of jazz music. After completing this project, I would observe, "The jazz musician, like any musician, cannot inscribe his nominal signature 'upon the work itself: the musician cannot sign within the text. He lacks the space to do so, and the spacing of a language (unless he overcodes his work on the basis of another semiotic system, one of musical notation, for example)" (Signsponge, 54). And then I would state my main thesis. The signifying chain chasse beaux-Jasbo-jazz constitutes what textualists call a signature event. When jazz signs itself, it writes Jasbo, or if one prefers a musical image, jazz is written in the key of chasse beaux. Finally, I would discuss (in great depth) how both the signature and chasse beaux signify that which is never determinable--the problematic of signification--and how they mark a folding together of the idiomatic and the generic, the common and the proper, the name and the thing.
Towards the end of *The Raw and the Cooked*, his analysis almost complete, Lévi-Strauss considers the problem of noise. He asks two, seemingly unrelated questions: "why do the Bororo connect the origin of storms and rain (anti-fire) with the consequences of incest," and "how are we to interpret the curious connection . . . between the cooking of food and the attitude to noise?" (*R&C*, 286). To understand the importance of these questions one would have to virtually recapitulate Lévi-Strauss's entire argument, so integral are they to his structuralist project. To begin with, one would need to retrace how he comes to terms with --that is, why it is necessary for him to finally reject-- "contemporary musical thought," which "either formally or tacitly, rejects the hypothesis of the existence of some natural foundation that would objectively justify the stipulated system of relations among the notes of the scale" (*R&C*, 21). That done, one would need to explain how the image noise figures into his symbolic economy.

Although this could form the basis of a potentially interesting project, and although in Chapter One I said that I would discuss this issue, I discover now that I neither want to initiate a discussion of structuralism's antipathy to modern music, nor speak directly of the function of music, silence, or noise in *The Raw and the Cooked*. Nevertheless, in order to once again think about the
possibility of employing the images which represent music as a model for writing theory, we would do well to observe the example of Lévi-Strauss. The Raw and the Cooked is, after all, ordered by an elaborate and extended musical analogy; the chapter on noise-making rituals, which I find particularly useful in organizing a group of images commonly used to characterize jazz, is entitled "Divertissement on a Folk Theme."

A divertissement in French baroque opera signified "all those pieces that served merely to entertain without being essential to the plot" (HCDM). It was a musical potpourri, if you will, a satura. In his divertissement Lévi-Strauss, as he puts it, leaves aside the Brazilian myths for a moment and makes one or two rapid excursions into the realm of general mythology and folklore. To get this intellectual dérive going, he informs his reader of an anthropological commonplace. He says, "If one were to ask an ethnologist ex abrupto in what circumstances unrestricted noise is prescribed by custom, it is very likely that he would immediately quote two instances: the traditional charivari of Europe, and the din with which a considerable number of so-called primitive (and also civilized) societies salute, or used to salute, eclipses of the sun or the moon" (R&C, 286). He then writes a brief catalog of these noise-making rituals, which begins with the following definition of charivari from the Encyclopédie compiled by Diderot and d'Alembert:
The word . . . means [hubbub] and conveys the derisive noise made at night with pans, cauldrons, basins, etc., in front of the houses of people who are marrying for the second or third time or are marrying someone of a very different age from themselves.

This unseemly custom was at one time so widespread that even queens who remarried were not spared. (R&C, 286-87)

To this I would digress and add an etymological and a historical note. "Shivaree" is an American corruption of charivari. A corresponding term in German is Katzenmusik (literally "cat music"), in Italian, scampata (HCDM). On the other hand, Le Charivari was a satirical newspaper, founded by Charles Philipon in 1832. The flatness of this declaration, however, belies its important place in the history of publishing. According to Richard Terdiman, whose book, Discourse/Counter-Discourse, offers a detailed history and theory of oppositional writing in nineteenth-century France, Le Charivari "sustained uninterrupted daily publication (even including Sundays) for sixty years," and it was the first newspaper to reproduce images in its pages, the first to employ the technology of lithography (a printing process invented by Aloys Senefelder in 1798). It, above all else, represented the institutionalization of "counter-discourse." Terdiman writes of such efforts:

Their object is to represent the world differently. But their projection of difference goes beyond simply contradicting the dominant, beyond simply negating its assertions. The power of a dominant discourse lies in the codes by which it regulates understanding of the social world. Counter-discourses seek to detect and map such naturalized protocols and to project their subversion. At stake in this discursive struggle are the paradigms of social representation themselves.

In the crossfire of hegemony and counter-hegemony by which the meaning and the control of all symbols
are contested, certain signs and representations seem to take on secondary meanings. Such meanings become detectable in the struggles fought over them. Typically they lie at some distance from the denotative ones which these representations normally express. (p. 149-50)

Jazz, I would maintain, has consistently been represented in this culture as a musical counter-discourse, whose aim is the unnaturalization (the defamiliarization) of the products of Tin Pan Alley (tympan alley). As the story goes, it proceeds like Le Charivari, which is to say, it appropriates, caricatures, then feeds back the culture's privileged representations of itself. One would do well to remember—perhaps return to—this point while reading the experimental essay on Martin Scorsese's New York, New York which follows this introduction to the trope of charivari. There I argue, although I think not explicitly enough, that the question of charivari always concerns who—or what group—will be allowed to function as a parasite: which, as Michel Serres has noticed, means (1) inhabit another (i.e., like a demon, possess a sign), (2) make noise (in French parasite means static), and (3) take without giving.22 I argue that jazz and New York, New York represent parasitic or charivaric forms of writing. And following the lead of Lévi-Strauss and Serres, which, as we shall see, would allow us to link the parasite with the charivari, I emphasize that charivaric writing—and here I remain sufficiently vague—entails the agonistic use of shared signification to make noise.
We return to Lévi-Strauss, for after defining charivari he begins to speculate. What do the two customary manifestations of noise have in common and what do people hope to achieve by them?

An answer comes easily--as it turns out too easily. In one case, a sociological "monster" figuratively "devours" an innocent body, in the other, a cosmological monster devours the sun or moon (R&C, 287). The charivari punishes a reprehensible union on earth; noise making at the time of an eclipse seeks to ward off a dangerous conjunction in the sky. The parasite (noise) seeks to drive out the parasite (the unwelcome, hungry guest). Through the ritual employment of noise, it seeks to interrupt communication between bodies, terrestrial and celestial. Somebody once asked Miles Davis, "What would you do if your wife left? What would happen?" He replied, "I'd play a B-flat major seventh. And then I'd feel alright." The charivari represents the homeopathic employment of noise.

"But is it not true," Lévi-Strauss writes, "that the conjunction does not constitute the primary phenomenon?"

He continues:

In the case of both marriages and eclipses, it can, in the first place, be defined negatively: it represents the disruption of an order enduring, in regular sequence, the alternation of the sun and the moon, day and night, light and darkness, heat and cold; or, on the sociological level, of men and women who are in a relation of mutual suitability in regard to civil status, age, wealth, etc. (R&C, 288)

The fact is, the din at a marriage or an eclipse punishes "not just a simple conjunction . . . but something much
more complex which consists, on the one hand, of the breaking of the syntagmatic sequence, and on the other, of the intrusion of a foreign element into this same sequence—an element that appropriates, or tries to appropriate, one term of the sequence, thus bringing about a distortion." He concludes with an even more remarkable assertion:

The function of noise is to draw attention to an anomaly in the unfolding of a syntagmatic sequence. Two terms of the sequence are in a state of disjunction; and, correlatively, one of the terms enters into conjunction with another term, although the latter is outside the sequence. (R&C, 289)

As one might expect, this statement forms the crux of Lévi-Strauss's argument. Far from a mere "Divertissement on a Folk Theme," it, as well as the chapter in which it appears, is absolutely central to his concerns. To see this, though, the reader must turn to The Raw and the Cooked.

My interests lie elsewhere, for it seems to me that, regardless of the final validity of his arguments, Lévi-Strauss, by playing around with the idea of dinning (at the conjugation of stars and plain folks), has created a workable recipe for charivaric writing. Stated differently, as is well known, Lévi-Strauss appropriated a language-based model to do anthropological work; it seems pretty evident, then, that his theories can be employed to do hermeneutical work. The Raw and the Cooked (or a cursory glance through a catalog of new, theoretical books) proves this. But I am intrigued by the possibility that his theory of the function of noise can be appropriated to do noisy writing.
In the following section, I try to follow Lévi-Strauss's prescription and do some charivaric writing. I end up with a piece in two columns—one feeding off another or, if you will, one raw and one cooked—which, in fact, loops (the image of the tape worm is inescapable). I consider it a fairly good start at writing modeled on the charivari (as I write these words, the section is done, and I consider the barely suppressed image of the "well-made book" as a text written backwards). But my efforts should be regarded as tentative. I am still working on possible ways to do writing that explicitly "draws attention to an anomaly in the unfolding of a syntagmatic sequence," and my future efforts will, obviously, center on theorizing, working out, this methodology more fully. My study, after all, attempts to mark off topics for future decompositions. Should the reader wish to see another, but fully developed, example of charivaric writing, I suggest he look, not at The Raw and the Cooked, for it is, perhaps, the antithesis of noisy writing, but at Serres's The Parasite.

Chasin' the Twain:
Scorsese's "New York, New York"
and Lévi-Strauss's "The Raw and the Cooked"

Entropy, which is less an identifiable thing than a grouping of concepts, did not receive its formulation until 1885, when seriously think about the frequency with which children respond with "Huh?" to
Rudolph Clausius coined the word and stated the first two laws of thermodynamics with the following couplet:

1) The energy of the universe is constant.

2) The entropy of the universe tends toward a maximum.

But this principle--namely, that the amount of energy in a system remains constant, but that the inability of that energy to do work tends toward a maximum--was noticed early on in apocalyptic literature, and it was expressed in what we could call its modern day, scientific form by the French astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736-1793) when he speculated:

all bodies in the universe are cooling off and will eventually become too cold to support life . . . [further] all bodies must eventually reach a final state of equilibrium in which all motion ceases.24

Bailly's theory flew in the face of classical mechanics, for it countered reversibility: Newton's law which permitted adults' attempts at communication. My kids--I have three boys--do this all of the time. Sometimes I think about getting their hearing checked, but most of the time I realize that their "Huh?"s represent a clear-cut case of decoders not commanding facility with a particular system of codes such that they can fill in missed parts of messages. Sounds too complex doesn't it? Eco and others say that language is around fifty percent redundant. Well, that may be true for him and his friends, but around my house language is about ninety percent redundant. The kids--
"individual particles to retrace exactly the path they followed in space, arriving back at their original starting point."25 Newton believed that all nature followed a uniform pattern, not necessarily of ideal relations, but of mathematically computable deviations from an ideal.26 David Porush puts his theory thus:

Since in the Newtonian view every action has an equal and opposite reaction, the amount of energy transferred from one moment in time through the actions of a system of energy and matter to another moment in time remains constant. This law of the conservation of matter and energy implied that the process could be reversed with no loss of energy, and then reversed again with the same results, ad infinitum. Because no essential change occurs over time, in the Newtonian view, time itself is reversible.27

Newton's universe could be labeled as anti-entropic or, better, bi-entropic, because energy could turn and return, trope and retrope. Bailly's universe, though, was irreversible--entropic. Stated in the heat conduction equation that is, all the "Huh?"s--prompt Pam and me to constantly repeat things. I often feel like a walking tape loop. I felt like one when I typed this sentence. You see, you're probably reading along pretty comfortably now, but when I wrote this sentence I struggled with it--probably read it over a total of eight or nine times just to make sure you could get through it with relative ease. I imagined you saying "Huh?" over and over.

My wife says I think too much about what other people think. I guess she's right, but I've been thinking about those situations
formulated by Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier (1768-1830), which quantified Bailly's theory, this yielded the following postulation: "wherever temperature differences exist, they tend to be evened out by the flow of heat from high temperature to low" (Holton, 186-87).

Sadi Carnot, author of Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire (1824), applied the principles of Bailly and Fourier to the steam engine. He showed that heat can do work only when it descends from a higher to a lower temperature. A difference must exist. The amount of heat and the "height of its fall" decide how much mechanical work can be accomplished (GM, 35). Because of this phenomenon, Carnot maintained that it was impossible to drive an engine at maximum efficiency. The heat imbalances or concentrations—that is, the differences necessary for producing work—always degrade themselves such that they reach a

where someone speaks but another person does not understand, like with my kids, and I've come up with some thoughts. The task is to get a few of them down, mark off a spot, a topic, to which I can later return. At the moment, my ideas are pretty disorganized so you might have to work a little harder than usual to get anything out of what I am saying. As best as possible, and it's really tough, I'm trying to disregard your "Huh?"s.

Truman Capote said that Jack Kerouac didn't write. He typed. I'm not sure that was true, but it was, none-theless, a great
particularly simple state called an equilibrium where energy is evenly distributed throughout the system. William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin, expressed this as "a universal tendency in nature to the dissipation of mechanical energy." 28

In 1854, Hermann von Helmholtz observed that Thomson's principle, if generalized, implied the cooling of the entire universe. Or put differently, all energy would eventually be transformed into heat (the most degraded form of energy) at a uniform temperature; at that time, all natural processes would cease. "The universe," Helmholtz said, "from that time forward would be condemned to a state of eternal rest." Heat death, foreseen nearly a century earlier by Bailly, was now re-forecast in all its doom but grounded much more firmly on the science of thermodynamics. 29

Twenty-seven years later, the concept had become so trivialized, compliment. Kerouac did try to use his typewriter to do what it did best. I suppose I don't write either, or at least I'm beginning to ask myself: "How can I stop 'writing'?" I, as they say, enter information on a word processor. Most of the time I treat its amber-colored screen like a sheet of white paper, but sometimes I wonder what this instrument will do one day. When I begin to think such thoughts, though, I often find that I am the one saying, "Huh?"

Returning to more familial concerns, we notice that my kids' frequent failure to understand me represents
such a cliché, that Flaubert would make his ingénues, Bouvard and Pécuchet, fret that the world might end not with a bang, but with ... Well, you know the rest. Flaubert writes:

This work of nature astonished them, and gave rise to lofty considerations about the origin of the world.

Bouvard inclined to neptunism, Pécuchet on the other hand was plutonian.

The central fire had broken the global crust, raised up land formations, caused crevasses. It is like an inner sea, with its ebb and flow, its storms; a thin film separates it from us. There would be no sleep for anyone who thought of all that lies underfoot. However the central fire is diminishing and the sun is growing weaker, so that one day the earth will die of cold. I will become sterile; all the wood and all the coal will have been converted into carbonic acid, and no life will be able to survive.

"We are not there yet," said Bouvard.

"Let's hope so," replied Pécuchet.

All the same, the end of the world, remote as it might be, made them despondent, and they walked side by side silently over the pebbles.

This state of things obviously set the stage for Clausius's already mentioned formulation, and it a simple case where different levels of proficiency in employing a shared system of codes come into contact. Simply put, they have not mastered the grammar and syntax of their native language, English. Thus, for them, the language is unpredictable and rich in information. But more than this, we observe that the designation "child" actually hinges on, is defined by, not only a culturally derived standard of cognitive facility, but a culturally conscribed standard of inability. Children are those who, along with other culturally sanctioned criteria, cannot perceive,
allowed for the ready acceptance of Sir Arthur Eddington's metaphor for entropy: "the arrow of time." In Eddington's view the question of time was simply a question of the degree of organization of energy. Campbell explains: "Earlier is different from later because early energy is more highly organized." That is, if there is more and more randomness along the path of the arrow, it points toward the future. If there is less and less randomness, it points toward the past" (GM, 84). In other words, the universe is not, nor can there be a perpetual motion machine. The universe is unidirectional.

The most famous challenge to this body of "entropic truth" was Maxwell's demon, a hypothetical being who made his appearance under the heading "Limitation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics" near the end of James Clerk Maxwell's treatise *Theory of Heat* (1871), complete, or generate certain patterns or structures deemed conventional or redundant by other groups such as parents, whose definitions of what is perceivable, complete, or generatable create identity both for children and themselves (often at the expense of children). Children, then, function as (negative) indexes or confirmations of what counts as worth knowing in a culture. What they do not know defines what needs to be known (or has to be learned). Certainly, this could be expanded at great length, but I am more interested returning to the child's query than in playing
and who possessed science for several decades. Porush's account of Maxwell's theoretical experiment paraphrases Maxwell's own remarks. He writes:

given an insulated box divided into two chambers such that there is a little doorway between the first and second chambers, imagine that sitting atop the box there is a demon. Now imagine that there is a gas divided into each chamber so that there is an equal average number of warm and cool molecules (the heat of a molecule is a function of how fast it is moving) in each chamber. The box then is in a state of maximum entropy, since the molecules in each chamber are undifferentiated and random, and there is no differential in energy across the barrier between the chambers available to do work. This demon is capable of distinguishing warmer molecules from cooler ones. Every time he sees a cold molecule heading from the first to the second or a hot molecule heading from the second to the first, he doesn't allow them to pass. If the demon is patient enough, all the faster, hotter molecules will be in chamber one and all the more sluggish, cooler ones in chamber two. This creates a temperature differential across the wall dividing them, and this differential can be used to do work. After all the available energy is used, and the system is at maximum entropy once more, the demon can repeat the process. The result is a perpetual-endless choruses on the "The Foucault Blues."

During the year 1976-'77, I worked at a school with a long name: Tampa United Methodist Center, Model Cities Preschool for Retarded Children. While there, I taught children whose scores on the Stanford-Benet Intelligence Test ranged from the high 50s to around 80. Other teachers worked with children whose IQ's could not be measured by conventional testing procedures. If a child's IQ was over 70, he had to manifest a secondary handicap in order to be allowed in the program and, in turn, my class (which had the "brightest"
motion machine contravening the Second Law. (SM, 48-49)

Interestingly, the solution to this paradox did much to open up the concept or metaphor of entropy by suggesting that information and entropy are related—even directly proportional.

Physicist Leo Szilard stated it this way in 1929, "Any action resulting in a decrease in the entropy of a system must be preceded by an operation of acquiring information, which in turn is coupled with the production of an equal or greater amount of entropy."31 Leon Brillouin substantiated Szilard's position and expanded it when he claimed: "an intelligent being, whatever its size, has to cause an increase of entropy before it can effect a reduction by a smaller amount (Ehrenberg, 109, emphasis mine). The operative word here is "cause"; the implication is that the very act of seeing—perception—increases the entropy in a system. In kids in the school).

The children, at least those who could speak, and there were many, said, "Huh?" a lot. Because of that experience—almost being "Huh?"ed into a torpor—I can imagine a limit situation where every conceivable, technical means of encoding redundancy would not insure communication. (This is the basis of the banana-in-the-ear joke as well as Orr's crab-apple/horse-chestnut joke in Catch 22.40

Question: "Why have you got bananas in your ears." Answer: "I'm sorry. I can't hear you. I've got bananas in my ears.") I look at a child and say, "Throw me the
his history of Maxwell's demon, Ehrenberg summarizes Brillouin's arguments:

Before an intelligent being can use its intelligence, it must perceive its objects, and that requires physical means of perception. Visual perception in particular requires the illumination of the object. Seeing is essentially a nonequilibrium phenomenon. The cylinder in which the demon operates is, optically speaking, a closed black body and, according to the principle enunciated by Gustav Kirchhoff in 1859, the radiation inside a black body is homogeneous and non-directional because for any wavelength and any temperature the emissivity of any surface equals its coefficient of absorption. Hence, although an observer inside a black body is exposed to quanta of radiation, he can never tell whether a particular photon comes from a molecule or is reflected from a wall. The observer must use a lamp that emits light of a wavelength not well represented in the black body radiation, and the eventual absorption of this light by the observer or elsewhere increases the entropy of the system. (p. 109)

Brillouin demonstrated mathematically that the increase of entropy caused by the process of perception exceeded the decrease of entropy the demon could effect. For all ball." The child says, "Huh?" I repeat the phrase and get, "Huh?"
Restate it in a different way--the same response.
Pretty soon, to ignore all sorts of alternative solutions to the problem of "Huh?"
I imagine a world where every signifier functions as a homonym.
This place is not just your typical, ironic world, mind you, where every term means one thing and its opposite too. It's a world where everyone shares the same set of signs but employs them to completely different ends.
In this world, if I ask two people, "Stamped several brown cups soon?" one might frown
practical purposes, Maxwell's demon was exorcised.

At this point it might be helpful to recount Max Planck's classification of all elementary processes into three categories: natural, unnatural, and reversible. A natural process "proceeds in a direction toward equilibrium" (the point where entropy reaches a maximum level).

For example, two bodies initially at different temperatures are connected by a metal wire. Heat flows from the hot to the cold body until the temperatures of both bodies are the same. As another example, a vessel containing a gas is connected through a stopcock to an evacuated vessel. When the stopcock is opened, the gas expands to fill the whole of the available space uniformly.  

Unnatural processes represent the reverse of natural processes. They "move away from equilibrium and never occur. If \( A \rightarrow B \) is a natural process between states \( A \) and \( B \), then \( B \rightarrow A \) is an unnatural process." Reversible processes find their examples in those processes in nature that we regard and bring me a watermelon, another might smile and start counting the freckles on my face. Admittedly, this world doesn't last very long--too much cognitive dissonance. Next, I imagine another world where everyone also shares one set of signs; but here one group of people defines itself by the way it employs signs, defines other groups of people by the way they use (i.e., abuse) those same signs.

This world—arguably less severe than my first one but ultimately as mad as any penned by Swift, is the world Martin Scorsese creates in his revisionist musical,
as infinitely cyclical (e.g., the water or nitrogen cycle). They actually constitute an "idealized natural process that passes through a continuous sequence of equilibrium states," and they are only distinguished from natural processes by noting that "a reversible process may be exactly reversed by an infinitesimal change in the external conditions." Thus, it is important to note: "every process occurring in the world results in an overall increase in entropy and a corresponding degradation in energy." This is the entropy law (Jaep).

But "law" may be too strong a word, for we should remember that Clausius stated that "entropy of the universe tends toward a maximum." We should also remember that entropy has no place in the Newtonian universe--"a universe," according to Norbert Wiener, "in which everything happened precisely according to law, a compact, 

New York, New York (1977). After the credits run--art-deco letters over a cut-out, NYC skyline, all to the music of Gershwin--the movie proper begins with a blast of noise: V-J Day, 1945. In New York, Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra is playing some palatial ballroom--a dance broadcast over radio station WNEW--and Jimmy Doyle (Robert De Niro) is roaming the floor looking for a woman, preferably a star. He finds her in Francine Evans (Liza Minnelli). Francine rebuffs all of Jimmy's advances. The couple is, of course, as different as we expect that they should be: more
tightly organized universe in which
the whole future depends strictly
upon the whole past."33

The Second Law of Thermodynamics, as it is now understood, reflects the methods of statistical mechanics and specifically the theories of Ludwig Boltzmann and Willard Gibbs. According to their and others views, "physics now no longer claims to deal with what will always happen, but rather with what will happen with an overwhelming probability" (Wiener, 18). In taking this tack, which is consistent with the atomic theory of matter, entropy denotes "a statistical property of particles," where the movement of particles toward equilibrium represents a movement toward the most probable molecular arrangement, that is, toward the most mixed or most random state. Boltzmann expressed this concept with this basic equation:

\[ S = k \log W \]
different than even Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Jimmy—all bebop nerves and noir dissonance—plays tenor saxophone in the legato style of Lester Young, Paul Quinichette, Zoot Sims, Flip Phillips, and Georgie Auld, which means the man's got eyes for bop, and that means when swing goes out (television comes in; people stay home; clubs close), he will weather the changes (and, in the process, probably get a "habit"). Francine, on the other hand, is a pop singer (in no uncertain terms a cinematic citation of Judy Garland). She, the star-is-born system assures us of this, will also weather
in which S stands for entropy, k is a universal constant known as Boltzmann's constant, and W has to do with the number of ways in which the parts of the system can be arranged. The entropy S reaches a maximum when all the parts of the system are so thoroughly mixed up and random that there is no reason to expect it to favor one particular arrangement over any of the colossal number of other possible arrangements. Since the system is in constant motion, new arrangements are created at every instant in the invisible microworld, much as a new arrangement of a pack of playing cards is created every time the pack is shuffled. (GM, 46)

By supplanting the notion of physics as inviolable law, by grounding the Second Law on an application of "the idea of statistically probable or 'contingent' courses of a system," and by representing entropy in mathematical terms (involving equalities), Boltzmann demonstrated that the principle of dissipation of energy may occasionally be violated (Holton, 374). In other words, there is a small chance--infinitesimally small--that a system will not run down, that energy will, the demise of the big bands, achieve immense fame and probably a big splashy production number towards the end of the movie. On this count, our expectations are not frustrated.

Whew! Hold onto that last paragraph. If you are even slightly proficient as a reader, you know that I've been working up to it ever since I started this column, and if you are even slightly competent as a critic--meaning you can gauge my progress against a standard computed by extracting a kind of textual equivalent of a mathematical mean from the blue zillion texts you've read before this one--then you
for a time, not become unusable. For instance, if we take a sealed bottle "containing" a vacuum and place it in the middle of a field, break the vacuum so that only one molecule at a time can pass into the bottle, the law of entropy will be demonstrated as the bottle fills with air. Will the bottle ever naturally become a vacuum again? The answer, of course, depends on the size of the bottle (and on chance). If the bottle is small, say, can hold only one molecule at a time, it is conceivable that it would become a vacuum frequently. If two molecules would fill its space then it would become a vacuum less frequently. If the bottle was a "mason jar," the chances of it becoming a vacuum again are incredibly small--small but statistically not impossible.

Or to illustrate further, extend the playing card analogy mentioned under the discussion of Boltzmann's equation. A theory probably think that it took me too long to get there. I could claim that I'm miming NY, NY. Watch it. Scorsese claims that his first cut brought it down to four-and-a-half hours. The final cut is two hours, forty-five minutes, excludes the film's biggest production number, and seems like it lasts forever. Or I could claim that I am miming film on the most elemental of levels: the justified column on the left is my image track; this skinny strip of writing is an (optical) sound track--a rambling monologue like Travis Bickle's in Taxi Driver ("I'm Jazz's lonely fan."). Nevertheless,
of entropy based on probability postulates that a random, mechanical shuffling could produce a highly structured system, such as a perfectly ordered deck of cards. Subsequent reshufllings, however, would very likely produce a less ordered arrangement, and the more ordered the first arrangement, the greater this likelihood would be. Number, of course, influences probability. A deck with fifty-two cards has a remote but reasonable chance of being ordered accidentally, but a substance in nature, a gas, let us say, has billions of molecules, and the countless possible arrangements of them affects the odds. The most probable condition of the gas is to manifest all the possible molecular arrangements represented in such proportions as would be produced by "shuffling." As each split second corresponds to innumerable shufflings, the gas quickly moves toward maximum disorder, to compensate, I'll speed things up.

Let's pretend that the reader has seen NY, NY, knows it well. Then I may safely assume that, with a minimum amount of effort, I can state my thesis, and the reader will not say, "Huh?" Utter the word, though, and you know what that spells: one thing, w-o-r-k. I have to write more; you have to read more. In any event, here is my thesis. Everything which follows is a repetition of this: NY, NY = charivari.

In his study of American Cinema (1930-1980), Robert Ray argues that, early on, Hollywood developed what he
randomness, and chaotic equilibrium. Again, such shuffling could in principle produce a highly ordered, complex structure by accident, but, in Sir Arthur Eddington's analogy, the chances are about the same that an army of monkeys hammering on typewriters could reproduce all the books in the British Museum (Cooper, 112-13).

Although Eddington's analogy is calculated to satirically deflate the emphasis statistical thermodynamics places on probability--i.e., lampoon its actual or "applied" differences from classical thermodynamics--it does little or nothing to unsettle Gibbs's speculation that entropy implies, not the narrowing of alternatives down to one inevitable doom, but rather the tendency of "worlds to multiply, that is, for a given set of conditions to point toward an ever larger range of possible outcomes" (Wiener, 20). In a

calls a reconciliatory pattern: a formal paradigm based on the concealment of choice--"the systematic subordination of every cinematic element to the interests of a movie's narrative"--and a thematic paradigm where incompatible values--or competing myths--were resolved "simplistically (by refusing to acknowledge that a choice is necessary), sentimentally (by blurring the differences between the two sides), or by laughing the whole thing off."41

If this is the case, and it would certainly seem to be, the MGM musical represented a stylized, almost
passage designed to convey the
sense and force of Gibbs's argu-
ments, Wiener writes:

As entropy increases, the uni-
verse, and all closed systems
in the universe, tend natur-
ally to deteriorate and lose
their distinctiveness, to
move from the least to the
most probable state, from a
state of organization and
differentiation in which dis-
tinctions and forms exist,
to a state of chaos and same-
ness. In Gibbs's universe
order is least probable, chaos
most probable. But while
the universe as a whole, if
indeed there is a whole uni-
verse, tends to run down,
there are local enclaves whose
direction seems opposed to
that of the universe at large
and in which there is a lim-
ited and temporary tendency
for organization to increase.
Life finds its home in some
of these enclaves. 34

The concept of entropy, as we
saw in the discussion regarding
Maxwell's demon, is not only cru-
cial to an understanding of ther-
mosdynamics or statistical mechan-
ics, but also to an understanding
of information theory. Indeed, a
relationship between thermodynamics
and information, implicit in the
Boltzmann equation and explicit
in Shannon and Weaver's
liturgical version of
Hollywood's basic mater-
ials. Thematically, its
stripped-down-to-non-
existent plot relied
on both the audience's
familiarity with, and
adherence to, the funda-
mental tenets of the
Hollywood myth. Form-
ally, its celebration
of continuity editing
and the principal of
"centering" (the audi-
ence, as it were, always
had the best seat in
the house) suggested
nothing so much as a
paean to the trans-
parent or invisible
style (CTHC, 38).

Scorsese's film
disrupts the reconcili-
atory pattern. Here's
how. First, like any
number of "corrected"
genre movies, it mimes
Mathematical Theory of Communication (1949), is plainly stated in Porush's analogy:

just as in thermodynamic systems there is an inevitable tendency for organization and usable energy to decrease in favor of randomness and unusable energy (entropy), so in information systems there is an inevitable tendency for messages between parts of the system to be degraded by disorganization. (SM, 56-7).

Or as Wiener puts it, in The Human Use of Human Beings (1954):

Messages are themselves a form of pattern and organization. Indeed, it is possible to treat sets of messages as having an entropy like sets of states of the external world. Just as entropy is a measure of disorganization, the information carried by a set of messages is a measure of organization. In fact, it is possible to interpret the information carried by a message as essentially the negative of its entropy, and the negative logarithm of its probability [hence, the term "negentropy"]. That is, the more probable the message, the less information it gives. Clichés, for example, are less illuminating than great poems.35

This statement is a sententious, but not especially entropic, expression of information theory's basic tenets, couched in the fairly --or, rather, like a parasite it inhabits-- the form that it corrects. In this way, it corresponds to representations of jazz that picture this music as an art form that works off previously available forms. NY,NY, we should observe, parades its artifici- ality; it can be read straight, as the story of two people who cannot get it together, or it can be read ironically, as a real movie about other real movies. To the naive viewer, it is, in Scorsese's words, "a love story set in the big band era in the Forties."42 To the hip viewer, it looks like a musical trying very hard to look like
non-technical language that characterizes Wiener's humanistic treatise. Notice this, however. Whereas the metaphorical valence of thermodynamic entropy is largely negative, informational entropy is more ambiguous. "It," Porush writes, "designates the initial conditions of variability—the amount of uncertainty—which are the necessary preconditions out of which information arises" (SM, 57).

On its most basic level, information theory defines communication as "the transmission of messages." As such, and as a project whose aim is the quantification of communication processes, it is most of all concerned with such things as: how to send the maximum amount of information along a given channel, how to measure the capacity of the channels and media of communication, and how to improve encoding and decoding to increase semantic efficiency and a musical. Filmed completely on sets, it gives us, not one location shot of New York, New York (in singer Jon Hendrick's words, "A town so nice, they named it twice"), but Hollywood's image of New York City (which, one might add, contributed greatly to New York's image of itself, which contributed to Hollywood's image of New York, which . . . and so on and so on).43

Next, it frustrates the convention which assumes that opposing value systems can be reconciled through romantic love. Let me explain. As I was saying earlier, Francine successfully thwarts Jimmy's advances
accuracy (Fiske, 6-7). Shannon pictured this model as a three-step process:

- transmitter
- signal
- received
- signal
- receiver
- noise

Here a source chooses a message to send, the selected message is changed by a transmitter into a signal, and the signal is sent through the channel to the receiver. Even though this linear conception of communication has been repeatedly discussed, modified, and challenged (challenged most notably by the project known collectively as semiotics), it remains the prototype of its kind, and it retains something of its pristine simplicity.

Noise, information, entropy, and redundancy—key terms used to express relationships in this process—shall now be defined, explained and illustrated as I

at the VJ Day celebration. But convention demands that she run into him later. She does so, the next day. Again, they do not hit it off, but through a series of maneuvers which I shall not detail, Francine ends up in a cab with Jimmy, who is on his way to an audition at a tiny, downtown club. He proceeds to give her his philosophy of life.

Jimmy: Listen, I want to ask you something. You want to know what interests me the most, Francis? One is music. Number two is money. And Number three is . . . [makes the sound of kissing while leaning on Francis' shoulder].

Francine: I got it. Uh huh. I got it.

Jimmy: What's the matter?

Francine: I don't want it. They're always in that order?
complete this history of the scientific concept of entropy.

Noise (Latin nausea > Old French noise--R&C, 294) is anything that gets in the way of--impedes--the encoding, transmission, or reception of a message. It is anything that interrupts, blocks, or, otherwise, jazzes up communication (communication, one may recall, once had precisely the same sexual connotations now associated with the word intercourse). But more than this, noise includes "any signal received that was not transmitted by the source, or anything that makes the intended signal harder to decode accurately" (Fiske, 8). Noise is, therefore, caught up in a whole system that assumes that meaning is determined by tracing a signal back to the sender's intention(s). At the level of mathematical description, however, there is absolutely no distinction between noise and information. Abraham Moles, author of Jimmy: Sure, they're always in that order. Unless, you happen to come across someone who grooves you, and you want to groove with--say you--and if things work out, and you start acting a little more intelligent, then possibly, then I will make number three number one, number one number three, and number two. Now wait. Wait, I'm getting confused. You put it where ah...

Francine: You put it where number three is.

Jimmy: Francis, let me start all over again. Let me get this. Number three would be number one.

Francine: Number two would be number two.

Jimmy: Exactly. And when you have that, you have what you call a major chord.

Francine: What is a major chord?

Jimmy: A major chord is when everything in your life works out perfectly, when you have everything you could ever possibly want. Everything. You have the woman you want. You have the music you want. And you have enough money to live comfortably. And that's a major chord.
of Information Theory and Aesthetic Perception, restates and amplifies this point when he writes, "There is no absolute structural difference between noise and signal. The only difference that can be logically established between them is based exclusively on the concept of intent on the part of the transmitter" (GM, 26).

We would also do well to observe what Michel Serres, has been so careful to point out: namely, the linguistic/metaphorical (and potentially analogical) connection between parasites (the biological) and noise (communication theory). In French, a parasite is a guest who trades words for food, a plant or animal that lives on or within another, and noise—"the static in a system or the interference in a channel."37 In the language of thermodynamics, a parasite is the "thermal exciter" in a system; in information theory, it is that which interrupts, which

The film now cuts to Jimmy's audition. He plays a tune that jumps a little too much for the terminally square club owner. Obviously, he has blown a chance at a paying gig. But then Francine starts snapping her fingers, and singing, "You brought a new kind of love to me." She prompts Jimmy to play obbligati over her melody line. He complies, and they land a job as a boy/girl act. This moment of conjunction, however, is established to be summarily disrupted. Francine's agent, Tony Harwell (Lionel Stander), immediately finds her a job singing with Frankie Harte's
transforms one message (or one system or order) into another.

"Information is simply a measure of the probability that a given signal or element will be selected from among a set of differentiated elements, a set of alternatives" (CM, 57). It has nothing to do with content, but is directly "proportional to the amount of variety (entropy) in the original set" (57). This means, the more disordered a system, the more information it will take to describe it or linguistically order it. Thus, "the process of information transmission can be regarded as a process of reducing uncertainty."^38

"Entropy is simply a measure of the number of choices of signal that can be made and of the randomness of those choices" (Fiske, 12). When unpredictability or uncertainty reaches a maximum, entropy is at a maximum. Therefore, the amount of information needed to reduce that maximum big band. (Harte, by the way is played by Georgie Auld, a musician who played all the saxophone parts Jimmy plays in the movie.) She runs out on Jimmy. He follows her, catches up with her in the middle of a performance at The Meadows, ushers her outside, and, against a backdrop of cut-out trees, tells her, "I love you. I mean I dig you." He joins the band, soon marries her, and when Harte leaves the band, Jimmy takes over. The band succeeds until a pregnant Francine returns to New York. Jimmy continues to lead the band for a short while, then also returns to New York.
uncertainty will also have to be at a maximum. Similarly, if there is no uncertainty remaining after a message is sent, then the amount of information transmitted is the same as the amount of uncertainty that existed initially. Stated another way, we may aver that "a message conveys no information unless some prior uncertainty exists in the mind of the receiver about what the message will contain. And the greater the uncertainty, the larger the amount of information conveyed when that uncertainty is resolved" (Campbell, 68).

"Redundancy is that which is predictable or conventional in a message" (Fiske, 10). The opposite of entropy, it is the result of high predictability, and it functions on both a technical and social level. Technically speaking, redundancy insures accuracy in decoding; socially, it reinforces social ties, insures they pursue separate careers in music: Jimmy plays The Harlem Club by night; Francine records jingles and demos by day and, eventually, gets a contract with Decca Records. Their marriage falls apart. Jimmy leaves Francine the morning their son is born, without even seeing the child. Francine, of course, goes on to great commercial success as a recording artist and film star. But, surprisingly, Jimmy also succeeds. He opens a club, The Major Chord, and has a hit with "New York, New York," a tune he wrote for Francine.

Now my point is this: 
NY, NY abides by
communication. For example, the bundle of redundancies that conventionally signal the end of a sentence—a lower case letter followed by a period, two spaces, and an upper case letter (which not only marks the beginning of a new sentence, but a redundant marking the end of the previous sentence) —protects against the mistake of thinking a sentence is complete when it is not. Or take two other examples: notice that the Aristotelian plot curve, with its Protasis, Epitasis, Catástasis, and Peripetia, developed out of ritualistic origins or consider that a wedding at the end of a comedy is nearly one-hundred percent predictable.

Restrictions, then, of both form and theme, by establishing a convention, delimit the freedom of writing to be completely arbitrary or random. Thus, redundancy acting essentially as a constraint, increases predictability. Paired (writes out) the myths of jazz. It wards off the unnatural unions perpetrated by Hollywood musical. According to what we could tag the "irreconciliatory pattern" Jimmy and Francine's relationship could never work. From the very beginning, it was an illicit conjunction, fated to fail. When they speak, Jimmy and Francine may share the same words, and when they make music, they may share similar sounds, they may even share a song ("NY, NY"), but this in no way insures communication. Simply put, pop and bop can always not conjugate. "Huh?" I hear you say, "isn't this merely a case of
with the concept of information, this concept of redundancy suggests the following paradox: "information is quantified in proportion to its variety only, but humans rely upon redundancy in order to perceive meaningful patterns in their communication with the world and each other" (CM, 59).

As a result of redundancy, information may be available even if part of a message is missed.

For example, the blank in psychology can easily be filled in with an o, for the remaining letters give us sufficient information, and in effect we still have the whole message. If we reflect on the frequency with which children respond with "Huh?" to an attempt at communication, we shall no doubt be grateful for all the redundancy English contains. Probably the child's query is more often produced by an inferior ability to reconstruct missed parts of the message than by inferior hearing.39

Information theory emphasizes that the child's "problem," the problem of entropy, can be remediated by technical means, by increasing redundancy. For instance, the message could be repeated ("Do substituting one myth for another, and furthermore, isn't a myth that brings the irreconcilable together preferable to one--a myth posing as anti-myth--that keeps people apart?" I would readily agree were it not for one fact noticed by my reading of NY, NY. The possibility of Jimmy and Francine actually provided the very conditions that made the reconciliatory possible in the first place.

The chance that you might (perhaps always) conjure an image completely different from the one I intend means, of course, that we may never connect (or that we might think we are connecting
not, I repeat, do not get up from your desk again."), restated in different ways ("You're a pretty special guy; I mean you're all right."), or the potentially entropic message could be prepared for by a reflexive statement, a metacomment that tests the channel and instructs the decoder to add his own redundancy to the message about to be given ("Now, I'm going to say something important. Listen carefully."). But the child's problem can be looked at in another way.

(continued on p. 273)

When I lived in Chattanooga, I occasionally went to the flea market. One day while browsing around, I happened onto a whole table of combination locks. Interested in purchasing one, I asked the woman sitting behind the table if she had a list of the combinations, since I saw none attached to any of the locks I had examined.

"No," she said.

I asked, "Well, then, how do you get them open?" She said, "You try it. Some people get it right off."
Notes


2 Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Discourse of the Imaginary," Diacritics, 10 (1980), 67, 66. In this review of Barthes's A Lover's Discourse: Fragments and Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, Ulmer writes: "In the Symbolic Order . . . meaning arises out of the opposition of differentiated elements; the Imaginary is the realm of images, the Symbolic the realm of language (understood to function according to structuralist principles). Thus the passage from the Imaginary to the symbolic (the entry into language, in Lacan's terms) involves a shift from signification based on identity to signification based on difference" (p. 63). Subsequently cited parenthetically in the text.


5 Max Harrison, A Jazz Retrospect (Boston: Crescendo Publishing, 1976), p. 8; and Sargeant, pp. ix-x. A dyed-in-the-wool formalist, Harrison occasionally succeeds so well in analysis as to rupture his persona of tough-minded but "innocent" reader. In one such "ruptured" essay, a reading of the music of Teddy Charles, he writes:

The growth of taste for music has several almost disconcerting aspects. Providing we do not restrict ourselves to an unduly narrow range of experience, we often find on returning to a piece that we have not heard for a long period that our reaction to it has markedly changed. This does not refer merely to the truism that fine music takes a while to yield all its secrets, or even to the half-truth that yesterday's revolutionary is tomorrow's reactionary. The point is, rather, that as experience grows the way in which we apprehend music subtly alters. (p. 43)

This statement, in suggesting that a unified reading of a musical text may be predicated on a restriction of experience, implies that musical form, rather than inhering in a text, is predicated on apprehension. It finds a critical analogue in de Man's essay "The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism," B&I, pp. 229-45, and specifically in his reading of William Empson's seventh type of ambiguity, for it suggests that our response to music, like our response to poetry,
"does no more than state and repeat" "the deep division of Being itself." The musical text, far from resolving conflicts experienced by the listener, actually signifies them (237).


7 Larry Gushee, liner notes to Duke Ellington 1940, The Smithsonian Collection, DPM2-0351, n.d.


9 Criticism—and its generic, journalistic forms, the concert and record review and the feature article—undoubtedly helped write the definition, and shape the development, of jazz, but no one has offered more than a few random observations on criticism's purportedly deleterious effects on music. Someone ought to demonstrate the interdependence of jazz music and criticism and write a political history of the critic's dialogue with the makers, distributors and consumers of jazz music. To carry out such a project, one would have to pay close attention to the mass of periodicals associated with the history of jazz music (both Kennington and Read and The New Grove contain bibliographies), and one would need to pay close attention to those few critics who are especially self-conscious about their position as music critics: eg., Balliett, Gary Giddins, and Philip Larkin, All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961-1971 (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1970). As an aside, I might add that I hardly ever agree with Larkin, usually agree with Balliett, and almost always agree with Giddins. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of all three critics will bear careful scrutiny.


11Hawkes, p. 154.

12Corbett, p. 54. Employing post-structuralist "writing" to theorize that type of improvisation jazz musicians call "free," or the musical paradigm Attali labeled "composition," Corbett images improvisation "as a diverse range of strategies . . . a confederation dedicated to the relocation of 'music' in the body of the performer--but one that is unified neither at the level of the three bodies (knowledge, performer, instrument) nor at the juncture of those bodies, but in the space between improvisers, at the level of what Attali calls 'tolerance' and what we might call 'paradoxy'" (p. 71).

13The bulk of the material written about jazz functions to introduce neophytes to cultural and field specific (musical) codes--summarized by designations like "recordings," "personages," "compositional forms," "playing styles," and "historical periods"--by which jazz music is known in this episteme. Well-known illustrations of this urge to initiation are: James Lincoln Collier, The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History; Robert S. Gold, Jazz Talk (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975); Nat Hentoff, The Jazz Life; and Frank Tirro, Jazz: A History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977). However, because they are coded systems, these books also constitute barriers to comprehensiveness, and this tendency of discourse to conceal knowledge, one of the generic features of writing, is especially apparent in writing about jazz. It is most noticeable in jazz autobiographies--such as Milton "Mezz" Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe's Really the Blues or Charles Mingus' Beneath the Underdog. To Balliett, the jazz columnist of The New Yorker, Mingus said, "My book was written for black people to tell them how to get through life. I was trying to upset the white man in it--the right kind or the wrong kind, depending on what color and persuasion you are" (AM, p. 326).

14"Pythagoras (6th cent. B.C.) is said to have discovered the basic laws of music by listening to the sound of four smith's hammers, which produced agreeable consonances. They turned out to weigh 12, 9, 8, and 6 pounds, respectively." From these measures he derived mathematical relationships which produced musical intervals (octave, fifth, fourth, and whole tone)--"Pythagorean hammers," HCDM. For a particularly influential reading of the interconnected development of equal temperament, modern notation and the orchestra see Max Weber. Also consult Noise and CM.
15David Lewin, "Behind the Beyond," Perspectives of New Music, 7 (Spring-Summer 1969), pp. 59-69, in CM, p. 68.

16Kerman writes: "In music, modernism falls into two broad phases. The first phase was accomplished just before the First World War, with works such as Debussy's Jeux, Stravinsky's Le Sacre du printemps, and Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire. The second was launched directly after the Second World War, with the compositions of Boulez, Stockhausen, and Cage" (CM, 14).

17Charles Mingus, Better Git It in Your Soul, Columbia, G 30628, n.d. "If Charlie Parker Were a Gunslinger, There'd Be a Whole Lot of Dead Copycats" was the original title of a composition Mingus later renamed "Gunslinging Bird." The Barthes citation is from La Tour Eiffel (Lausanne: Delphire, 1964), p. 28.


23Miles Davis, in Rowland, p. 92.


29 Peter L. Cooper, Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1983), p. 112. Subsequently cited parenthetically in the text.


35 Tanner, p. 145.

36 Fiske, p. 2.

37 Schehr, in Serres, p. x.


39 Marx and Hillix, p. 421.


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When James Michael Jarrett (born 1953) was thirteen years old and living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, he pictured himself playing an alto saxophone, and, after securing his parents' hesitant approval, he signed up for Beginning Band at Dalewood Junior High School. But day one, lesson one, Mr. William Henson, the band director, told him to forget the saxophone. He said, "Learn to play the clarinet. Once you've mastered that, you can easily move on to the woodwind of your choice."

Four years later, Michael still had his plastic, Bundy clarinet stuck in his mouth. He hated it. When he played solos in his mother's Sunday School Class at Highland Park Baptist Church, ladies politely applauded, but when he marched with the band at football games, his friends threw ice and laughed. And he knew why. Clarinets were only for girls and effeminate boys. He pitied himself; he was the next-to-the-worst clarinetist at Brainerd Senior High School, "The Home of the Fighting Rebels."

When he was a senior, he took physics during sixth period, the hour band met, and packed his clarinet away. A couple of years later, though, while at Tennessee Temple College, working on the B.A. in psychology he would receive in 1975, he discovered jazz: specifically the recordings of Duke Ellington and Thelonius Monk.
In the early 1980s he returned to school, this time to work on an M.A. in English at the University of South Florida. He completed his degree in 1984 and moved to Gainesville to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Florida. While there he intended to write a dissertation on Menippean satire, but after some soul searching and a long read through Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, he realized that his knowledge of critical theory, jazz music, and literature about jazz would allow him to do original research in an area that interested him more and depressed him less. He took his Ph.D. in 1988, and now lives with his wife and three sons in York, Pennsylvania.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Gregory L. Ulmer, Chairman
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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August, 1988

Dean, Graduate School