

反義性、協同するもの達、
即興及び遍在する常時変動

Oppositional Logics, Collaborative Objects, Improvisation and the Ubiquitous Transient

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No Island Music

Any incident of sound is inherently transgressive. Either usurped by apparent “silence” or infiltrated by the very systems necessary to maintain the tone, a musical sound is immediately made obsolete, dependent to its source for continuation in duration, or beholden to a series of other sounds for repetition or for membership in a structural phrase. Any claim to autonomy, much less authority, that a sound may be granted relies on it dynamically riding memory inside of such time-traveling vehicles as repetition, continuation, allusion and contrast. These time-machines are manifested, fueled and navigated by the sound’s transgressors, each trajectory of which traces a clear figure of collaborative mutuality, reinforcement, allyship, assemblage.

No sound goes it alone for long. There is no island music.

Authority and transgression are always mutual, sharing and switching roles in the conditionality of their co-orienting relationship. The law of transience requires it. Everything ends. And, in this way, it becomes facile to assume that roles of sounds in music can be determined too firmly. Authority can’t resist the swarm of changes and shifts that reorient its position and destabilize the indicators that make any measure of its power secure. Is a melody the authoritative aspect in a song? Is the first note more authoritative than the thirteenth? Is the final note what it’s all about, or is it even the end? If we were able to authorize the definitive structure of a piece of composed music, could we say where its authority is located in order that we could then orient how any other sound serves to supportively fulfill its authority, or potentially transgresses the song’s composition via the innumerable chances for failure?

Besides and regardless, a composed structure is not sound. Sound is physical agitations within a space, of a space. What a sound’s authoritative aspects are depend on how we define or measure them, how we frame them or grant them their special status. How we determine them. Is a sound’s

authority its initial appearance--in other words when it starts--or is it its order of presence before or after other sounds? Is it the size of its most vibrant volume, and thus does a louder sound have more authority? Is it a sound's duration or changing decay before "silence?" Is it a sound's uniqueness? Is it its tone or timbre? Is it the sum total of the sound's resonating tones vibrating together to form the sound heard in an ear or in a mic or via the particular air of a particular space? Each of these is a rough and rather randomly constructed frame to show how an authority--and equally any of its transgressions—is enthroned by values of judgement granted from an outside measure. "Everything will depend on the weight we attribute to this or that concept, and this weight will always be arbitrary. . . . In this way, as many different systems will spring up as there are external points of view from which the reality can be examined" (Bergson 5).

Authority and transgression are a set, a dialectic duo of dramatically definitive terms that share (*discharge*) the same oppositional logic. And, as in observing any time-based practice (*such as life*), oppositional elements serve as simplified but traceable indicators that are useful for reading generalized collaborative flows that are too subtle, too nuanced, too shifting, too complex and/or too total to say much--or perhaps anything--about otherwise (*Nobody can say nothing*). Oppositional sets serve as manageable frames to make sense of (*make sensible*) dynamics that far exceed sense-ability. Like a freeze-frame image—such as of a small parrot named Obi wearing tiny custom-made goggles to protect its eyes from a laser sheet scanning its landing on a perch amidst the dynamic vortices of air particles in a Stanford lab—seems to capture a moment and thereby display a sense of certainty—such as how Obi's wings being here and not there affect and adjust to their collaboration with the air to produce a measurable model (*or model a measure*) of lift, manageable frames are useful and can facilitate the attainment of purposeful goals (*reaching a future as we expect it will be*) (Dormehl).

The potential uses for applying frames are always already generated by human purposes limited by human limits (*physical/conceptual*). Each frame reveals human-scaled logics. (*It's not enough to know. You have to not know as well*.) Use and application always trace a line back through purpose to logical constructs and the vaguely swirling assumptions that support their lift-off and flight through time. (*They get a job assignment done*.) Marking collaborative elements as oppositional is a useful device for determining change and difference amidst any vast complexity of

shifting elements, but it's limitations are telling. The limitations of collaborative oppositional sets are comparable to installing a long rack of readymade suits inside of an opening in a wall shared by two adjacent ready-made clothing stores--named Authority Suits and Transgression Suits, (*respectively*). This soft wall/divider of off-the-rack selections offers the full variety of available choices. The finest Authority Suits available. The finest Transgression Suits available. Customers enter opposite stores through opposite doors. They look through the suits, barely noticing the other shoppers on the other side looking at the same suits in an opposite way. They try suits on. None of them fit so well—a bit “baggy” here or overly tight around there (Deleuze 44)--but they are good enough for their purposes. (*How's a suit supposed to fit, anyway?*) Thus, the customers find the right suit from those still available. Dressed in their suits, they leave the store and don't think much again about the rack. Each inside breast label reads:



Extended Tube with Cavities

I place the reeded metal mouthpiece between my teeth. Attached to a tenor saxophone, the mouthpiece tapers down to nearly a point and feels hard as my lips fold over my teeth and grip it. This seals the assembled system. I am now an extension of this engineered metal tube. The cavities of my mouth, throat, sinuses and lungs provide further speculative branches to the tapered twist of hollow copper and its variety of length-altering doors. We are an instrument. The sax can't make sound without me, and I can't make sound without it (*can't make certain sounds, anyway*). We are “irreducible to [our] parts” (Delanda 21). These sounds are our sounds. (*Emergent properties*.) Collaborating objects.

As well, on this day in this room with this crowd of four or five listeners (*Is that guy near the exit includable?*), the sounds we produce can't not include vastly more collaborators than I can name and attach to this assembled mass that I might try to trace causes to and effects from. Small things are often unnoticeable before they become noticed. I don't want to delete them from

consideration merely because they are not evident, and so, in place of giving credit to them via mention, I layer these lines with absences, secrets, silences. . .

I inhale. I close all the keys on the saxophone, place its bell opening against my left inner-thigh and slowly blow. My leg seals off the tube we make, changing the pressures that move within us as an instrument. The sound that appears is not what I would have expected had I formed an expectation (*which I always try to avoid doing, but often fail at*). But, the sound is the actual sound. It can't be denied. Everybody hears it (*differently*). It agitates the room (*differently in different places and at different angles into ears*). It isn't any other sound (*however it's heard*) or imaginary or memory. It makes itself noticed and known. It becomes the reference point of what is happening and what is to be responded to. It stakes its position as vividly as any authority. It orients attention to it as the matter of the time and the space (*of this time and this space*). And, with that, thus, the next sound sounds, and responds to the first. No way around it. Time and the various factors involved in paying attention require it. The second sound grows longer without seeming to change in other ways. It is a tone. It seemingly extends itself as unchanging duration (*but getting longer is a change of being short*), until it then grows into something different via small infiltrations of turbulent textures that arise at its edge. The authority sound is being transgressed. Like the spread of colored filaments patiently reaching in towards the center of a halo, the sound that had previously held authority becomes multiple, perhaps two or three contrasting turbulences transgressing what had temporarily established itself in an ephemeral state. A sound's authority contains its implicit conditional decay. (*Time's brutal brevity.*)

My lungs decrease in power. My teeth shift against my lips. The moisture in the reed builds up to a point at which it is capable of altering the vibration of the woody fibers. I estimate (*guess/assume*) this potential. I slip my lower teeth out from under my lips and set them directly against the reed's under-surface. Gently enough to not pinch the reed off, I let air flow into the mouthpiece and across the moisture accumulated on the reed's upper-surface. I imagine the phenomena to look like waves being crested by currents of wind. A sharp skipping series of gurgling chirps begins, which I immediately fear (*from experience and self-doubt*) that I won't be able to maintain for very long. This time it ends even sooner than I anticipated and I consciously avoid the risk of trying to get it going again (*The guy near the exit is not includable*) but I continue

to exhale across the reed and a sound I've never heard before gathers like a delicately howling tunnel. I change the keys and the howl responds. I touch my teeth under the reed again and an unexpected chirping layer adds into the howl (*The guy is less near the exit*). These sounds continue until an alteration reveals a different mix of known and new, of skills acquired long ago and first time gifts born from conditional shifts (*The past and the present assemble as much as me and this copper tube*).

I judge that the theme of squeaky sounds needs some contrast and I choose to let them fade slowly out. I let the “silence” of the room--its absent minded awareness of having no authoritative presence that would expect attention--grow into its own authoritative presence to which the energy of the crowd orients, and I then remove the mouthpiece from the saxophone's neck (*The guy has taken a seat*). I place my pursed lips to the small round opening of the neck and use my tongue to produce a percussive beating that sounds like a helicopter with an occasional asthmatic wheeze. I continue this while exhaling and inhaling with little change noticeable to the rhythm and sound. Circular breathing, kind of. I can smell the copper the horn is made of. I can smell my breathing. I release some keys and the changed length of the tube alters the sound, making for musical contrasts in tones that allude to melody, something almost Gospel. Gospel helicopter music. Rapture song.

Crossroads to Nowhere

Freely Improvised Music is a musical practice situated at the crux of authority and transgression, of acceptance and denial, of past and next. It enacts its activities at such crossroads where directions are inherently confused, contrary energies find willing bodies for bastard (*or monstrous*) birth rites and devils of disturbance mythically grant “mastery” to neophytes and autodidacts. While respecting the churches of music that plot spots on the maps of tradition, free improvisation is critically suspicious of the assurances their borders claim to confirm and then claim. Free improvisation often prefers to go nowhere, or in the direction of the ever-eminent location Sun Ra called “the other side of nowhere” (Fischlin 2). Free improvisation authorizes and transgresses itself in the same gesture, confounding the sense of confirmable destinations. It resides locally in the now/here. Primarily attentive to the sound coming about at the moment of its

making, improvised music commonly avoids the use of pre-established scores, detailed plans, or other compositional structures which determine--or otherwise create expectations about--what is to be played how and when by whom. Free improvisation's attention to the sound actualized in the present moment links with its signature aesthetic method: to creatively respond to changing conditions, often via collaborations between fully independent players. How any particular player actually responds in the moments of play is the choice, or creative right, of that player alone. This independence is one of the meanings of its "free."

At times, "free" might be a sound with an authoritatively stable movement that conveys a confident sense of connection, continuity and melodically engaging formal completion. At times, "free" might be transgression confronting transgression, sounds cutting across the direction of any purposeful flow, attacking and altering some up-to-then observed sense of established form into erosional ruin and opening fissures of liberational release. At times, "free" might be sparse clusters of sounds arising from multiple authorities, appearing in the air as though from respectfully disparate cultures operating by their own rules on isolated islands. But, often when improvisation is going best, "free" is impossible to determine because at such times the players' involvement without roles or expectations results in a direct creative absorption wherein ideas of control, subservience and opposition seem as absurd as saying a wave is either leading the ocean or breaking it into bits.

And yet, free improvisation does abide by some rules. While generally unspoken, how such guidelines operate shows further how authority and transgression flow and transpose in the art form's practices. As in any organized social activity with human interactions, there are implicit behavioral assumptions that partially guide free improvisational collaborations. Basically, the rules are that players should try to listen positively, give respect and create. How these manners are literally enacted is not codified, nor taught in any formal way. At times, someone may make mention or give caution regarding one or some of these ways of participating, but mostly it is assumed they are natural or self-explanatory. And, as a free improvisation session usually operates without leaders or composers, there are only vague ways to judge--let alone punish--"misbehavior" or "breaking" the rules. It seldom matters anyway. Someone being a jerk doesn't mean the music or experience necessarily suffers. At times, having an asshole is a good element for

meeting the moment's sound. A healthy transgressor of the status-quo. And, without having an expectation of what a piece of music is supposed to sound like (*or not sound like*), it is tough to argue for how the work might have been ruined, or by who. This lack of leadership undermines the authority that an act of transgression would need in order to become potent or even noticed. If no one is in charge and there is no plan to abide by, there is no way to find fault or rationale for revolt. (*Nowhere has no capital, prison or lost and found.*) And, should I (*and I do*) assume that some particular musical enactment of a first-time creation has been ruined, my critique ironically places me in the role of establishing myself as the authority and of judging from a position without ground or framing orientation. This behavior would thereby transgress a casual but central tenet of improvisation: don't place too many expectations on a piece (*or any time-based practice, such as life*), for that road leads to disappointment (*If you're trying to get lost, don't consult—let alone create—a map*).

Unsurprisingly, judgements regularly arise in free improvisation. Nobody plays without a heart and thus players become attached to how pieces turn out. Self-satisfaction (*making the self feel satisfied*) is a powerful habit. However, as stated above, improvisations are inherently tricky to evaluate. The practice functions in relation to--and feeds off of--a fundamental openness (*or emptiness or lack or absence or nothingness*) that is crucially linked to transience. On one level, this lack works as something of an immune system that never gives any would-be authority a structure within which it can infiltrate and establish its stability. By the same token, nothing exists to validate transgression, thus it too cannot establish a stable contrast within improvisation's inherent flow of differences. In fact, the "would-be authority" mentioned two sentences above is no different from a transgressor. Nothing remains within transience to be attacked or to reject attack. This results in a default evacuation to an open emptiness, an absence against which nothing can attach or hold on. Without a framing structure, time doesn't keep any promises. Moment to moment, the moment is always already replaced by a new and different moment. This process fundamentally frustrates expectations and regularly sets the judging self which generates them into tantrums. The future-oriented aspects that an expectation clings to, and how it projects evaluative judgements onto interactive conditions or maintains particular positions to be met, are regularly frustrated by the actual sounds that come about (*It is tough to*

resurrect a corpse). Any projected sound that is wrapped up in the flag of expectation assumes a position of authority, but it is of a dead power transported from its has-been time and context: the moment it was born as expectation. Such an authority sound expects (*or presumes*) to be obediently served and forces itself into the improvised flow of acontextual transgressing moments (*You can never live twice*). In this way, improvisation's freedom serves as something of an anti-authority because it is derived from the endlessly open potential of transgression inherent in transience's always already absence.

The self—to the degree that it can be said to desire perpetuation—can be viewed as similar to this dead sound authority wrapped in a cherished flag. The self hopes to build on and maintain past aspects that it deems to be essential in order to fulfill some image of self-perpetuation or delusion of permanence. In improvisation (*as in any passage of time*), as the moments coming into existence differ from the self's projected expectations, emptiness becomes revealed as present within the self. The self derives from emptiness. The self's expected images resist the actual, which starts a conflict between “reals:” the expected and the empty. One is suspended and unfounded except in self-projection and the other is unknown and beyond control of the self. The dream vs the new. The self is built ever-fresh from nothing it knows, made of the mysterious moments which usurp, absorb and “sum up those which preceded it” (Bergson 4). The self—as a site of activated authoritative and/or transgressive dynamics—becomes suspended through the practice of improvisation and senses it is equally as resistant to stability as time is. The self flickers as it embodies nothingness. The music keeps flowing, but what is played by who and what? (*Collaboration*.) What can be excluded or included? The sense of clearly delineated edges becomes less valid. Without expectations, an ephemeral assemblage of a player with players and instruments—of human and non-human collaborators—plays along as if nothing happened. This is accurate: nothing happened.

Regularly, improvisers describe the experience of playing as being purifying or of making them feel like they vanished within nothing, into the flow, inside the moment. In my analysis, this experience is a result of free improvisation's fundamental activation within transience. Through this taking place, free improvisation becomes a process capable of scrubbing ghosts out of the self's husk. It loosens up fundamental assumptions that the self uses to convince itself that it can travel

in time. Improvisation undermines assumptions held by the self that its present form is not merely derived from but is actually reliant on maintaining past patterns, which it thus clings to and inflates into promises of continuity or trajectories of predictable self-perpetuation. As improvising (*playing in the moment for the moment*) deconstructs these assumed trajectories with the “failures” such expectations inherently give rise to, the freedom/openness of the self’s absence can be made manifest, letting its theoretical time-machines vanish into fantasy. In this way, if judgements and expectations are viewed as a system of self-presentation that is used for the self’s self-confirmation (*reinforcing the stability of its identity presence*), improvisation (*and life, for that matter*) functions as something of an autoimmune system which turns the dialectic elements responsible for maintaining self against their own oppositional framing logics.

To the degree that the self envisions itself as stabilized in an oppositional frame of reference, such as authority and transgression, the self must enact the logics of that frame. The self maintains itself within that frame’s narrative, which in the case of authority and transgression contains loops of dramatic confrontation (*revolutions*)--loops that consist of securing power, exerting pressure, suffering attack, infiltration and defense, counter attack, overthrow, etc. Oppositional frames reinforce both sides of the conflict. They strengthen each other and in the process give the self scripts it must follow in order to maintain itself as a central figure within the framing experience. (*Welcome to human history.*) But, improvisation undermines the stability these oppositions provide to each other by undermining the identification with stable roles and the self itself. As the self becomes more conditionally constituted, there becomes less identification with roles situated exclusively within oppositional frames. Rather than opposites being in conflict, opposite aspects become co-creating collaborative elements themselves.

However, any frame (*including improvisation*) is ultimately a limiting structure which is used to make sense of (*make sense-able*) the open transience of existence in its vast and unfathomable irreducibility. As a frame, free improvisation allows practitioners to model existence in ways that are more dynamic, indeterminate and revealing of life lived within the shifting complexities of being. In contrast to the clunky and overly baggy suits of oppositional dualisms--like authority and transgression--improvisation maybe fits better. Improvisation is perhaps a more custom-made suit that is sewn to fit each player at each moment, but it is still an artificial covering. And “fit” is as

relative as any other description in fashion. It still limits and focuses experience to a practice context, a period of intensity and a special space of sharing which is different and special due to its limitedness. Likewise, improvised music is focused on sound and comes to an end. It is not the ceaseless onslaught of being that it hints at, emulates in miniature and gives us potential insights into. Free improvisation is something that we can choose to partake in or leave behind as we move for the door. It is a contextual structure that happens in a limited time and place, regardless of all its similarities to and affinity for the vastness beyond the nowhere. It is a concept that we can use as a mode through which to think or not.

But, each person's most intimately formless assemblage of improvisational collaboration is not something he or she can refuse or stop. Each of us is always already in/of a body. My body is the ceaselessly real collaborator that I can't walk away from or stop (*Even "that" doesn't stop it. Its collaborative efforts will outlive me.*)

Ubiquitous Transient: The Body

When I put a saxophone in my mouth, I become part of an assemblage with that metal tube. But this mutual extension has a start and end. The performance concludes and we let each other go on without the other. The saxophone goes back into its case, capable of staying there indefinitely. I am more restless and maybe have a beer. My collaboration with the sax is over until the next time I choose to activate it. But, my body is nonstop. It is an object that I collaborate with without pause, separation or respite. It never goes off by itself. It is my always already activated collaboration partner. Even referring to it as "it" feels a bit disrespectful. But, calling my body "he" or "she" or "they" feels equally off. For some ironic reason, personifying the body doesn't work. So, I call it, "it."

My body does not resist or indicate any preference for any name I might pull over it like an ill-fitting polyester sweater. It is an object that--like the saxophone--exerts its unfathomable creative potentials in collaboration with my human concerns, concepts and desires. It is an object of profound intimacy but also contains impossible mystery. My body is not human. Unlike the saxophone and Obi's goggles and suits and theories, my body is not even human made. It does not exist for human purposes. It has capabilities, capacities and activities that I (*and likely all of*

science) know nothing about and cannot ever comprehend, cannot even ask the right questions to see they exist. My body is an active agent in the world--and/or in its world--I may be playing a part in its existence that I can't fathom.

While it is true that my body and I fulfill each other in ways that are as freely improvisational and as wrapped in my expectations as anything I might play with a sax, my body is not merely my tool. My body is willing to collaborate with me in cooking spaghetti sauce, pouring whiskey into it, hitting the snooze button on my phone alarm, chasing and killing a mosquito, falling asleep in the sun without protection till I'm severely burnt, putting a rope around my neck and jumping off a chair. My body will do anything I bring myself to do. My body is the vast openness each moment facilitates. It responds to changes without hesitation and it risks everything with full acceptance, regardless of outcomes. If I say it doesn't care, I must also say it cares for each new actuality without reserve or doubt. And, the whole time my body is collaborating with me—facilitating my efforts and plans, but always via improvisation—it is also regulating heartbeat, digesting spaghetti, replacing burnt skin, producing and maintaining a vast array of sub-assemblages including molecular machines that manufacture DNA, nurturing a cancerous tumor, etc. For doing these task simply as its “side-job,” my body makes the complexity of my day's tiring efforts look as passive, simplistic and dumb as a saxophone in a box appears to me.

The body never fully forms. It is open and empty at each moment. The body “is perfect, by being perfectly what it is” (Bergson 2). The body always already embodies the collaborative conditional assemblage of the moment by moment shift, of the blood's pulsing reach pause reach pause, the skeleton's bendy postures in ever-adjusting positions fitted within chairs under tables around cups of coffee in conversation between strangers friends and objects continuously completing the body's ubiquitously entangled transience.

(The body is naked within every suit.)

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