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激動の変遷: フリージャズと新派のカオス
Turbulent Transitions: Free Jazz and the Chaos of the New

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The 1960s and 70s are rightly identified as a period when dramatic changes were taking place in various areas of American life. The civil rights movement was in full swing and had achieved some success in the signing of the Equal Rights Act of 1964, but this did little to calm the currents of agitation and struggle that were roiling through the culture. Evidence of the continued unrest can be seen in the fact that the Watts riots in Los Angeles erupted just over a year later. As well, there were on-going protests against the Vietnam war, an increase in counter culture movements such as the hippies, Black Panther Party, the Weather Underground, etc. There were movements happening to change the society, and counter movements to slow or stop the changes. Passions were flowing throughout the time and efforts to affect change were wide-spread, varied and popular.

Big changes were also happening in technologies which were directly affecting the way people were perceiving and experiencing daily life. From automobiles and airplanes to televisions and audio systems, the era became rather sardonically synonymous with the advertising cliche: New and Improved.

> In the time-span of 1954 to 1964, TV changed from black-and-white to color, audio changed from table radios and massive . . . consoles to elegant stereo components, very high-quality FM radio became widespread, aircrafts changed from slow and noisy Super Constellations and DC-7's to fast and quiet Boeing 707's, interstate travel changed from congested 2-lane roads with many traffic lights to freeways, and space exploration changed from an impossible science-fiction dream to everyday reality (Olson).

In talking about jazz--an art form that prides itself on being an improvisational force of democratic freedom and wellspring of what's new, hot and cool--it should be no surprise that things were also changing during this time. Previously--in the post-WWII era--bebop had largely replaced the more dance-focused styles of jazz that had been popular in the heyday of the big bands and

before. Audiences were also changing. By the mid 60s, dance music was not associated with jazz music anymore. Instead, jazz was increasingly being made for listeners, either to be heard live in clubs or, ever more popularly, at home on HiFi units. Advancements in audio technology brought about better microphones and speakers, thus improving both the sound quality of recordings and home listening. As part of what is called "The Golden Age of High Fidelity," the 60s also saw the establishment and popular use of stereo sound, from both LP (long play) albums and radio (Olson).

To return our focus to the change in jazz music, bebop was the characteristic style associated with the early post-war period. Often described as fast and complex, angular and aggressive, it was in contrast to the brighter, more upbeat and dance-friendly swing modes popular before the war and of the general big band styles. Bebop was, for a time, the avant-garde. But, jazz of this era was not exclusively bebop. There were other modern jazz forms happening in the late 50s, the era blessed with jazz' richest array of musical super heroes. Far from playing within any single style, the range and scope of the period's musics are best respected by simply listing the names of some of the legendary artists that created them, musicians like John Coletrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, etc. The variety and breadth of jazz of this time are vast and for the most part it was being made for people sitting quietly and listening close.

This shift in jazz' focus towards being listened to carefully and critically caused it to become less of a popular entertainment mode and more of a contemplative abstract art form. This new role for jazz allowed it to be more idiosyncratic, obscure and challenging, serving as a vehicle for representing the visions and explorations of individual artists. Jazz became more difficult to figure out for the general public, more of a sublime art of experimentation and individualized voices, sharing some of the opaqueness of abstract expressionist painting that was a powerful force in the art world of the post-war cold-war era. Even though we now know that the rise of American Abstract Expressionist painting was partly orchestrated by the secret patronage of the CIA as a weapon to influence Western intellectuals in the culture war against Marxism (Saunders), the fact that the artwork and artists motivated others to imagine greater extremes of abstraction can't be denied. This was definitely felt in the worlds of music, not only jazz.

Jazz music has always been synonymous with reaching and developing new forms, of pushing out on the limits of expectation and form. At the end of the 1950s, jazz critic for *The New Yorker*

magazine, Whitney Balliett, described this unpredictable music as *The Sound of Surprise,* a suitable summary that served as the title of his book of jazz essays. This characterization fits nicely with the idealised image of jazz improvisation as an embodying act of freedom, that it is a spontaneous leap into risk without promise of safe landing. Either the bird produces magical wings, or it crashes. But, jazz also has a deep sense of tradition, with practitioners who take and maintain its history very seriously. This was true within bebop as well. "It is in the nature of concepts of freedom that they so often become ossified and turn almost into their opposites. The freedom of bebop thus became an orthodoxy and, for some, a formula, stifling creativity" (Prevost 19). In addition, jazz has an influential critical tradition via which writers both push the art form forward and serve as gate keepers maintaining a status quo. As the famous jazz critic Nat Hentoff explained,

> Critics are sometimes extraordinarily obtuse. They claim to want to hear new things, but new things bother them because they can't categorize them. . . And that affects the work [artists] get. . . [I]n jazz . . . if somebody's gonna make it, he or she first has to get the attention and the admiration of other musicians. Then if he's lucky, the other musicians will hip some critic who doesn't know anything to speak of and the critic will say, 'Hey, this guy is really important.' Then the gigs come, and the record companies come (Hentoff 3).

But, some of the most famous and established artists from the 1950s—including Davis and Coletrane--were willing to resist the pressures to play things safe and pushed their sound into forms that threatened to undermine much of the traditions they had inherited. With their personal transformations, they helped bring about an eruption within jazz, altering the sound of what the music could be. They may have lost fans and the idolization of some critics, but their actions were seen by supporters of the new form as embodying the deepest revolutionary core of jazz music: its primordial purpose of being a vehicle for discovery rather than simply being a popular music genre or a gate keeper of conventions. Following the lead of younger players—including Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler--this era of broader cultural turmoil in the United States witnessed jazz enact its own revolution. Some of the top names of the time took up the mantle of innovation, inspired by unknown players who seemed to emerge from the desert like weird babbling outcasts and self-

styled prophets. The debate still goes on about whether these young innovators were geniuses or frauds. Regardless of what was or was not their jazz pedigree, a new form was born, something that still confounds easy categorization. Jazz, as it had done throughout its history, exceeded itself. Free Jazz came into being.

The precise moment when Free Jazz was born is still debated, but a generally accepted landmark is Coleman's 1959 album, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* and his four-month stint of playing at the Five Spot in New York City with his quartet made up of Don Cherry, Charlie Hayden and Billy Higgins. In reference to Coleman's new sound, John Coletrane said,

> When he came along, I was so far in this thing [the "harmonic structures"], I didn't know where I was going to go next. And, I didn't know if I would have thought about just abandoning the chord system or not. I probably wouldn't have thought of that at all. And he came along *doing* it, and [when] I heard it, I said, "Well, that - that must be the answer (*Quersin 123).*

Regarding breaking free of the system of chord changes, Coleman is quoted as saying, "The theme you play at the start of a number is the territory, and what comes after, which may have very little to do with it, is the adventure!" (*The Adventure*). For Coleman, if the chord changes are pre-established, then the music can automatically become limited and predictable. If the map of a tune is known before the start, it creates a pre-established energy of expectation which means the players aren't really forced to listen to the sound being made in the moment. Chord sequences also limit the amount of difference that can arise by guiding the changes from stage to stage. Players play in anticipation of reaching the next chord change rather than hearing new directions for the music to flow towards. Or, players play thinking back to the score that they are supposed to follow. The weight of the future and past metaphorically plug the ears for hearing the present. But, theoretically, if each player has the freedom to take the sound where the inspiration he or she hears at any moment points, the music has the chance to turn at any moment, to go off in directions of discovery that would be fenced off by plans and expectations. Coleman wanted to create a music that is more responsive to the moment, capable of changing directions as new elements arise within the moment of playing, a music that lets the players be more free, with all members able to influence where the music goes. By opening up the parameters of mutual

influence, the level of freedom for all the players increased. No longer was a drummer bound to just keep time for the creative flights of the melodic improvisers. All the players could direct changes in the system, mutually affecting “the shape of the jazz to come” out as a result. About this innovation in jazz, drummer Tony Williams--who became a prominent player in the period following Coleman's emergence--said, “Ornette Coleman's music had become very important. So I was very much influenced by what was known then as the avant-garde. So I was interested in expressing the drums and the drum set in a different way” (Williams).

Even before Free Jazz, the shift in jazz towards being an art form of sound that should be carefully and critically listened to caused changes in the two key aspects of the musical genre—the creators and the listeners. This listening shift pushed the musicians to extend the territories of sound and structure, and pushed the listeners to expand what they were capable of hearing, and willing to accept and expect. And, with Free Jazz, this dynamic was pushed to far greater extremes. Listeners often didn't know what they would get when they lowered the needle onto a new album by their favorite artist. Some of the music confronted them, forcing them to battle with their expectations. People had to learn to hear in new ways and as a result learn to think in new ways, and by further extension learn to feel new emotions. “Free Jazz was intended to elicit new sounds, both individually and in ensemble, and make use of purely free structure and interplay. The argument was that 'new' sounds would a) elicit new emotions and b) re-enact a spiritual experience, creating a medium for communicating with divinity” (McSweeny).

Bringing about the emergence of new emotions and a communicative connection with spiritual energies are pretty grand goals, but not unfitting for a historical period in which hopes for revolution and cultural evolution were wide spread. The forces of the new wanted to break free of the old and its limiting structures. And, throughout American culture, music had become a driving energy of the changes that were occurring, most popularly in folk and rock music. But, in jazz--America's particularly original musical form--Free Jazz reflected the social energy pushing towards the new. The logic was that new emotions could spur changes in the old patterns of society—changing ways of thinking in order to bring about a more just society out of one that had long been plagued by racism and inequality. But, to bring about the new, the feeling was that people had to go beyond the usual limits. So, musicians were pushing into the unformed, trying to

recognize what hadn't taken shape yet, trying to bring something out that could be shared, or trying to find a way to lead people into that unknown new space.

Is it really much of a surprise that a period in American history which was going through such turmoil should bring about something as tumultuous at Free Jazz? It seems completely plausible now. But, how to categorize Free Jazz was problematic for many. Looking back from our 21st century side of history, Free Jazz appears to be a rather logical extension of the trajectory jazz had been taking up to that time. Musicians who were solidly respected within jazz—such as Coletrane, Mingus, Davis, etc.--were already expanding the spectrum of what could be recognized as jazz. “As early as the Fifties, Mingus worked out a concept of collective improvisation that later proved to be essential to the evolution of free jazz” (Jost 11). In addition, Free Jazz coincided with similar extreme experimentation going on within the world of classical music at the time by composers like John Cage and others who were exploring sound through very unorthodox and abstract approaches, many times in ways that had people questioning if it was music at all, and even what music actually is.

Free Jazz also was, and still is, difficult for many listeners to wrap their heads around, or open their ears to. Free Jazz is often not easy to listen to, and sometimes extremely difficult for some to endure. If we examine it through the science of systems theory, we can find some help in understanding why it is difficult. “Paradoxically, complex systems, whether in music or physics, produce turbulence and coherence at the same time” (Steinitz 17). Free Jazz tends to have a high amount of complexity and it has been said that Free Jazz players are “constantly creating new patterns, or patterns of patterns, in order to keep the energy going, all the while working to maintain the coherence of the performance” (Borgo 4). In addition,

> because [as music listeners we have an] overriding focus on linearity, we are accustomed to thinking in terms of centralized control, clear chains of command, or the straightforward logic of cause and effect. The freer forms of group improvisation challenge us to shift our analytic gaze towards collective dynamics and decision-making, and the emergent, self-organizing, and synergetic aspects of ensemble performance (Borgo 4).

Basically, for the listener, Free Jazz requires new ways of hearing, new ways of dealing with time and sound, new goals regarding what to experience from the music. Rather than expecting presentation of an idea which is then expanded upon before bringing the work to a understandable musical conclusion--which follows the standard arc of interest going through beginning, escalation and closure--Free Jazz listeners don't know where to focus their listening in the music or what element of the music to use as a central organizer. With many equal things happening at once, there is a potential layering and cross saturation of effects that can overwhelm one's ability to pay attention if the listener goes in with the expectation to understand everything. And, for us in the 21st century, listening with some appreciation of chaos theory and complex systems theory, we can possibly imagine a way of using these concepts as filters for understanding this music, or for garnering some meaning (as opposed to "the meaning") from such experiences in which turbulence and coherence are mutually present. We can listen to and analyze Free Jazz with the ideas of complexity in mind. But, for the listeners and players active in the time when Free Jazz was new, there must have been a huge rift between "getting it" and not. Interviewed in 1966, one of Coleman's collaborators, Charles Moffett, analyzed the problem and explained the situation like this: "Some people do not really hear Ornette's music. They may be there, but they are really not listening. If they come, they may be listening for something they want to hear. And when it's not done, they don't accept it. . . But if you listen to Ornette, if you can throw everything out and listen to really what's being said, then [you] may get the message" (Fontaine). Sadly, or understandably, many only heard it as a meaningless chaos, cacophony or "just playing any old thing" (McLean).

But, let's not underestimate the value of chaos. The arts and humanity have a long tradition of connecting chaos with creativity. Chaos is a generative mechanism grounded in classical myth. So, there might be good reason why Free Jazz may have sounded, and still sounds, like chaos to so many listeners. Chaos is a fundamental necessity for creation, as old as the Greek myths describing the birth of the gods. As Hesiod wrote in his *Theogony*: "First of all Chaos [Gap] came into being" (line 116). Before anything else, there first needed to be chaos, the primordial turbulence within which what was formlessness could take form. Chaos means "gap" in ancient Greek, and this fact gives us a primary condition for how something new can be born. Before a start, a context must first arise. First, an emptiness or gap or lack needs to open for a form to

emerge or fill it. If there is no opportunity, there is no chance for emergence. As Jenny Clay states in *Hesiod's Cosmos*, "The *Theogony* constitutes an attempt to understand the cosmos as the product of a genealogical evolution and a process of individuation" (13). This mythic system of genesis provides the classic model for the processes of creation at work. But, creation myths like this imply that there is nothing before the creation, that everything is coming out of nothing and thus the formlessness of chaos needs to appear first. In the Biblical tradition we see a similar structure, but before there is nothing, there is a creator god. The prime mover and source for creation gives form to everything via "the word." In contrast to Hesiod's initiation of creation out of chaos, "the word" implies an order behind creation, as well as the word's order doubling as a command. The fact of "the word" implies there is language and thus an idea backing it up, and an intelligence backing up the thought: a grand plan. But, if we take this line of logic a step further, we can assume that the Biblical God itself—which often seems to lack a stable form, is unseen and absent (in contrast to most Greek gods which often seem all too human in their appearance, behavior and desires for attention)--is the same conceptual mechanism of Hesiod's chaos/gap, serving as the primordial generating condition via which everything comes into form.

But, anyway, the genesis of Free Jazz didn't appear in an empty universe. Its chaos arose within a context of a distinct time and conditions. Its chaos reflects the genesis of the new within a context of change. It can be viewed as a bridge of turbulence stretching from the past to the future. Free Jazz arose as a response to, or a rejection of, an old order. Free Jazz can even seen as a logical evolutionary stage of a tradition that self-identifies with anti-traditionalist methods.

As an agent of change, the image of chaos still functions effectively. In the Of the Refrain chapter of their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari take up the theme of primordial chaos as a necessary condition for transformational change, providing us with a way to understand how Free Jazz could arise as a mode of apparent chaos within its complex social situation. Deleuze and Guattari say, "From chaos, Milieus and Rhythms are born" (313). Further, they explain how the times and social conditions in which people live (their milieu) are always sliding and overlapping with other times and social conditions. The conditions are rather fluid, maintained by a complex nexus of factors. Thus, "milieus are open to chaos, which threatens them with exhaustion or intrusion" (313). There is never a distinctly

stable or static period of time and way of living that neatly finishes before a different one starts up. The new is born from within the old. Difference arises from out of the norm. As well, they say each milieu has its own vibe that is made up of repeating elements. This seems to point to how eras can be identified by certain recognizable patterns, perhaps the elements which allow people to locate themselves within and identify with a particular cultural period and context. "In my day and age, we did this," is a common phrase heard from instruction-giving elders, and it is basically saying that things were a certain way in the past, and that way was different from how things are now. This implies there is a way to tell, a vibe that can be sensed and distinguished, even if the whole is far too complex to fathom completely. The rhythm of the milieu makes its vibe. The rhythm of a milieu could be, for example, what the common emotional response is for a particular people within a certain time and place. After a certain time, that emotional response no longer makes sense to the people of that place, or to a large number of them. Some habit or way of thinking might lose its currency. And, of course, the "natural" tendencies of one culture often do not make sense to another. Deleuze and Guattari go on to say that "every milieu is coded. . . but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding" (313), a fluidity which enables one period of time to become the next. And, the rippling of this fluid transitional state can be what allows us to sense where the transcoding is happening. The rhythm of one milieu blends with the rhythm of the next, in something like a contrapuntal entanglement. This turbulence is the resulting rhythm which arises between them. This rhythm is chaos. Difference dancing with difference. Other kissing other. And, this mingling of one milieu into another is also how the two milieus communicate, the chaotic song they sing. "What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between—between two milieus, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos" (313).

If we look back now at Charles Moffett's comment and examine it more closely, viewing it as something of a formula for understanding how some people may have heard chaos from something which obviously for him and Coleman had a profoundly valuable quality, we can see Moffett is saying that the music can't be accurately understood if it is approached with expectation. The music somehow fails when approached in this way, or this approach closes the listener from realizing something important within, or via, the music. One must meet the music without prejudice to hear it accurately and to potentially understand its message. Such a message could

even be that there is no message. But the Moffett equation also reveals that things, like music and art--but also conditions of a milieu and even “hard objects” like tables--can have a fragility that can be easily overwhelmed if one attempts to place them within pre-existing expectations. Part of Coleman's reason for getting rid of chord progressions was to undermine the influence that expectations can have in controlling and thereby reducing the freedom of a piece of music. An important aspect that identifies Free Jazz is that it creates the new without controlling it. This line of logic also implies that we as listeners, or as objects interacting with other objects, are transformed in the process. So, when I listen to Free Jazz and hear chaos, I am partly hearing myself. Or, rather, my self is a fragile object that is being transformed by interaction with others.

It feels now like we are getting into the “communicative connection with spiritual energies” goal of Free Jazz, and thus this may be a good place to stop. But, I wish to say that the field of critical theory called New Materialism appears to be developing some interesting tools for looking at non-human objects in more revealing ways, as well as analyzing human-objects in ways that entangle us more with the stuff we dismiss as “just stuff.” This may give us the chance to understand Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas about chaos and rhythm in ways that reveal our ontological co-habitation with objects and things, and as objects and things.

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