

Fig. 2:

From the Anarchic to the Archaic: Theorizing Free Improvisation

by Mike Heffley

(presented at a Jazz-Institut conference in Darmstadt, Germany, a few days after 9/11)

Before the attack on New York City--which, had it happened a day earlier or later, might have stopped me dead in my tracks on my twice-weekly commute from Connecticut to my teaching job at Rutgers University in New Jersey--I had written this paper to take on a question Ekkehard Jost asked in his 1987 book *Europas Jazz*: how does one analyze a music that creates and defines itself in the moment of its sounding? He was referring to the music known then as European free jazz--which had indeed ushered in an improvisatory practice that European critics and players understood to be European jazz's individuation and independence from its American parent. Since then, the free jazz movement has expanded to a much more broadly motivated and global "new and improvised music" scene, and Jost's question rings all the more loudly.

My attempt to answer it began with my 1997 encounter with a performance by Cecil Taylor at the Total Music Meeting in Berlin, at the beginning of my own study of the Berlin *Freie Musik Produktion* (FMP) label. The opening 5-10 minutes of that performance consisted of Cecil prowling around a darkened stage and growling and muttering ominously like some wild beast, joined by his 10 American and European bandmates doing the same, until it culminated in what sounded like a menagerie of birds, beasts, and insects around some wilderness watering hole.

At least Jost was dealing with instruments. I had been listening to Cecil and some of the others he played with that night long enough to feel comfortable as a listener; I'd also been writing about it as a journalist long enough to have developed ways of describing, giving opinions, and assessing it for general readers. I'd also participated in it as a musician enough times--some with the people I'd just heard with Cecil--to know how to discuss it in that context. But how to write about it as a scholar, analytically, then even further, theoretically?

The beginnings of my answer then were informed by a very visceral reaction to Taylor and his music by two youngish European couples sitting next to me. They were mainstream jazz fans who were looking in on this celebration of freely improvised music for the first time, and they were shocked and revolted. In conversation afterwards, expressing no overt racism, they described Taylor as a devil producing evil music, entralling his younger (all white) protégés with his evil charisma. (Parenthetically, I was surprised and amused, in that regard, at one of the young men's depiction of white Americans as a populace spawned by the losers and outcasts of their own European society, those who couldn't hack it

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in civilization.) I assured them that I understood and respected their feelings, that I sometimes also experienced them, but that, as an American from a pluralistic society, I had learned to refrain from immediate demonization of others as the natural response to such feelings. Our discussion went on to glance at such demonizations that had taken place, mostly interracial, in both American and European history, the genocides and murders that had resulted from them. We also touched on the question, one they brought up, of whether there was such a thing as universal good and evil, and what the nature of its battles should be in flesh-and-blood humans, specifically in the terms of artistic manifestations of it.

All of this called to my mind many similar moments from jazz historiography: Darmstadt's collection of historical German articles about early jazz include similarly horrified descriptions of it as the chaotic ragings of barbaric hordes storming the gates of Western civilization; my close study of John Gray's *Fire Music*, a bibliography of press coverage of the free-jazz movements in America and Europe, revealed a similar reception in much of the jazz press of the time. Descriptors such as musical anarchy or barbarism, or music of hate, were not uncommon, as many of us remember personally.

This conflict between the barbaric and the civilized, I recalled further, has a long and inglorious history as a dialectic in the West's discourse on music. I sketched the instances I knew about in a structuralist dyad, Fig. 1.

Fig. 2:

tumbling strain
phrygian
Greek *mousik*
Germanic *baritus*
Gallic

Gothic
Protestant
Baroque
romanticism
flow
carnival
Dionysian
body
Africa
America
folk, *unterhaltung*
secular

low
hot
black
barbaric
rustic
oral
improvised
new-and-improvised music scene

one-step melody (Sachs)
dorian
plainsong (McKinnon)
Latin literature (Tacitus)
Old Roman/Gregorian
(Treitler, Hiley)
Roman (Lang)
Catholic (Lang)
Classical (Lang)
empfindsamkeit
moment (Husserl)

lent (Attali)
Apollonian
word (Mellers)
the West (Small)
Europe
ernst
sacred

high (classist)
cool (Kumpf, jazz)
white (racist, essentialist)
civilized
cosmopolitan
literate (Sidran)
composed (Bailey)
globalized music industry

Fig. 2:

This dialectic is easily recognized in jazz historiography: Africans in America have often been cast by Western eyes into the role of the barbarian, even as they aspire to that of the civilized. In European history, the role of the barbarian was also played by the Germanic tribes encroaching on classical Mediterranean civilization, not to be entirely shaken off until the rise of the West as a world power, and re-conceived in modern terms in the 20th-century wars.

My agenda in my pre-9/11 paper was to counter civilization's assessment of barbarism as an embodiment of violent anarchy with my own re-assessment of it as what I called a turn to the archaic. The etymology of both anarchy and archaic is that of *arche*, the Greek word for "first principles." My idea was that in music, the first principles reside in the human body, including what we call its mind and psyche, and in nature as a whole, in the physical properties of acoustics and sound. The term "anarchy" suggests that arena as one ungoverned by and begging imposition of principles of order, forcefully or coercively as often as not. Most specifically here, jazz, and especially free jazz, has been represented and resisted as this kind of anarchy--something both lacking and threatening order--throughout the history of its reception. By placing spontaneously improvised music rather under the rubric of the archaic, I wanted to make the point that there is already an order in place there, it is not mere unprincipled potential. Whereas anarchy suggests a barbarian's hostility to a civilization's underlying respect for life, the archaic rather suggests an affirmation of life's principles unmediated by compromising qualifications. Something like the phenomenologists' phrase "*Ding an sich*," or thing in itself.

The rest of my handouts will walk us through the development of an analytical methodology I devised to reveal this autonomous order on the level of the improvising body; they will show the connection between these analytical revelations and the theoretical rubric of the archaic as experienced in personal and social bodies.

Fig. 2:

**African American Modal jazz,
*Sketches of Spain***

Starting with a most tangible and simple example, the turn to Greek modes taken by George Russell and Miles Davis was one based on sheerly musical considerations. Still, implicit was an identification with a cultural and intellectual history less problematic than that which it preceded in the West; *Sketches of Spain*, more subtly, evoked through a contemporary composition mythic images of a Western country Africanized, rather than an African one Westernized

Free jazz

The music of Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler, while packaged and received under an avant-garde rubric, evoked a rural African America riding free of urban, commercial, and Western-civilized frameworks imposed.

Global spirituality, Afrocentric mythos

Coltrane's later recordings, in a quest to unearth spiritual roots and principles buried by secular modernity, evoked the West's archaic past via non-Western current traditions that departed less crucially than the West did from that same shared past; Pharoah Sanders and Julius Hemphill, with recordings such as *Tauhid* and *Dogon AD*, evoked a mythic African Eden unspoiled. Art Ensemble of Chicago, Sun Ra, and Anthony Braxton all tender elements of a primal occult and perennial philosophy, associated with Egypt and Cush and other ancient African empires.

European Modal jazz, German medieval

Like Miles Davis and John Coltrane, Albert Mangelsdorff's turn to metrically open-ended modal platforms, in a piece such as "Es Sungen Drei Engel," was primarily a musical gambit to move past the conventional tune with changes-- though his choice of a medieval German folk song for the vehicle also suggested a concern for his own cultural-historical roots, and their connection with the larger Eurasian world before it was so divided into East and West.

Free jazz

Peter Brötzmann, while professing no conscious look backward farther than early jazz, was associated with the Fluxus group, the professed aesthetic of which included associations with the primal and anarchic, and a general eschewal of any top-down organizations by high culture or civilization. Closer to his own music, Brötzmann's sound and style often provoked comparisons in the press with a primal teutonicism, and images of the barbaric Hun storming civilized gates, much as Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp and others did in America with blackness. Peter Kowald's collaborations with Japanese butoh dancers, Greek traditional musicians, Tuvan singer Sainkho Namtchylak and others similarly evoked Western reconnections with paganism and shamanism, sometimes articulated directly in his liner notes.

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In the different context of East Germany, Ulrich Gumpert drew on medieval German folk and sacred music, evoking pre-nationalistic tribal roots; and Günter Sommer made his own drumkit and other instruments, turning away from the modern Gretsch and Ludwig equipment of his colleagues to suggest some African village drum maker, and to indeed evoke the soundscapes of Africa and Asia he couldn't get out of the country to visit.

Global spirituality, Eurocentric mythos

The Globe Unity Orchestra's first recording, while a very modernist project drawing on contemporary composition, also featured liner notes by Alexander von Schlippenbach that read like something Pythagoras might be imagined to have written.

Fig. 2:

The abstract of my talk mentioned Charles Mingus's solicitation of Duke Ellington's opinion of the then new thing in jazz sparked by Ornette Coleman's first recordings. Duke's answering question--"Do we really want to go back to something that primitive?"--reminded me of yet another pattern of discourse within the music scholarship of my purview: the phenomenon of innovations, often received and represented by the press and general public as "avant-garde," being in fact conceived by the musicians making them as reaches into some primal past, half historic, half mythic, as much as gestures looking forward in time. I listed some examples that came to my mind on Fig. 2. I don't want to dwell on their details; I only want to point out that while these examples seem to suggest something like an historical revival, this is not what I mean by a turn to the archaic. It is true that we can impose an evolutionary teleology and timeline on some of the pairings in Fig. 1--eg., civilization obviously came after non-civilization in history, as did literacy after orality, composition after improvisation, Christian plainsong after Greek *mousik* and so on--but it's even more true and obvious that both sides are more complementary than successive, more like a see-saw than an evolutionary ladder. When one side appears, the other doesn't go away; indeed, each side gives rise to and feeds the other. So it doesn't work to say that a turn to the archaic means a turn to something in the most distant past that gave way to the historical and modern, and is now being revived after having been overridden. The archaic, as the arena of first principles, has never left.

I got to the theoretical notion of a turn to the archaic as a function of the improvising body by constructing an analytical methodology suited to the music Jost and I were both studying. I built on Jost's own approach then, which was to time and describe the sequence of musical events comprising a free improvisation. I combined that with the graphic work of Dietrich Noll, which was to depict musical events as multitextured sound surfaces patterned in moment time, like paintings on a canvas, rather than as layered pitch-and-pulse matrices unfolding in flow time, like linguistic syntax; and I drew on the work of American analyst Lawrence Ferrara, who, like Noll, used the German fathers of phenomenology to model a methodology that would account not only objectively for the music's sound terrain, but also for the subjective emotional affects or any other psychological states it triggered or suggested.

Fig. 2:

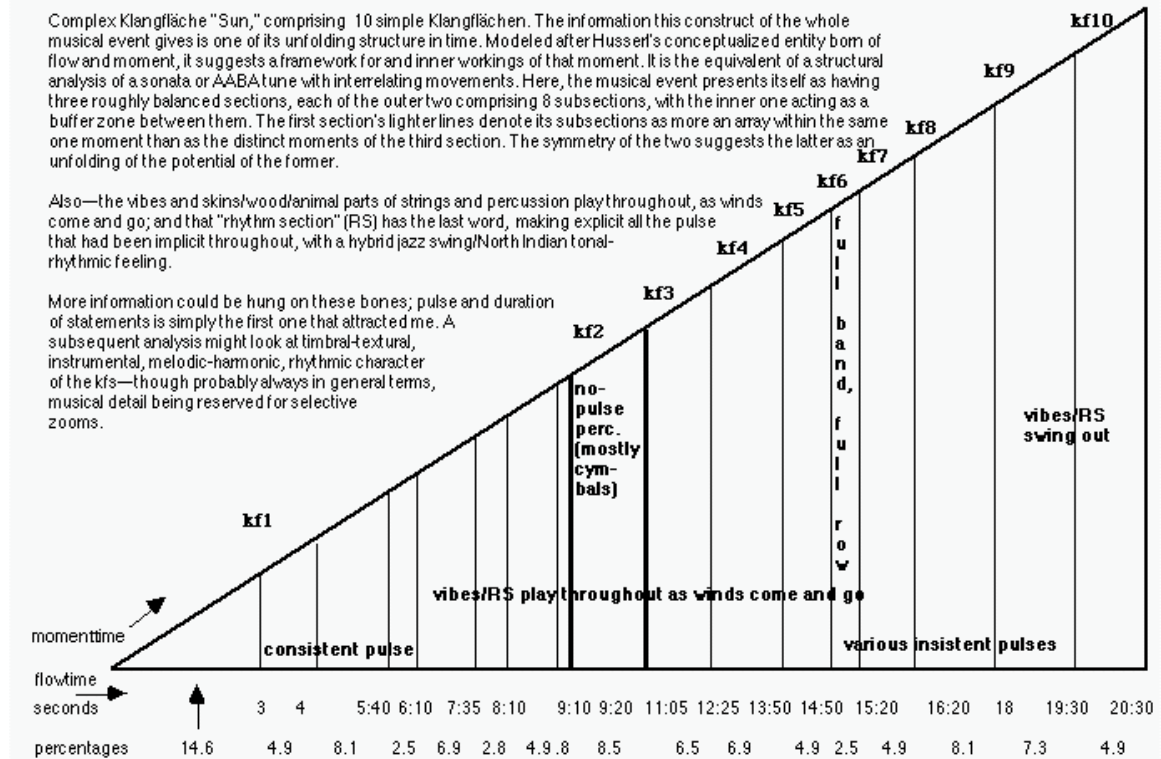


Fig. 3

is an analytical rendering of one of the FMP-related recordings I studied, the B side of the early SABA recording *Globe Unity*, Alexander von Schlippenbach's piece called "Sun." My graphic combines a variation on Jost's timings and descriptions and Noll's depictions of what he called *Klangflächen*, sound surfaces; as you see from my shorthand tags KF in both capital and lowercase letters, Noll conceived of the entire musical event as what he called a complex *Klangfläche*, and of the discernibly distinct components it comprised as simple *Klangflächen*. The triangle shape is Noll's variation on phenomenology's founder Edmund Husserl's graphic depiction of the sense of time passing; the music begins at the point on the left, the horizontal axis charts time's flow, the vertical axis its moments. More concretely, in this example, musicians improvise in distinct segments--group play gives way to solo and other combinations, tempi or dynamics change, or lines are spun out to an ending--and the sequence of these makes up the single musical event. Some elements of these segments are somewhat scripted, but the thing this graphic highlights--musical time--is not. No one decided precisely when to end one section and begin another, the timing and pacing unfolded spontaneously in performance. This tells me that, as mentioned above, primary principles are operating autonomously, intuitively, rather than rationally and prescriptively, not only on the generative but also on the receptive ends of this musical event. That is, my analysis did not set out to unearth this order of a biological clock in action,¹ of periodicity and symmetry; I was guided by no mental map, as the musicians were not, yet a map emerged from me, even as the order it maps emerged from them.

Fig. 2:

Now what does this map of the improvising body have to do with the idea of the archaic? The short answer is that both music and the human body, as many scholars and musicians have noted--and here I'm recalling some of Charles Seeger's, Edward Hall's and Alan Merriam's work, and my interviews with Günter Hampel, Joachim Kühn, and Vinko Globokar--function somewhat as time-travel machines. The ontogeny of our development from embryos recapitulates the phylogeny of our emergence from the microbiology of the sea; the evolution of our species from reptilian to mammalian to human beings is recapitulated in the layers of our limbic, mammal, and neo-cortical brains. Evolutionary time is encoded in the moment of our own bodies.

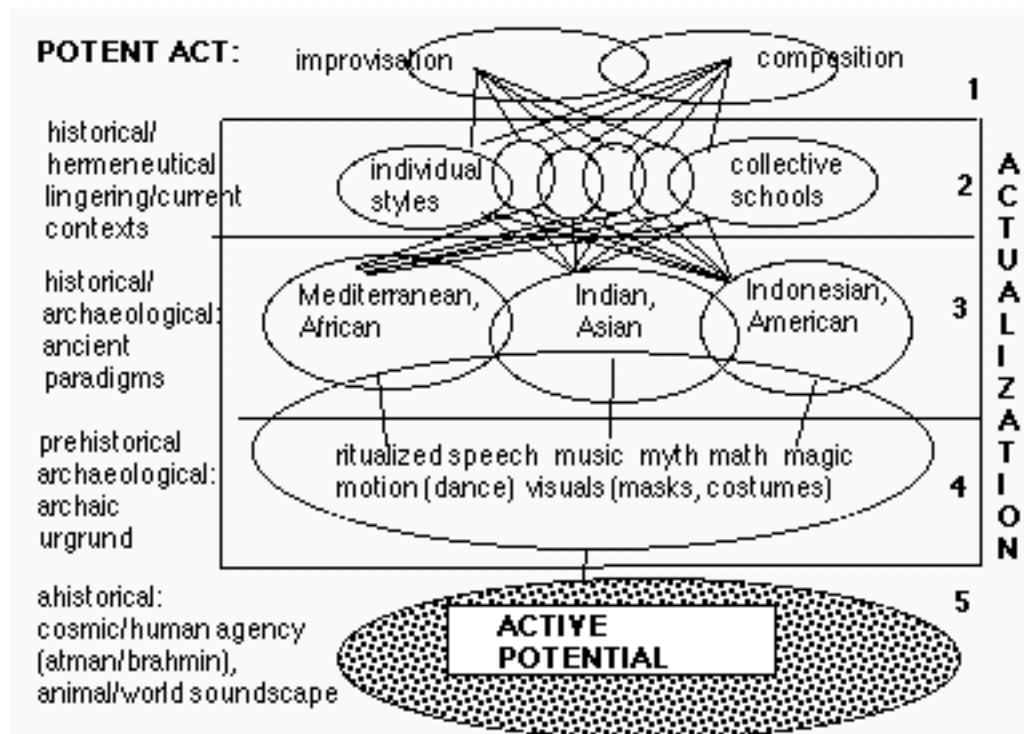


Fig. 4: this depiction of the moment of spontaneous musication is, among other things, a de-polarization of the two sides of the structuralist dyad of Fig. 1, conceiving their marriage rather than conflict.

Fig. 3 captured an order in the music that suggested an ordering autonomous to the body; Fig. 4 is my attempt to visualize the process that makes that order unfold. That is, the autonomous order of the biological clock unfolded when the musicians employed a certain approach called free or spontaneous improvisation; I wanted to chart that process as I understood it through both my observations of this music and its players and my many participations in it as a player myself over the last 30 years.

Fig. 4 depicts the moment of musical creation, that of either an improviser or composer. Like my other graphic device, this was built on the work of other

Fig. 2:

colleagues, Gary Tomlinson and Ludwik Bielawski, musicologists not working in this area, but contributing tools I can use. I can best explain this chart subjectively and practically, the way I actually do use it as both player and listener.

I think of these five layers as levels of consciousness within the act of musical creation, something like chakras that can be either awake or asleep in the body. Each layer is discrete and distinct from the others, but all are connected, and comprise a greater whole. The top layer is where I, and anyone, actually make the gesture that makes the music. If only the top layer existed, every act of creation would be from a *tabula rasa*, essentially uninformed by the past or the present outside the self-contained genius, individuality, and authority of the artist.

This idea of the blank slate, of wiping out the past as a mistake and starting from ground zero has a special place in the history of free jazz, as, indeed, in that of the idea of "avant-garde" in 20th-century Western arts, politics, and philosophy, starting from phenomenology and moving through existentialism into the various potent acts their "active potential" has inspired in sociopolitical and cultural arenas, both destructively and benignly. To list all the various implications of the blank slate idea that have been taken seriously--rather than dismissed as I and every one of the musicians I've talked to and worked with dismiss it--would be yet another paper, thick and rich.

Suffice it here to suggest that freely improvised music as actually developed and practiced by its American and European proponents is a discourse that is generally misunderstood and ignored as nothing but top-layer action--the gestures of players ungrounded in historical musical discourse--and understood as the flower of all five layers by those who passionately make and listen to it. I would further assert that the real nature of both the human nervous system and of human culture--of the individual and the collective--as unearthed by real scholarship of both subjects, corroborate the music as an issue of all five layers better than as one of the top alone.

If we add layer two, we add the historical dimension in the form of personal styles other than those of the creating artist, and of collective styles couching those. Thus, Beethoven and Romanticism, Bach and Baroque, Duke Ellington and Swing, Charlie Parker and bop, etc.--any indigenous genre (in my case, it's been Western music, including jazz), and any of its non-generic stylists. Musicians are not free *from* these, as in layer one alone, but now free *to* them as part of their palette for originality. In practice, accessing layer two is how musicians typically learn, as a stage prior to either building something original or settling themselves into derivative work and careers (which I would depict as moving from layer 1 to layer 2, rather than combining them). European jazz developed in this way, imitatively, until its *Emanzipation* in the 1960s; African-Americans, for that matter, also deferred in this way to Western conventions until the 1960s.

Fig. 2:

Layer three brings in the overarching historical traditions that couch layer two, giving the creating musician access to all formalized and historicized music everywhere and everywhen, as well as the way to discern between personal styles, local-historical styles, and global-historical styles. The point, remember, is that as we add these layers they become fodder for personal, original music, not scripts of tradition to be performed. Thus, at this point we move beyond our local-historical issues into the world and history at large; if playing the blues in a night club, or a 32-bar song in a college become problematic, we can move into musical material and its associated cultural-historical issues wherever and whenever we find them and put our own spins on them, apply them to our own situations. Sun Ra, Anthony Braxton, and John and Alice Coltrane did that to broaden their music out of the American universe, as did the East German musicians to get out of their state-governed dance bands. They didn't revive something from an earlier time, they changed their time by connecting with other times and places.

But again, if we stopped at this layer, all improvised and composed music would be creatable and analyzable in terms of its infinite personal variations on fixed formal schemes and systems, codified as either oral or literate tradition or both--which is what the vast majority of public, commercial music is. The composite of these three layers is, for me, both personally and politically, an idol; it has the power and promise of an idol, and also the limits and treacheries. We fall short of our own human agency and responsibility, we serve genres and traditions as something higher rather than subject to us, and we rise and fall, kill and die over them. While their musical materials do comprise some of what we hear in improvised music--we do hear scales, rhythms and other such traditional material--they don't stand as its foundation. Layers four and five get us into that foundation, what I'm calling the archaic as a function of the improvising body.

Layer four represents an imagined primal past of which we have no historical record, oral or literate, but which we postulate as undeniable from what music we do know, and as ongoing: the human capacity, ingrained and interacting with the environment, to generate any and all such formalized systems--of languages, arts, sciences, religions--as people and as peoples. And, in layer five, the common ground we share with the nonhuman universe from which our humanity draws its life and shape. These layers are archaic in the word's true sense because they define the realm of first principles; and we get to them by mining correspondingly deep levels of our own bodies/minds, proprioceptively integrating every anatomical system from brain to loins, like practicing phenomenologists or meditating yogis, whatever end of the chakra spectrum we start at, in the process of creating a musical universe that expresses both us and the larger universe as uniquely as do our fingerprints and faces. In moving awareness and its musical expression from neocortex to limbic brain, again, we are moving through our own little time machine from the new and improved and personal and cultural to the old and primal and impersonal and natural. In plumbing the timely moment of our bodies, we tap into a timeless organic reality

Fig. 2:

that is both as new as each of us is and as old as our species and, fundamentally, the world and universe itself.

My suggestion is that the music we call nonidiomatic, free improvisation, with the compositional strategies designed to serve it, is characterized by its access to and integration of all these layers at once, dynamically, without getting trapped--to our financial and social benefit, or at the risk of our lives and souls, in today's world--in any of them.

Now that we have these music-analytical and music-theoretical constructs in mind, I'd like to ponder a few cultural-historical issues they speak to in my mind. One is the role the new-and-improvised music scene plays in the music industry that has gone global over the last 20 years. Another is the idea of whiteness and blackness as identities signified by the music. Another is a response to Stockhausen's recent ill-conceived remark that the attack on New York City was a great work of art. And finally, a consideration of morality in the context of the archaic as a function of the improvising body.

Firstly, Berlin musicologist Veit Erlmann talks about the evocation of a primal past in many New Age and World Music recordings as "pastiche and nostalgia." In the context of the commercial music industry, his ultimately dismissive definition makes sense: all music everywhere and everywhen is dressed up for and assimilated into the globalized Western music industry's moment and agenda, inevitably becoming schtick on some level in the process. By contrast, Don Cherry in an interview with Joachim Berendt, spoke of his approach to world music as a reach for what he called the primal universal foundation of all music, something that strikes me as the same thing as my archaic.

The observation that heartens me, almost a half a century after this music's first hours in both America and Europe, is that it doesn't seem much closer to the centers of power and money than it was then. Mainstream jazz and rock have become commodified and culturally manipulated by the media, as classical music and pop have long been; and the music industry has had no problem marketing the defiant voices and styles of African American youth, or, as world music, of scores of other peoples around the world. These quickly become just another part of the Empire they're burlesquing to the extent that they effect nothing much besides their maker's musical careers. Such hostile takeover by Empire may indeed happen with freely improvised music, but until it does I can indulge the notion that there might yet be such a thing as a musical gesture potent enough to manifest its aesthetic implications in the sociopolitical realm, to deconstruct and reshape Empire along the music's own lines, rather than have Empire forever assimilate, reify, and commodify them.

Secondly, the description of my talk included a promise to sketch a Western version of the myth of the archaic in cultural-historical terms, to match that evoked by the African American artists who pioneered this musical sea change.

Fig. 2:

While such myths are, again, only surface reflections of what I'm calling the archaic, they have played a role in the public arena of culture that accurately reflects something about identity that I think is true on a deeper level. The free jazz-cum-improvised-music movement in Europe certainly didn't match the iconics of a primal blackness removed from Western history with poetic images of a primal whiteness also removed from its own history of imperialism and oppression. That would have been problematic because of the real history of the World Wars and colonialism. Nevertheless, if you read into the information sketched about the European musicians in Fig. 2 a story a European American might less problematically read, you read the myth of a primal Eurasian cultural continuum differentiated more by classes than races, classes of the powerful and the oppressed, and clashes of the civilized and the tribal, the oral and the literate, with this music naturally resonating with the underdog therein--what Wilfrid Mellers described as the culture of the body, oppressed by the culture of the word. This pan-Eurasian group of dissenters against their own tyrants and tyrannous systems is where this music speaks and finds its common human ground with those non-Eurasian victims of the same evil. As the images of African identity free of the West have contributed to African American psychological liberation, those of whiteness standing against or apart from its own worst aspects liberate Europeans and European Americans who otherwise feel trapped in either their own histories as victimizers, or in being mere derivations of African American, or any other peoples', identity and freedom.

It is not even remotely a matter of rehabilitating the Aborigines, or finding them a place in the chorus of human rights, for their revenge lies elsewhere. It lies in their power to destabilize Western rule. It lies in their phantom presence, their viral, spectral presence in the synapses of our brains, in the circuitry of our rocketship, as "Alien"; in the way in which the Whites have caught the virus of origins, of Indianness, of Aboriginality, of Patagonicity. We murdered all this, but now it infects our blood, into which it has been inexorably transfused and infiltrated...It is now becoming clear that everything we thought left behind for ever by the ineluctable march of universal progress, is not dead at all, but on the contrary likely to return--not as some archaic or nostalgic vestige (all our indefatigable museumification notwithstanding), but with a vehemence and a virulence that are modern in every sense--and to reach the very heart of our ultra-sophisticated but ultra-vulnerable systems, which it will easily convulse from within without mounting a frontal attack. Such is the destiny of radical otherness--a destiny that no homily of reconciliation and no apologia for difference is going to alter.

--Jean Baudrillard (1990: 137-38)

Fig. 2:

My citation of Jean Baudrillard suggests a vision of a future I imagine reflecting a hypothetical move from cultural margins to center by the music as I've analyzed and theorized it--only I'm proffering here his myth of the White virus of "origins, of Indianness, of Aboriginality, of Patagonicity" to be one carried dormant in the White's *own* blood, and now awakening, as preferable to his idea of invasive infection by "radical otherness."

Having situated the music in terms of power plays between Empires and the bodies of its members and its others, I move into Stockhausen's take on *jihad*. His comparison of the attack on New York with a great work of art struck a nerve in me in the same way as the attack itself did, because of my long engagement with the free jazz movement's association with radical leftist politics. Such politics have often veered into the militant revolutionist's or anarchist's anti-Western rhetoric, first from African-American voices such as Archie Shepp's or Amiri Baraka's and their peers outside the musical arena in black power and nationalism, then from the student protests and violent actions in America and Europe in the '60s & '70s, and, more recently, in demonstrations against global capitalism in Seattle and Genoa--not to mention actions of the same sort from other angles, such as Timothy McVeigh's and the unabomber Ted Kaszynski's.

If we do see violence as part of art's provenance, and if we recall the call to arms and war that music has indeed often been throughout history, and if we see art as a project of culture and civilization building, we would have to see the attack on New York, in particular, as the gesture of one who sees himself as the civilized carrying out an attack on the barbarian whom he sees as having too successfully overthrown and usurped civilization. Civilization from his point of view is Islam as the truth that has superseded the earlier and relatively more barbaric stages leading to it through history. As the Hebrews slew the heathen, then the Christians both the heathen and the Hebrews in order to impose true civilization, so do the *jihadic* warriors try now to slay the infidels in order to do the same.

For me, this teleological fallacy is homologically located in layer 3 of my Fig. 5. That's where these broad expansions of the tribal into the imperial lie and compete, and I call them idols because they function as the masters rather than the servants of those who generate them. (I would add here that I sympathize with Adorno's critique of "jazz" as potential fascism; jazz-as-genre can be reified into a state music like any other genre, as the neo-con movement at Lincoln Center has so resoundingly suggested. But I also see Adorno himself as trapped in the teleological fallacy and the reification of what he considered liberatory. The Second Viennese School became a cage for American academic composers from which John Cage had to liberate them. Free improvisation as I've conceived it on layers four and five moves into the underlying unity of such clashing divisions trapped in history, into an ahistorical experience of culture, in layer 4, and a timeless experience of nature, in layer 5.

Fig. 2:

Finally, having said that, I find myself looking for clues in real musical examples for that nature of morality in all this. If music is a morally neutral force, and the body capable of both living peacefully and killing defensively or aggressively, what makes a music evil or good, and by what lights? This is a question that would be too big to tackle here, except that it happens to be answerable on the very prosaic terms of the musical discourse I'm engaging. I mentioned Lawrence Ferrara's influence on my work; he inspired me to include in my analytical methodology a step I call Metaphorical Insight. This is drawn from the analyst's own subjective responses to the music, who then comes up with his own decision about and vision of the music's identity, like Adam naming the beasts.

Again, as in Fig. 3, there is an arbitrary and unplanned element here, just as there is in the music, in what I incorporate into an assertion of the music's meaning, or identity. Its poetic significance beyond its sound mechanics is asserted more through a self-licensed divination than through an interpretation or analysis to be argued or proven, or even fixed. As the last step in the analysis, it is more a theory than an analysis of the piece, a stab at what the analysis suggests to the analyst at that particular moment.

It is at that moment that I can call this thing good or bad, even as John Coltrane called his own music a force for good and others called it a music of hate. In the spirit of such self-issued poetic license, I've included in my handout one final citation that speaks to me about what freely improvised music is and is not.

Searching in the ruins of Copan for keys to the Maya civilization, Olson became excited about the history of Kulkulkan, the Maya priest-king. The mythical Kulkulkan symbolized to Olson the possibility of social power through cultural authority. He wrote to Creeley:

Are not the Maya the most important characters in the whole panorama...simply because the TOP CLASS in their society, the bosses, were a class whose daily business was KNOWLEDGE, & ITS OFFSHOOT, culture?...

and that any such society goes down easily before a gun?...((The absolute quote here, is, one prime devil, Goebbels, who sd: "When I hear the word 'kultur' I reach for my gun."))

This statement of Olson's turned the myth of progress on its head. The most desirable cultures, he asserted, fell most readily before the weapons of Goebbels and his kind. The idea suggests an inversion of social Darwinism, for it implies that colonizing powers are, as a rule, inferior to the cultures they displace. (73)

And:

Fig. 2:

Olson implied that this loss [of treasures trampled underfoot as worthless by invading Europeans] had occurred because European civilization identified its progress solely with wealth as defined by the accelerated exchange of commodities; as a result, all other standards of value faded before an accumulative desire.

This voice argues that hope lies not in a radical break with the past but in a selective recovery of it--even underfoot, in the Americas, there are clues to social alternatives that suffered untimely destruction. (75)

Daniel Belgrad

Belgrad's passage makes Baudrillard's idea of radical change more concrete. If, suddenly, the superior but weaker culture were empowered, and the dominant and inferior one disempowered--sort of a millennial vision of the last being first--what would the world look like? I prefer an image from the news only slightly less recent than the one of a victorious *jihad* from any quarter. The *New York Times* reported a return of Native Americans and buffalo to the American heartland Plains, and an exodus of whites out as their farming operations failed. The gist of the article was that the agricultural practice and culture established there over the last century and a half may be turning out to be just a failed experiment, not the inevitable progress of civilization previously supposed. When I consider the similarly unsustainable imbalances connected with current global environmental, economic, and political policies and conflicts, I find myself imagining the three top layers of my Fig. 4 chart dissolving before my eyes. When that happens, I want those fourth and fifth layers to be awake and blazing along to generate three new ones. Just like I heard Cecil and his band do that night in 1997 after their first few moments of growling and muttering and shrieking, when they took out their instruments and got down to business.

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