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Author(s): Ingrid Monson

Source: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (Winter, 1994), pp. 283-313

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343912>

Accessed: 23/07/2008 16:37

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# Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation: Irony, Parody, and Ethnomusicology

Ingrid Monson

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

—W. E. B. DU BOIS, *The Souls of Black Folk*

High in the tower where I sit beside the loud complaining of the human sea I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that puzzle me more than the Souls of White Folk. Not, mind you, the souls of them that are white, but souls of them that have become painfully conscious of their whiteness; those in whose minds the paleness of their bodily skins is fraught with tremendous and eternal significance.

—W. E. B. DU BOIS, "The Souls of White Folk"

These words of W. E. B. Du Bois resonate forcefully in the context of current discussions on culture and identity in ethnomusicology and an-

This essay is dedicated to the late Howard Mayer Brown, a generous mentor and friend. My thinking on this topic began while I held an American Fellowship from the Association of American University Women in 1990–1991. For critical readings and discussions I thank Elizabeth Alexander, Paul Berliner, Don Byron, Nahum Chandler, Jean and John Comaroff, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Adelaida Reyes Schramm, Bambi Schieffelin, and Kay Shelemay.

*Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994)

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thropology. Post-structuralist discourse, which emphasizes the historical contingency of knowledge, questions the coherence of totalizing concepts such as culture, challenges the notion of transcendent universals, and critiques as essentialist descriptions that define groups in terms of unvarying sets of characteristics, has problematized four key assumptions that have guided ethnomusicologists for decades: 1. Distinct musical cultures exist and are relatively homogeneous internally. 2. Musical cultures can be described meaningfully through ethnography and academic discourse. 3. We can inductively generalize to the level of culture from our fieldwork data. 4. Clear boundaries can be drawn between cultures.<sup>1</sup>

These assumptions, which characterize what I am calling a homogeneous concept of culture, have been critiqued increasingly within the field, particularly by work in urban areas and popular music.<sup>2</sup> We have come to recognize that the boundaries between our areas of study are hopelessly entwined, that what is observed in music is likely to recur in other domains of cultural activity, and that musicians borrow from everywhere. The writings of Pierre Bourdieu and Mikhail Bakhtin, among others, have made us aware of the importance of dialogic and multivocal perspectives in our work. Consequently, we are more likely to realize the idiosyncratic and historically situated character of the data resulting from our research than to presume its generalizability.<sup>3</sup>

1. For a concise summary of these issues in anthropology, see Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 1–38. On the productivity of Foucauldian ideas in musicology, see Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Towards a Historiography of Others* (Chicago, 1993).

2. See Adelaida Reyes Schramm, "Ethnic Music, the Urban Area, and Ethnomusicology," *Sociologus* 29, no. 1 (1979): 1–21, "Explorations in Urban Ethnomusicology: Hard Lessons from the Spectacularly Ordinary," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 14 (1982): 1–14, and "Tradition in the Guise of Innovation: Music among a Refugee Population," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 18 (1986): 91–101; Ingrid Monson, "Forced Migration, Asymmetrical Power Relations and African-American Music: Reformulation of Cultural Meaning and Musical Form," *The World of Music* 32, no. 3 (1990): 22–45; Mark Slobin, "Micromusics of the West: A Comparative Approach," *Ethnomusicology* 36 (Winter 1992): 1–87; and Christopher Alan Waterman, *Jùjú: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Form* (Chicago, 1990).

3. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1977), and Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Holquist (1935; Austin, Tex., 1981), pp. 259–422. Examples of work in ethnomusicology informed by these ideas include Steven Feld, "Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style or 'Lift-up-over Sounding': Getting into the Kaluli

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**Ingrid Monson** is an ethnomusicologist and assistant professor in the Department of Music at the University of Chicago. She is at work on a book entitled *Saying Something: Musical and Human Interaction in Jazz Improvisation*, in which she expands on many of the ideas presented here.

Nevertheless, talking about culture in the context of these constantly shifting paradigms and multiple considerations remains a vexed issue. Mark Slobin has recently proposed a general yet fluid framework for considering the interactions among heterogeneous local cultures ("subcultures"), hegemonic cultures ("supercultures"), and internationally related cultures ("intercultures"), as well as the melange of elements that constitute each of these individually. Slobin has assembled examples from a wide variety of ethnographic work and organized them by issue to illustrate the range of phenomena and issues that ethnomusicologists have observed. In doing so he has admirably demonstrated the scope of the problem of culture without presuming that a global model will provide final answers. By his own admission, he did not attempt to address the particular problems raised by the issue of race.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay I explicitly address that issue by taking a relatively close look at a few examples of musical irony in jazz with a view toward illustrating the complex cultural web in which these fragmentary musical details are embedded. These examples include transformations of non-African-American popular songs (standards), quotation of tunes (or solos), and exaggerated, humorous references to well-known musical features of jazz and other African-American musical genres. If musicians are saying something—musically, culturally, socially, or politically—when they improvise,<sup>5</sup> the ethnographer must consider in what ways this meaning is articulated, communicated, and perceived by musicians and their audiences. I view jazz improvisation as a mode of social action that musicians selectively employ in their process of communicating.<sup>6</sup>

In what follows I attempt to draw some broad continuities between the heterogeneity of musical expression in jazz improvisation and the heterogeneity of cultural identity found in African-American musical communities. What Slobin calls superculture, interculture, and subcul-

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Groove," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 20 (1988): 74–113; Louise Meintjes, "Paul Simon's *Graceland*, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning," *Ethnomusicology* 34 (Winter 1990): 37–73; and Waterman, "'Our Tradition is a Very Modern Tradition': Popular Music and the Construction of Pan-Yoruba Identity," *Ethnomusicology* 34 (Fall 1990): 367–79.

4. See Slobin, "Micromusics of the West," p. 81.

5. For ethnographic documentation and interpretation of language metaphors in the metalinguistic practice of jazz musicians, see Monson, "Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz: An Ethnomusicological Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1991), pp. 174–229, and Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (forthcoming).

6. Many musicians leave the word *jazz* out of their descriptions, preferring to call their musical practices simply music or improvisation. Contemporary musicians Michael Carvin and Jaki Byard separately indicated this preference to me in interviews conducted on 12 December 1992 and 20 February 1991, respectively. On the deliberate avoidance of the word *jazz* by early jazz musicians, see Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana, Ill., 1992), pp. 71, 133–34.

ture are certainly at play in my analysis, yet I suggest that the notion of subculture as applied to African-American music has a problematic aspect because the predominant direction of influence in American popular music in the twentieth century has been from African-American to European-American. In the musical sphere, African-Americans invert the expected relationship between hegemonic superculture and subculture (without, however, changing these relationships in the economic sphere), something which is of extreme symbolic importance to African-American communities. It is my contention that a close reading of this process of inversion has a great deal to offer current ethnomusicological debates about cultural theory.

My initial thinking on the problem of culture, race, and music was motivated by the challenge of presenting in my dissertation the viewpoints of fourteen professional jazz musicians active in the New York and international jazz scenes in a manner that did not do violence to their thinking on musical processes or the range of their opinions on the issues of race and identity.<sup>7</sup> A homogeneous view of culture was simply inadequate to conceptualize such a deeply intercultural situation.

Musicians stressed their fundamental disdain at being cast in the image of the jazz musician as untutored, instinctual, nonverbal, and immoral rather than knowledgeable—an image that has been transmitted in a wide range of (primarily non-African-American) historical writings. This image, which has pervaded jazz discourse in both obvious and subtle ways, has been tied to what Ted Gioia terms “the Primitivist myth.”<sup>8</sup> In it the jazz musician is constructed as a “noble savage” who maintains a pure, emotional, and unmediated relationship to his art. The earliest jazz critics were French men—Hughes Panassié, Charles Delaunay, and Robert Goffin—with strong relationships to the primitivist movement.<sup>9</sup> From their perspective, the “primitive” was something positive—a romanticized, uncontaminated ideal toward which artists should aspire. Hughes Panassié, for example, praised African-American musicians—but in terms that revealed insulting presuppositions about the nature of African-American musical knowledge and cultural life:

7. My ethnographic work is described in Monson, “Interaction in Modern Jazz.” I worked with fourteen professional jazz musicians including Richard Davis, Sir Roland Hanna, Billy Higgins, Cecil McBee, Jaki Byard, Roy Haynes, Michael Carvin, Don Byron, Phil Bowler, Ralph Peterson, Joanne Brackeen, Kenny Washington, Jerome Harris, and Michael Weiss. I do not claim a privileged relationship to these musicians, who generously spoke to me at particular points during the course of my dissertation research in New York in 1989–91. Each of them has been multiply interviewed by many jazz journalists and historians and none is a stranger to the public eye. In work that is as close to home as this it is absurd to claim a definitive voice for the ethnographer.

8. See Ted Gioia, *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture* (New York, 1988), pp. 19–49.

9. See Gioia, *The Imperfect Art*, pp. 25–31.

Instead of leading toward progress, the development of musical theories, which are often erroneous, has, on the contrary, a tendency to muzzle inspiration, to restrain and cripple the creative effort of the great artist who thus loses much of his spontaneity. That is why musicians who are untrained in musical theory and who have no preconceived notions often express themselves with a naturalness which, granted equal talent, makes them far more interesting than the cultured musicians who are more or less consciously victims of the theories of their age. In general, such independence is impossible except in a primitive music and then only in the beginnings of that music.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the musicians and audience members whom I encountered while gathering information for this project expressed extreme distaste for this sort of backhanded compliment. The tendency of non-African-Americans to make lower-class life or the idea of an exoticized subculture stand for the jazz community is deeply resented by most. This subcultural perspective on jazz has distorted the general perception of African-American cultural life.<sup>11</sup> Many of the musicians I spoke to in 1989–91 expressed the desire that others recognize the discipline, musical knowledge, achievements, and intelligence necessary to perform at a level that meets the jazz world's standards of spontaneity, soulfulness, creativity, virtuosity, and drive. This desire is *not* a simple capitulation to "white middle class" standards but an assertion of an idea of "African-Americanness" that includes the cosmopolitan and everyday knowledge of urban African-Americans. In *Blues People* Amiri Baraka described the challenge of such self-assertion for bebop musicians:

They [bebop musicians] sought to erect a meta-culture as isolated as their grandparents', but issuing from the evolved sensibility of a modern urban black American who had by now achieved a fluency with the socio-cultural symbols of Western thinking . . . It was the beginning of the Negro's fluency with some of the canons of formal

10. Hughes Panassié, *The Real Jazz*, trans. Anne Sorelle Williams (New York, 1942), pp. 14–15.

11. Sociological writings that have taken this perspective include Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, 1963) and "The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience," *American Journal of Sociology* 57 (Sept. 1951): 136–44; William B. Cameron, "Sociological Notes on the Jam Session," *Social Forces* 33 (Dec. 1954): 177–82; and Alan P. Merriam and Raymond W. Mack, "The Jazz Community," *Social Forces* 38 (Mar. 1960): 211–22. Merriam was one of the principal founders of modern ethnomusicology. For a longer discussion of this literature, see Monson, *Saying Something: Musical and Human Interaction in Jazz Improvisation* (forthcoming). For a romanticized, exoticized subcultural perspective on Charlie Parker's life, see Ross Russell, *Bird Lives! The High Life and Hard Times of Charlie (Yardbird) Parker* (New York, 1973). Compare Russell's biography to "Beboppers . . . the Cult," a chapter in Dizzy Gillespie's autobiography that critically evaluates exoticized images of the bebop movement point for point. See Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To BE, or Not . . . to BOP: Memoirs* (New York, 1979).

Western nonconformity, which was an easy emotional analogy to the three hundred years of unintentional nonconformity his color constantly reaffirmed.<sup>12</sup>

In *Urban Blues* Charles Keil questioned Baraka's "ethnic pose." Though praising the general contributions of *Blues People*, Keil suggested that the book's relative neglect of the urban blues scene could be explained by Baraka's middle-class background and consequent lack of familiarity with the "real"—that is, poor and urban—African-American world.<sup>13</sup> The simple correlation of "authentic" blackness (or the lack thereof) with class status has increasingly been replaced in recent African-Americanist cultural studies with an emphasis on the paradoxes and multiple mediations linking race, class, gender, and style.<sup>14</sup> But in suggesting that there are criteria by which certain African-Americans (and some European-Americans) might judge others as "less black," Keil articulated a point of debate within African-American communities that continues to this day.<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising that the terms in which this debate continues have taken on a different emphasis in the nearly thirty years since *Urban Blues* first appeared. How to interpret intercultural borrowing stands at the center of this debate.

### *Doubleness and Irony in African-American Music*

It is two worlds separate yet bound together like those double stars that, bound for all time, whirl around each other separate yet one.

—W. E. B. DU BOIS, "Beyond the Veil in a Virginia Town"

Du Bois's metaphor of doubleness summarizes the encounter between Africans and Europeans in America by constructing an image that includes two separate worlds clearly demarcated yet inextricably entwined. The vernacular gloss, which sets "the black way" against "the white way," simplifies a long historical process of cultural confrontation that has resulted in an American cultural landscape where the African and non-African-American worlds have remained distinct yet have partially overlapped.

12. Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York, 1963), p. 201.

13. See Charles Keil, *Urban Blues* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 41, 43.

14. For an excellent discussion of these issues as articulated in the arena of black hair-style, see Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 247–64. On the issue of the multiplicity of voices in African-American identity versus an "authentic" African-American voice presumed by white audiences, see bell hooks [Gloria Watkins], *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston, 1989), pp. 11–12.

15. See Baraka, *Blues People*, pp. 122–41. Baraka associates the church and the middle class with the ideology of assimilation and the shame of blackness.

Du Bois's concept of doubleness has resonated in the thinking of African-American intellectuals, including most recently Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who speaks of a "two-toned heritage,"<sup>16</sup> and poet Elizabeth Alexander, who has proposed the term *collage* to describe the multiplicity of voices that coexist in African-American identity. Alexander explicitly moves away from a dichotomous opposition of "black" and "white" to a perspective that includes multiple voices. She rejects the notion that African-Americans speak from a "state of spiritual and cultural schizophrenia and self-division," in favor of a conception of collage that "maps a theoretical space in which the myriad particulars of identity can reside."<sup>17</sup>

In an anthropological assessment of Du Bois's early writings, Nahum Chandler has argued further for "a generalization and therefore radicalization of Du Bois's notion of 'double-consciousness' as the process by which social identity in general is constructed."<sup>18</sup> Yet within ethnomusicology this very compositeness of identity when situated against disciplinary presumptions of homogeneous culture has been among the reasons that African-American studies until recently have been "not quite other enough" for ethnomusicology and "too other" for musicology. This position of in-betweenness and consequent marginality within the field has masked the fact that African-American music and culture have long raised what are emerging as the most central issues in current social and cultural theory. Though current ethnomusicological and anthropological work has increasingly emphasized that all identities are multiply constructed, Du Bois, as early as 1903, and Baraka in 1963 were explicitly aware of this issue, and they were not alone among African-American thinkers.

### *Doubleness, Signifyin(g), and Irony*

In *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., draws upon the sociolinguistic literature on African-American language to extend the con-

16. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York, 1988), p. xxiii; hereafter abbreviated *SM*.

17. Elizabeth Alexander, introduction, *Collage: An Approach to Reading African-American Women's Literature* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1992).

18. Nahum Chandler, "The Problem of Purity: The Question of Social Difference and African American Social Identity in the Early Work of W. E. B. Du Bois, 1895-1915," unpublished dissertation prospectus, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, p. 16. Chandler deals with the problem of intermixture in Du Bois and the implications for the construction of white identity in "The Signification of the Autobiographical in the Work of W. E. B. Du Bois," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, 5 Dec. 1992. I thank him for referring me to Du Bois's "The Souls of White Folk" and "Beyond the Veil in a Virginia Town."

cept of signifying beyond its associations with African-American verbal dueling genres. Central to Gates's notion of Signifyin(g) are the ideas of transformation and intertextuality. African-American literary aesthetics, in his opinion, transform and frequently invert mainstream literary and linguistic conventions: "Signifyin(g) is black double-voicedness; because it always entails formal revision and an intertextual relation . . . I find it an ideal metaphor for black literary criticism, for the formal manner in which texts seem concerned to address their antecedents. Repetition, with a signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g), as we shall see" (*SM*, p. 51).<sup>19</sup> Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon includes the notion of "repetition with a difference" as well in her definition of parody:

Parody, then, in its ironic "trans-contextualization" and inversion, is repetition with a difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humor in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual "bouncing" . . . between complicity and distance.<sup>20</sup>

Signifyin(g) for Gates is about the valorization of figurative modes of expression that mark the "two discursive universes" of black and white (*SM*, p. 75). It is not so much a matter of what is said but of how it is said. The transformation of language usage of the "white" discursive universe into the expressive modes of the "black" discursive universe underlay Gates's notion of "repetition with a signal difference." At the most general level Gates uses Signifyin(g) to mean any transformation that employs an African-American mode of figurative expression. At a more specific level Gates is interested in "repetition and reversal" (*SM*, p. 63), the kind of transformation that includes the ironic "critical distance" and "intertextual 'bouncing'" that Hutcheon mentions. Reversal, incongruity, and re-contextualization are the hallmarks of irony as defined in both literary and anthropological usages.<sup>21</sup>

The clarinetist Don Byron emphasized the salience of irony when he was asked what he thought were the most important elements in African-American musical aesthetics:

19. For a discussion by Gates of sociolinguistic literature on African-American speech, see *SM*, pp. 44–88.

20. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (1985; New York, 1991), p. 32. I thank Douglas Bruster for referring me to Hutcheon's work.

21. See James W. Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), p. 286.

There's irony *all over*, irony everywhere. . . . It's definitely that balance . . . between totally opposing aesthetics . . . the conflict between being serious and avant, and just playing swinging shit . . . a polar pulling between cleanliness and dirtiness, between knowing rules very well and breaking them. There's a certain kind of pull between opposite impulses that you . . . see in any good black anything. . . . A certain kind of inventiveness outside of . . . what is acceptable. And I think that comes from being in the society in that role . . . just the fact that you're not quite an accepted member of society gives you a certain distance from the way things usually go.<sup>22</sup>

Byron's discussion is organized around a series of contrasts—being serious/playing swinging shit; cleanliness/dirtiness; knowing rules/breaking them—and the confrontation of “opposing aesthetics” (which he interpreted as “black” and “white”). One may detect Du Bois's idea of “two warring ideals” embedded within this chain of association, yet a close examination of the musical embodiment of these opposites reveals, if anything, a far more complicated situation. The tensions that Byron cites *coexist* and often are emphasized selectively in one direction or another according to context. In music, the “two warring ideals” are more akin to Bakhtin's conception of dialogism.

The topic of irony in African-American studies is, of course, a very old one.<sup>23</sup> What Baraka says in the following commentary on the cakewalk is emblematic of the issues of irony in music that I will explore: “If the cakewalk is a Negro dance caricaturing certain white customs, what is that dance when, say, a white theater company attempts to satirize it as a Negro dance? I find the idea of white minstrels in blackface satirizing a dance satirizing themselves a remarkable kind of irony—which, I suppose, is the whole point of minstrel shows.”<sup>24</sup> The idea that there is the *potential* for cultural irony in interpretation underlies the musical examples in this essay. But I do not mean to imply that an ironic interpretation of a musical event is the only one possible, because the variable reactions of listeners and performers from divergent backgrounds have the potential to produce multiple interpretations of the same event. Irony is only one of several possible interpretations, all of which depend on the listeners' and musicians' different perceptions, intents, and social situations.

Intentionality in any particular case is a moot issue. We know from historical accounts that jazz musicians intended to comment critically, socially, and culturally in many aspects of their musical practice because

22. Don Byron, interview with author, 10 Apr. 1989.

23. For further discussion of the issues of irony and humor in African-American studies, see *SM*, pp. 103–7, and Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1977), pp. 298–366.

24. Baraka, *Blues People*, p. 86.

they have talked about it openly.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, though it may not be possible to prove that any specific example of musical reference and transformation was *intended* to be ironic, that ironic interpretations of my examples are possible and well within the interpretive discourse of musicians and audiences is well established. It is this transformative and ironic quality of jazz improvisation that Gates has in mind when he comments that “there are so many examples of Signifyin(g) in jazz that one could write a formal history of its development on this basis alone” (*SM*, p. 63).

I discuss three examples of musical irony or parody in jazz: two are cross-cultural, one is intracultural. The first example presents musical irony conveyed by the transformation of a European-American popular song into a vehicle for jazz improvisation, the second example makes reference to a classical composer in an ironic style, and the third makes humorous reference to a style within the jazz tradition. Multiple examples of each type of irony could easily be cited because these examples represent practices that quite literally pervade jazz improvisation. Irony and parody in African-American music, it seems, make use of the doubleness of the African-American position in American society by commenting through musical reference. My concern is to show the way in which improvising musicians articulate worldviews, identities, and aesthetics through manipulation of musical resources that signal matters of cultural significance.

### *My Favorite Things*

John Coltrane’s transformation of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “My Favorite Things” is the first example of irony.<sup>26</sup> Embedded within Coltrane’s well-known version of “My Favorite Things” are several significant musical and cultural issues. First, there is an ironic juxtaposition of Coltrane’s version and the simpler and more sentimental version sung by Mary Martin in the stage production of *The Sound of Music*.<sup>27</sup> Coltrane

25. For the perspectives of musicians Kenny Clarke and Max Roach on the political implications of bebop, see Gillespie and Fraser, *To BE, or Not . . . to BOP*, pp. 141–42, 208–9, 287–91.

26. See John Coltrane, *My Favorite Things*, Atlantic SD-1361, recorded in New York (21, 24, 26 Oct. 1960); Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *The Sound of Music* (vocal score) (New York, 1960). Gates juxtaposed Julie Andrews’s “vapid” version from *The Sound of Music* to Coltrane’s as a particularly telling example of reversal. See Gates, “The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey,” in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Gates (New York, 1984), p. 291. Coltrane’s version, however, predates the film, which was released in 1965. Mary Martin sang in the original stage production. The power of mass culture to affect our interpretation of history is apparent here, as most Americans are more familiar with the Julie Andrews version.

27. Mary Martin, *The Sound of Music: Selections*, Columbia CK-32601, original Broadway cast.

in this respect demonstrates the power of his musical intelligence and imagination (and that of his band members) to transform a European-American musical theater song into a vehicle for expressing the improvisational aesthetic of jazz. Second, Coltrane evidently liked something (perhaps the meter) about the tune, which led him to choose it for basic material. An appreciation of the potential of music drawn from European-American musical theater, in other words, does not contradict the articulation of an African-American improvisational aesthetic. Third, Coltrane may have wanted to reach a broader audience in a time-honored manner, that is, by selecting a musical theater tune.<sup>28</sup> Fourth, Coltrane's version asserts the power of the African-American musical aesthetic to "improve" the music of European-Americans. This last point is most important for our discussion: *in terms of the aesthetic of African-American jazz*, the Coltrane version is without a doubt a vast "improvement" upon the original.

Jazz listeners generally view the transformations of Broadway tunes as considerably "superior" to the original material. In critical evaluations made by jazz listeners, an African-American musical aesthetic is the taken-for-granted standard against which the Broadway version is judged. I have placed evaluative terms in quotation marks to emphasize my awareness that the African-American versions are not *inherently* "better" but relative to a particular aesthetic (which many non-African-Americans share as well). Most notably, these tunes are made to swing by the addition of jazz grooves that are not present in the original and of more complex harmonies than exist in the sheet music versions of these tunes. In "My Favorite Things," the rhythm section of Elvin Jones on drums, Steve Davis on bass, and McCoy Tyner on piano provide a multileveled musical context against which Coltrane's transformation of the melody, harmony, and rhythm of the tune interacts.

Figures 1 and 2 help illustrate the nature of these transformations by presenting transcriptions of the melody and rhythmic framework of the ensemble accompaniments in the original Broadway cast recording of "My Favorite Things" and the John Coltrane version, respectively.<sup>29</sup> The Broadway arrangement supports the sung melody with an accompaniment that alternates pizzicato rhythmic figures with sustained harmonies in the strings (mm. 5–20). The rhythmic figure in the interlude is the "um pah pah" figure typically associated with the waltz (mm. 21–22). This rhythm provides the main accompaniment for the second and third A

28. Coltrane did reach a large audience with *My Favorite Things*. During its first year of release, the album sold 50,000 copies, five times the amount expected for a reasonably successful jazz album. See J. C. Thomas, *Chasin' the Trane: The Music and Mystique of John Coltrane* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), p. 133. The title track was also released as a 45 rpm single and became Coltrane's most popular tune. See Brian Priestley, *John Coltrane* (London, 1987), p. 42.

29. All musical transcriptions were done by Ingrid Monson.

The image displays a musical score for the Broadway cast version of "My Favorite Things." The score is organized into several sections:

- Introduction:** Measures 1-4, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano).
- A:** Measures 5-16, featuring a **String pizzicato** accompaniment and a **Melody** line.
- Accompaniment:** Measures 17-20, continuing the string part.
- Interlude:** Measures 21-24, marked *ff* (fortissimo).
- B:** Measures 25-36, marked *ff* and *div.* (diviso).
- Coda:** Measures 37-40, marked *ff*.

The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*mp*, *ff*), articulation (*div.*), and performance instructions (*String pizzicato*). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

FIG. 1.—Rhythmic reduction of Broadway cast version, "My Favorite Things."

The image displays a musical score for the jazz standard "My Favorite Things" by John Coltrane. The score is organized into several systems, each representing a different instrument or section. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4.

- Introduction:** Features parts for Drums (Elvin Jones), Piano (McCoy Tyner, rhythm only), and Bass (Steve Davis). The piano part includes a "Solo" section.
- Vamp 1:** A section for the saxophone and melody instruments, marked with a "ride" drum pattern and a "2" above the notes, indicating a two-measure phrase.
- A Melody:** The main melodic line, featuring "Soprano saxophones (Coltrane)" and a "Melody" line. It includes a "Vamp 2" section with a "minor 2nd" interval and a "3" above the notes, indicating a three-measure phrase.
- Additional Vamp 2 sections:** Located at the bottom of the page, these sections are also marked with "minor 2nd" and "3", and include a "2" above the notes.

The score uses standard musical notation, including treble and bass clefs, stems, beams, and various accidentals. The layout is clean and professional, typical of a published music score.

FIG. 2.—Rhythmic reduction of John Coltrane, "My Favorite Things."

Introduction	A	Interlude	A	
Interlude				
	E minor	E minor	E minor	E major
4 (bars)	16	2	16	2
A	B		Coda	
E major	E minor		G major *	
16	16		4	

In the Broadway version Maria sings through the full form in E, the Mother Abbess through form in F, and they repeat the final B section together in G minor (modulating to B flat major).

FIG. 3.—Formal plan of Broadway version, “My Favorite Things.”

sections of the tune (see fig. 3). Musical contrast in this arrangement is generated through alternation of short and sustained instrumental sonorities, through changes in dynamics (compare measures 21 and 39), and by changes in mode (from minor to major in the third A section). The arrangement supports the clear articulation of the text with an unsyncopated rhythmic framework.

The animating concept in the Coltrane version is very different. The accompaniment (what musicians call “the groove” or rhythmic “feel”) consists of three independent yet interlocking parts played by the drums, piano, and bass.<sup>30</sup> Figure 2 presents a rhythmic transcription of the Coltrane version. I have limited my transcription of the drum part to the principal time-keeping rhythm articulated by Jones on the ride cymbal and occasional interjections on the snare and bass drum. The first vamp section begins in measure 9. Note that Jones, Tyner, and Davis all play different but interlocking two-bar rhythmic patterns. The timbre and accentuation of Jones’s ride cymbal rhythm makes it particularly infectious—something not visible on the transcription itself. The repetition at two-measure intervals gives the vamp sections a strong six metric feel. (See figure 4 for the form of the performance.) By contrast, in the A sections of the melody the rhythm section plays rhythms that repeat at

30. Musicians’ definitions of the concept of groove are presented in Monson, “Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz,” pp. 316–21.

Introduction	Vamp 1	A	Vamp 2	
	E minor	E minor	E minor	
8 (bars)	8	16	8	
A	Vamp 2	A	Vamp 2	To piano solo
E minor	E major	E major	E minor	
16	24	16	16	

Solos occur over Vamp 2 in minor and major interspersed with statements of the A section; the length of the improvisational sections are at the soloist's discretion. The B section of the Broadway version is not played until the final out chorus, after all solos have been taken.

FIG. 4.—Formal plan of Coltrane version, “My Favorite Things.”

one measure intervals, giving these sections a rhythmic feel in three. Tynner’s rhythmic riff figure, which begins in the vamp section at measure 33, becomes the “home” comping rhythm, and the interlocking quality of his part with the drums and bass tonic pedal point produces the “hypnotic” feel often mentioned in contemporary accounts.<sup>31</sup>

Against this syncopated and interlocking rhythmic and harmonic groove it would be almost impossible to play the melody as squarely as it is written in the sheet music. Coltrane articulates a highly syncopated version of the melody against the rhythmically interactive musical context, providing a fourth independent part to the texture (mm. 17–33). Upon first listening, the dramatically different groove stands out. It sets the basic tone for the entire piece. Michael Carvin claims that a good rhythmic feel has a foundational quality: “the groove is the point of departure for ALL improvisational music.”<sup>32</sup> It is also one of the most important means for infusing African-American improvisational sensibility into music from other repertoires.

This transformation of “My Favorite Things,” or what Gates would term “Signification” upon the tune, inverts the song at nearly every level.

31. Don DeMichael, “John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy Answer the Jazz Critics,” *Down Beat*, 12 Apr. 1962, pp. 20–23; see fig. 2 for the form of the Coltrane version.

32. Michael Carvin, interview with author, 12 Dec. 1992.

It makes the vamps (over which the improvisation takes place) rather than the verse the subject of the performance; it transforms waltz time into a polyrhythmically textured 6 feel, and it transforms a sentimental, optimistic lyric into a vehicle for a more brooding improvisational exploration. Since the lyrics would have been on the sheet music the song plugger brought to the quartet,<sup>33</sup> Coltrane would have been well aware of the emphasis on “white” things in the lyric—girls in white dresses, snowflakes on eyelashes, silver white winters, cream-colored ponies. In 1960—a year of tremendous escalation in the civil rights movement and a time of growing politicization in the jazz community—<sup>34</sup>Coltrane quite possibly looked upon the lyrics with an ironic eye.

Another possible inversion involves Coltrane beating European-American musical standards at their own game; this is where the idea of irony at a cultural level becomes important. Coltrane’s version of “My Favorite Things” turns a musical theater tune upside down by playing with it, transforming it, and turning it into a vehicle for expressing an African-American-based sensibility in such a way that even many non-African-Americans prefer it to the original. In so doing, it invokes some standards of European classical music against European-American musical theater songs. The simple setting of the Broadway version of “My Favorite Things” works well in the context for which it is intended, that is, a musical theater performance. In addition, the performance is “well played” by musical theater standards; the strings and singers are in tune, observe dynamics, and keep a steady tempo. By the evaluative standards of “Western art music,”<sup>35</sup> however, the tune and arrangement perhaps would be described as “pedestrian,” “unsophisticated,” “simple,” or “too obvious.” In this context, the Coltrane version of “My Favorite Things” embodies selective elements of Western art music aesthetics more effectively than does the Broadway version. The four-part contrapuntal tex-

33. A song plugger (song salesman) supplied the sheet music to the Coltrane quartet while they were performing at Joe Termini’s Jazz Gallery in New York in 1960. See Thomas, *Chasin’ the Trane*, p. 133, and *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld, 2 vols. (London, 1988), 2:278.

34. For an account of the general escalation of the civil rights movement in 1960, see Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954–63* (New York, 1988), pp. 271–311. 1960 was also the year Ornette Coleman became nationally known and the controversy over “Free Jazz” began to develop. See A. B. Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business* (1966; New York, 1985), pp. 79–150. In October 1960 Charles Mingus recorded his version of “Fables of Faubus,” with lyrics explicitly protesting Governor Orval Faubus’s refusal to allow nine black students to enroll in Little Rock, Arkansas’s Central High School. Charles Mingus, *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, Candid BR-5012, recorded in New York, 20 Oct. 1960, and Branch, *Parting the Waters*, pp. 222–25.

35. By “Western art music” I have in mind the aesthetics produced in post-Enlightenment Western Europe and particularly nineteenth-century German concepts of “serious music” and “absolute music,” since these were quite influential in the United States. See Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York, 1983), pp. 307–38.

ture generated by the musicians in the Coltrane Quartet is certainly “more complex” when measured by Western art music standards than the rhythmically simpler framework of the Broadway version of the tune (compare fig. 1, mm. 5–13, and fig. 2, mm. 17–25).<sup>36</sup> Jazz musicians, in this sense, are able to invoke selectively some of the hegemonic standards of Western art music in their favor. At least part of the pride many African-American jazz musicians take in their versions of standards derives from their ability to “upstage” the European-American versions of these tunes—something acknowledged by both black and white audiences. In asserting a musical “superiority” even when measured against the (white) hegemonic standard, musicians make ironic the presumption of racial inferiority. Not only does the Coltrane version stand out in comparison to the Broadway version *with respect to* some standards derived from the European-American world, it does so while *at the same time* articulating an independent improvisational aesthetic that draws on African-American cultural sensibilities and that is the taken-for-granted standard against which non-African-American music is evaluated.

Jean and John Comaroff’s conception of ideology is helpful in thinking about this issue and in considering the role of assertion and cultural critique in the practice of jazz improvisation. Ideology in the Comaroffs’ conception draws upon Raymond Williams’s definition: “an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as [the] ‘worldview’” of a particular group.<sup>37</sup> The emphasis here is upon articulation. If hegemony rules by silence and “taken-for-grantedness,” ideology is spoken and asserted. To borrow a linguistic analogy: hegemony is the unmarked category, ideology the marked.

The hegemonic and ideological stand in an interdependent and dynamic relationship in the Comaroffs’ conceptual schema. Once something formerly hegemonic becomes contested and articulated it enters the realm of the ideological and can no longer be taken for granted. As the Comaroffs put it: “Once something leaves the domain of the hegemonic, it frequently becomes a major site of ideological struggle. Even when there is no well-formed opposing ideology, no clearly articulated collective consciousness among subordinate populations, such struggles may still occur. But they are liable to be heard in the genre of negation—refusal, reversal, the smashing of idols and icons—and not in the narrative voice of political argument.”<sup>38</sup>

It is from this vantage point that we can begin to understand the

36. I am limiting my comments to rhythmic transformations here, since discussion of this feature of the jazz repertory has been greatly neglected. I would argue, however, that the harmonic transformations present in this recording are equally “more complex” from the Western art music point of view than the Broadway version. A more detailed musical discussion of this example will appear in Monson, *Saying Something*.

37. Quoted in Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 24.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

deep significance of irony and doubleness in the articulation of a jazz musical aesthetic. The cross-cultural and intracultural musical references through which jazz musicians assert the ironic and parodic can be interpreted as ideological as well. The signs and practices through which musicians construct and represent themselves and others in musical terms are extremely powerful in African-American music in general and jazz in particular, as I hope the following discussion will illustrate. The fact that music has been an arena in which African-Americans have not only asserted an independent cultural identity but also have had non-African-Americans acknowledge their leadership in the form of emulation is deeply significant in the constitution of American musical culture more broadly. In jazz, European-American musicians have indeed been “painfully conscious of their whiteness” for a considerable period of time. In this way the hegemonic (to borrow the Comaroffs’ usage) is made ideological, at least in part.

### *Rip, Rig, and Panic*

Roland Kirk’s “Rip, Rig, and Panic” provides a second example of irony by making reference to the works of the classical composer Edgard Varèse.<sup>39</sup> Kirk specifically cites inspiration by Varèse in the liner notes to the album and musically refers most directly to Varèse’s *Poème électronique* and *Ionisation*.<sup>40</sup> Figure 5 provides a diagrammatic representation of the performance. The opening section of the piece (labeled A) is an out-of-time section that is freely improvised. At the end of the A section, a breaking glass, which emulates sounds produced electronically in *Poème électronique*, signals the band to stop. In the transition section and coda, both of which are out of time, Kirk evokes the electronic sonorities of Varèse with the multiphonic sound of several instruments played at the same time—something for which Kirk was widely known.<sup>41</sup> Towards the end of Elvin Jones’s drum solo a siren is sounded, an effect that is prominent in Varèse’s *Ionisation*. The countoff into both B sections—an uptempo swing melody which is itself an AABA form—is also an opportunity for

39. See Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Rip, Rig, and Panic*, Limelight (LS) 86027, recorded in Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 13 Jan. 1965. Liner notes by Don Heckman. Kirk explained the title in the liner notes to the album: “Rip means Rip Van Winkle [or Rest in Peace?]. It’s the way people, even musicians are. They’re asleep. Rig means like rigor mortis. That’s where a lot of people’s minds are. When they hear me doing things they didn’t think I could do they panic in their minds.”

40. Edgard Varèse in collaboration with Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier), *Poème électronique*, Philips Pavilion, 1958 World’s Fair, Brussels, Belgium, and *Ionisation*, for Percussion Ensemble of Thirteen Players (New York, 1958).

41. The liner notes to the album mention that there are also electronically produced sounds in the coda to “Rip, Rig, and Panic.” Kirk reportedly produced them by shaking an amplifier.

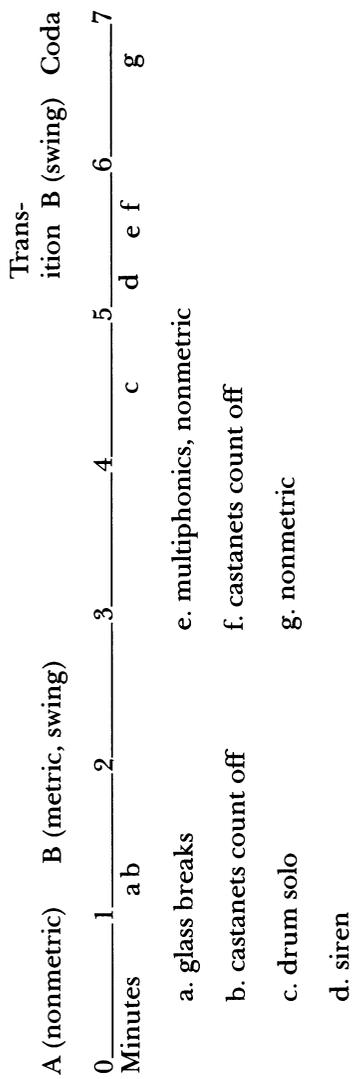


FIG. 5.—Formal plan of "Rip, Rig, and Panic."

irony. Kirk cued this uptempo 4/4 swing section by counting the band in with castanets (1, 2, 3, rest) rather than by using the voice or a drum cue as would be more usual in jazz performance practice. The light sonority and exposed character of the castanets, which imitate “refined” classical percussion parts, create an ironic incongruity between the supposed seriousness of avant-garde classical music and the silliness of counting in the band with castanets.

Don Byron, in fact, selected “Rip, Rig, and Panic” as a particularly good example of a recording embodying an African-American musical aesthetic. He broke into uproarious laughter at the breaking of the glass and the sound of the castanets when he played this for me and said that Kirk was “buckwild”—an admiring term (as used by him) to describe the willingness to go, as he said “outside of . . . what is acceptable.” An admiration for irreverence, particularly towards the decorum and perceived stiffness of the Western art music tradition, is another way in which a cross-cultural sense of irony is projected in jazz improvisation. Note that Kirk is not necessarily ridiculing Varèse; rather, he probably admired Varèse’s own sense of humor and adventure, since the classical composer was himself marginal and not fully accepted in the world of “serious” composition. In this sense, Kirk could also be expressing a solidarity with Varèse as an “outsider.” It is unlikely that the favor would have been returned, however, as Varèse did not like jazz.<sup>42</sup> Kirk ultimately makes use of the reference to Varèse for his *own* purposes and thus demonstrates that his virtuosic multi-instrument technique can “make fun” with music from an unlikely source. This making fun can face multiple directions; it can pay homage to the source,<sup>43</sup> or it can playfully tease and critique the source as well as make artistic assertions beyond it. By referring to Varèse, Kirk also demonstrates his knowledge of music beyond the confines of jazz and African-American traditions. Many European-Americans in his audience might presume that a jazz musician like Kirk would not know about Varèse; by skillfully quoting and parodying, Kirk demonstrates (to an audience with enough cultural knowledge to recognize) that he does.

### *Bass-ment Blues*

A third example of irony can be seen in a performance entitled “Bass-ment Blues,” which includes Jaki Byard on piano, George Tucker on bass, Alan Dawson on drums, and Joe Farrell playing flute.<sup>44</sup> Here the sense of irony and humor derives from transformed references to

42. See Jonathan W. Bernard, *The Music of Edgard Varèse* (New Haven, Conn., 1987), p. 9.

43. See John P. Murphy, “Jazz Improvisation: The Joy of Influence,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 18 (1990): 7–19.

44. Jaki Byard, *Jaki Byard Quarter: Live! At Lennies on the Turnpike*, Prestige PR-7477, recorded in West Peabody, Mass., 15 Apr. 1965.

recognized stylistic devices *within* the jazz tradition. Byard's approach to the blues is much more avant-garde; he plays traditional big band shout chorus riffs but with very dissonant cluster voicings. Knowledgeable listeners laugh when they hear Byard go into the "twisted" and transformed big band riff clichés. As Kirk did with reference to Varèse, he adapts the musical reference to his own clever purposes. Byard himself laughed at this passage when I played it for him during the course of an interview; he liked it so much that he even asked me to play it for him twice. The point for our broader discussion here is that cross-cultural references are often used in ironic passages in jazz, but references need not be cross-cultural to be ironic. A transcription of the passage I have in mind is presented in figure 6.<sup>45</sup>

Byard is insulted when people think his music is less "serious" because it contains humor: "my music *is* serious. I might do it with humor, but it's still serious because I mean what I'm doing."<sup>46</sup> To laugh at a musical reference during a jazz improvisation is a token of admiration, not scorn. The laugh acknowledges the cleverness of the musical moment or reference and draws attention to the fact that the listener has understood the musical argument in the context of the jazz tradition. The appreciation of musical humor in the African-American tradition conflicts with the preference of Western art music for more "serious" means of musical expression.<sup>47</sup>

### *Intermusicality*

We might consider for a moment how it is possible for instrumental music to convey irony and, by extension, culturally specific meaning at all. The three examples presented here all employ musical reference in one form or another to communicate the ironic play of difference. The reference may be as specific as a melodic quotation from a particular piece or as diffuse as a timbre or style of groove. It might be from within or without mainstream jazz repertory. The important point is that a chain of associations may be set off that engage the listener and unite her or him with a community of other individuals who share a similar musical point of view. Quotations are only the most obvious examples of the thick web of intertextual and intermusical associations to which knowledgeable

45. For a transcription of the first thirteen choruses of this performance, see Monson, "Musical Interaction in Modern Jazz."

46. Richard Brown, "Jaki Byard: Romping, Stomping, and Waiting for THE Break," *Down Beat*, 8 Mar. 1979, p. 16.

47. A preference for serious expression, however, does not preclude the existence of irony and humor in Western classical music. Varèse provides one example among many. The point here is that irony and parody are more central and *expected* means of aesthetic expression in the African-American tradition.

102

"Walk it"

104

l.h. brush r.h. stick time shuffle

Turnaround

Chorus 10 (Byard Dawson)

107

Turnaround

111

"huh yeah"

FIG. 6.—Rhythmic reduction of Jaki Byard Quartet, "Bass-ment Blues."



FIG. 6., continued.

performers and listeners react. Theoretically almost any musical detail or composite thereof could convey a reference, so long as a community of interpreters can recognize the continuity. The key here is “community of interpreters” (which includes both performers and audience), for a sonic detail becomes socially meaningful and actionable only in an at least partially shared context of use.

The semiotic modes of signaling implicated in this process combine aspects of the indexical and iconic in Peirce’s tripartite framework: an aural passage conveys to those with the sociocultural knowledge to recognize and interpret it a relation between a past performance and a present one. The quoted musical detail indexically “points to” another performance and thus places the two in a socially interactive dialogue.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, by virtue of the iconic resemblance (or mirroring), the index points between the two passages. What is crucial in the examples of irony in jazz improvisation presented here is that the iconic moment is not simply resemblance but a transformation of the thing resembled. In the case of “My Favorite Things” the transformation of the tune simultane-

48. On the social implications of indexicality in language, see William F. Hanks, *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 1–15.

$\text{♩} = 116$

1. time

Drums (Ralph Peterson)

2.

Piano (Geri Allen)

6 3.

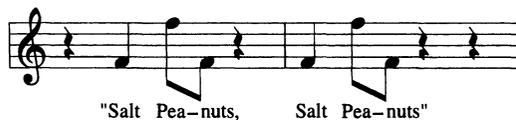
10 time 4.

FIG. 7.—Rhythmic reduction of Ralph Peterson Trio, “Princess.”

ously communicates the *resemblance* between the two versions and the vast *difference* of the Coltrane version—an example of Gates's ironic, Signifyin(g), "repetition with a signal difference."

In jazz improvisation aural references are conveyed through primarily instrumental means, that is, without words. While it is possible to call these references the "intertextual" aspect of music, I prefer to call them "intermusical" relationships to draw attention to a communication process that occurs primarily through musical sound itself rather than through words. The word *intermusical* is best reserved for aurally perceptible musical relationships that are heard in the context of particular musical traditions. Associations carried primarily through song lyrics would be primarily intertextual, and musical relationships observable with the aid of a score only might best be called intertextual musical relationships.<sup>49</sup> The complicated relationship between written and aural modes of musical knowledge, it seems to me, must be distinguished. Although the more generalized usage of the term *intertextual* in literary studies can include music as a specific mode of textuality,<sup>50</sup> musical scholarship has had sufficient difficulty distinguishing cultural meaning conveyed by text, music in its written aspect, and music in its aural aspect. Therefore a specifically musical term can be useful. The intertextual aspects of music are in this sense more complicated than those in the realm of language.

That such intermusical perceptions are an important aspect of how musicians talk and think about communicating in music is shown in a passage of an interview I conducted with drummer Ralph Peterson, Jr. I played him a recording of his composition "Princess," in which he plays with pianist Geri Allen and bassist Essiet Okon Essiet.<sup>51</sup> After hearing the passage transcribed in figure 7, I remarked "Salt Peanuts," since Geri Allen's piano figure in measures 9–11 reminded me of Dizzy Gillespie's famous riff (fig. 8, Savoy Jazz SV-0152).



Peterson remarked:

Yeah! "Salt Peanuts" and "Looney Tunes"—kind of a combination of the two. Art Blakey has a thing he plays. It's like: [sings]

49. I have in mind here musical relationships uncovered primarily through analysis, such as Schoenberg's use of row forms.

50. See Hanks, "Text and Textuality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989): 99–101.

51. Ralph Peterson, Jr., *Triangular*, Blue Note CDP 7 92750 2, recorded in New York, 21–22 Aug. 1988.

Dink dink Dink, dink  
 Dink dink di dink Dink dink ah



FIG. 9.

And Geri played: [sings]  
 Da do daht Da do daht



FIG. 10.

[Compare fig. 7, mm. 3–5.]

So I played the second half of the Art Blakey phrase: [sings]

Dink, dink, di dink Dink dink ah.<sup>52</sup>

[See fig. 9, mm. 3–4; compare fig. 7, mm. 7–9.]

Peterson then offered this interpretation of the musical process: “But you see what happens is, a lot of times when you get into a musical conversation one person in the group will state an idea or the beginning of an idea and another person will *complete* the idea or their interpretation of the same idea, how they hear it. So the conversation happens in fragments and comes from different parts, different voices” (“PI”).

There are several points regarding intermusical relationships embedded in this exchange. First of all, the phrase that reminded me of “Salt Peanuts” (fig. 7, mm. 9–11) and most clearly stated the famous riff was contained in Geri Allen’s *response* to Peterson’s Art Blakey rhythm. The melody of “Salt Peanuts” that leads into the riff (fig. 8, m. 1), however, corresponds to the accentuation pattern in measures 3 and 4 of the Art Blakey rhythm (dink dink di-dink, dink dink), so it is clear that there is a musical relationship between “Salt Peanuts” and the Art Blakey rhythm. When I mentioned “Salt Peanuts,” Peterson knew exactly which larger musical passage I had in mind, but he focused on a different set of details to explain his musical thinking. My point is that intermusical relationships need not be exact or unambiguously shared in order for them to be communicative. This process of picking up on other band

52. Peterson, interview with author, 28 Nov. 1989; hereafter abbreviated “PI.”

members' ideas, or being able to anticipate what direction another musician is headed, was greatly stressed by the vast majority of musicians with whom I worked and was often described as "magical" or the product of "chemistry" between players. As Peterson continued: "In time through playing together what you develop is the ability to play the same; to be *thinking* the same phrase" ("PI").

Sir Roland Hanna also emphasized the importance of developing the ability to anticipate the musical flow of events through familiarity with another person's ways of playing. He speaks of his knowledge of Richard Davis's bass style:

When you're talking about having been around somebody for 30 years . . . you're close to the way they think. Now maybe I don't know exactly . . . the way he thinks, but I am close enough to what he has been thinking in the past to have an idea of what he *might* play from one note to the next. . . . So I may not know exactly what note he's going to play, but I know in general the kind of statement he would make . . . You know, Ingrid, there's a curious thing about musicians. We train ourselves over a period of years to be able to hear rhythms and anticipate combinations of sounds before they actually happen.<sup>53</sup>

The idea that intermusical associations are part of the musical communication process during performance highlights not merely the theoretical but also the practical implications of intertextuality. Peterson and Hanna in effect explain that recognition of familiar ideas—rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, textural, or gestural—underlies a *social* process of developing musical ideas between individuals in the band.

The productivity of the literature of intertextuality for ethnomusicology seems to me to be manifold: (1) It provides a way to return sound to our discussions while avoiding the problem of looking at music as an autonomous, reified product. (2) It emphasizes the historicity embedded in music events as process. (3) It recognizes that aural awareness is the product of a continuous socialization process that varies greatly from individual to individual and is made social by the degree of overlap in the sound worlds of groups of individuals.

My concern with bringing musical detail back into our cultural thinking is motivated by my experiences in the New York jazz community. Knowledge and facility with musical sound is of central importance to the musicians I worked with, and it is the degree to which I shared musical and intermusical awareness with the musical community that provided me an *entrée* into establishing a dialogue with these individuals. My knowledge of "the music" was an extremely important means of communication in my fieldwork. Mellonee Burnim emphasizes that *both* her musical knowledge and ethnic identity were critical to her fieldwork in

53. Sir Roland Hanna, interview with author, 25 Oct. 1989.

African-American gospel music.<sup>54</sup> Musical competence, it seems, is extremely important in many African-American communities. In my case, knowledge of “the music” was often a factor that allowed some people to overlook my extremely blond, blue-eyed whiteness. This obsession with musical knowledge among jazz musicians is not the same thing as the reification of the music as an autonomous object that so much post-structuralist ethnomusicological work has rightfully criticized. To suspect that the assumptions underlying work that focuses on musical surface may be reproducing the Western preoccupation with the autonomous art object and its reification is no doubt a healthy tendency in our field. Nevertheless, in the case of the African-American jazz community, dismissing the musical surface involves a great deal of ironic inversion. For in jazz literature, work that has focused on the subcultural aspects of the community has in many cases been the work that has most “reified” the community into a static stereotype;<sup>55</sup> Panassié’s “real,” “untutored” jazz musicians are but one example.<sup>56</sup>

The musicians I worked with often complain that writers on jazz do not really know “the music.” My point is that knowing the music does not simply mean having technical knowledge. Various types of intermusical relationships depend on the ability of musicians and audience members to understand the *discursive* importance of musical events. The social understanding of these intermusical events stresses music as process, not product. The centrality of the metaphor of “conversation” as used by musicians underscores this discursive aspect not as *text* but as a socially interactive process of communication. Applying the African-American notion of discursive Signifyin(g) in the context of jazz music communities, as Gates and Floyd have argued, is not simply a clever metaphor.<sup>57</sup>

### *Doubleness Revisited*

Returning to the notion of doubleness, irony conveyed in jazz improvisation, as we have seen, frequently draws upon repertoires outside African-American music, often Signifyin(g) upon them in the assertion of an African-American musical aesthetic. The cultural knowledge of African-American musicians includes familiarity with both “black” and “white” music and it is upon *all* of this knowledge that a musician draws in the act of performance. What Kobena Mercer recently has argued in

54. See Mellonee Burnim, “Culture Bearer and Tradition Bearer: An Ethnomusicologist’s Research on Gospel Music,” *Ethnomusicology* 29 (Fall 1985): 432–47.

55. See Cameron, “Sociological Notes on the Jam Session,” Becker, *Outsiders*, Merriam and Mack, “The Jazz Community,” and Russell, *Bird Lives!*

56. See Panassié, *The Real Jazz*.

57. See SM, and Samuel Floyd, Jr., “Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11 (Fall 1991): 265–87.

the case of African-American hairstyles suits the situation in African-American music as well: "Black practices of aesthetic stylization are intelligible at one 'functional' level as dialogic responses to the racism of the dominant culture, but at another level involve acts of appropriation from that same 'master' culture through which 'syncretic' forms of diasporan culture have evolved."<sup>58</sup>

In much of the literature of jazz history an essentialized conception of African-American culture has been mapped onto an essentialized conception of musical detail; we find jazz writers such as Panassié speaking of black rhythm and white harmony, black talent and white knowledge. As one of the musicians I interviewed remarked in passing: "If a black man knows some shit, that's talent. If the white guy knows the same shit, he's smart." At the heart of the problem is the inability to recognize that the heterogeneity of musical elements found in jazz improvisation is deeply related to the heterogeneity of African-American cultural experience. The jazz experience has always been more varied and cosmopolitan than many of the narratives that have been written about it.

It is no accident that the "double consciousness" of which Du Bois wrote has inspired several recent African-American cultural critics. In describing her experience as the only black student in a writing class, bell hooks remarked on the problem of "authentic" African-American identity:

Whenever I read a poem written in the particular dialect of southern black speech, the teacher and fellow students would praise me for using my "true," authentic voice, and encouraged me to develop this "voice," to write more of these poems. From the onset this troubled me. . . . It seemed that many black students found our situations problematic precisely because our sense of self, and by definition our voice, was not unilateral, monologist, or static but rather multi-dimensional. We were as at home in dialect as we were in standard English.<sup>59</sup>

The "opposing aesthetics" that Don Byron talked about and that this article has discussed are examples of divergent cultural knowledges that *coexist* in particular individuals. The way in which individuals choose to take action with this knowledge is highly variable and changes from context to context. From this perspective, the extensive literature devoted to categorizing what is "white" and what is "black" in jazz music is fundamentally flawed. The question that has animated these discussions must be reformulated. Instead of asking which components belong to an essentialized category of "black" or "white," we must ask, In what way do jazz musicians draw upon heterogeneous cultural and musical knowledge in

58. Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," p. 257.

59. hooks, *Talking Back*, p. 11.

the articulation of particular aesthetics and ideological positions in music? How do we then draw boundaries (however flexible and contested) around a particular aesthetic, which may include participants from many ethnic and racial groups? It seems to me that the “poly-musicality” of many jazz musicians—and by this I extend Mantle Hood’s term to mean the ability to play in multiple musical styles—<sup>60</sup> should not be seen as a liquidation of cultural identity but as an important component of the cultural identity of a group in contact with multiple cultural others. The aesthetic and value system by which all of these heterogeneous musical and cultural elements are integrated and evaluated becomes the analytical level at which one can begin to speak of cultural identities.

### *Conclusions*

Some of the most interesting methodological, theoretical, cultural, and musical problems that face ethnomusicology reside in cultural situations that are heterogeneous and multiply (not only doubly) influenced. The presumptions of cultural homogeneity that have guided much of our work are being reconsidered and reformulated in light of recent work in anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies. Yet much of this work has leaped from theorizing about small-scale societies to theorizing about transnational influence and the structure of global music industries.<sup>61</sup> The relationship between micro- and macrolevels of analysis often becomes lost in the process.

Recent work in ethnomusicology also has dealt with the relationship between music and culture by drawing analogies between sound structure and social structure, with emphasis on the latter.<sup>62</sup> A focus on iconicity between cultural domains and the metaphorical concepts linking cultural activities has been extremely useful in developing our interpretive frameworks, but it seems to me that adding the idea of viewing musical performance (particularly improvisational performance) as an interactive, socially indexical *activity* would assist in bridging the perennial gaps between sound and its cultural context and between micro- and macrolevels of analysis.

My thinking about this problem has profited greatly from recent

60. Mantle Hood, “The Challenge of Bi-Musicality,” *Ethnomusicology* 4 (May 1960): 55–59.

61. See Steven Feld, “Notes on World Beat,” *Public Culture* 1 (Fall 1988): 31–37, and Slobin, “Micromusics of the West.”

62. See Feld, “Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style”; Waterman, “Our Tradition is a Very Modern Tradition”; Jane Sugarman, “The Nightingale and the Partridge: Singing and Gender among Prespa Albanians,” *Ethnomusicology* 33 (Spring/Summer 1989): 191–216; and Thomas Turino, “The Coherence of Social Style and Musical Creation Among the Aymara in Southern Peru,” *Ethnomusicology* 33 (Winter 1989): 1–30.

work in linguistic anthropology that stresses the interactive character of language as well as the social constitution of context and its role in mediating cultural socialization processes across domains.<sup>63</sup> As Bambi Schieffelin has put it in her work on the Kaluli: “talk is a form of social action as well as a symbolic system.”<sup>64</sup> Marjorie Goodwin in her work on the talk of African-American children has argued also that the analysis of face-to-face interaction, with particular cultural *activities* as units of analysis, has much to offer an anthropology that is moving way from totalizing concepts of culture.<sup>65</sup>

I am arguing something similar for improvisational music—that it is a form of social action, as well as a symbolic system; that one learns how to feel through music as well as to play scales, chords, rhythms, and repertory; that musicians articulate cultural commentary with sound itself; and that the aesthetic of interaction embodies very powerfully an ethos that binds its participants into something larger than the individual but less totalizing and ahistorical than “Culture” with a capital *C*. When improvising, musicians borrow, quote, transform, and invert music from all sorts of repertoires in their musical play; they ask audiences and other musicians to delight in their musical and social knowledge. In jazz the music itself is anything but peripheral to the construction of cultural meaning. The claim of musicians that they are saying something seems to be quite apt because through their musical invocations they *are* saying something to those who share aural knowledge of the tradition. These audience members and musicians may or may not be coterminous with the analytic categories that have been called ethnic groups or cultures. And that is the most important point: the interplay between shared social knowledge defined by cultural activities and social identities formed by the more traditional analytic categories of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and culture.

63. See *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, ed. Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin (Cambridge, 1992).

64. Bambi B. Schieffelin, *The Give and Take of Everyday Life: Language Socialization of Kaluli Children* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 16.

65. See Marjorie Harness Goodwin, *He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), p. 9.