

# The Resonant Body and the Newer 'New Jazz Studies': A Bibliographic Essay

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## **The Resonant Body and the Newer 'New Jazz Studies': A Bibliographic Essay**

In exploring successive transformations of jazz, its performance, consumption, and cultural status, this article engages with the 'New Jazz Studies', a disciplined proclaimed sometime in the early 1990s. In so doing, this article questions whether since the 1990s, scholars, though they have broadened the horizon by emphasizing the roles of culture, have focused almost exclusively on the social character of jazz. Since then, the 'Music Itself' has more often been the premises of scholars working within the field of performance or critical improvisation studies rather than jazz studies. Where does this leave jazz?

**Keywords:** jazz studies, jazz historiography and criticism.

## **El cuerpo resonante y los 'New Jazz Studies' más recientes: un ensayo bibliográfico**

Al explorar sucesivas transformaciones del jazz, su interpretación, consumo y estatus cultural, este artículo conecta con los 'New Jazz Studies', una disciplina proclamada en algún momento de comienzos de los 90. En esa tarea, este artículo cuestiona si a partir de los 90 los académicos, a pesar de haber ampliado el horizonte haciendo hincapié en los roles de la cultura, se han centrado casi exclusivamente en el carácter social de jazz. Desde entonces, la "Música en sí misma" ha sido más la premisa de académicos que han trabajado en el ámbito de los estudios sobre interpretación o improvisación crítica, que del jazz. ¿En qué lugar deja esto al jazz?

**Palabras clave:** estudios de jazz, historiografía y crítica del jazz.

## **Gorputz erresonantea eta 'New Jazz Studies' berrienak: entsegu bibliografikoa**

Jazzaren segidako eraldatzeak, bere interpretazioa, konsumoa eta estatus kulturala esploratzu artikulu hau 'New Jazz Studies'ekin lotzen da, 90eko hamarkada hasieran noizbait aditzera emandako diziplina. Zeregin horretan, 90eko hamarkadatik hona akademikoek, kulturaren rolak nabarmenduz ikuspegia zabaldu badute ere, ardatz ia bakarra jazzaren izaera soziala izan ote duten kuestionatzen du. Orduetik, "Musika bera" gehiagotan izan da interpretazioaren edo inprobisazio kritikoen alorrean aritu diren akademikoen premisa, jazz bano.

**Gako-hitzak:** jazz azterlanak, historiografia eta jazzaren kritika.

But he never fell into the error of arresting his intellectual development by any formal acceptance of creed or system, or of mistaking, for a house in which to live, an inn that is but suitable for the sojourn of a night, or for a few hours of a night in which there are no stars and the moon is in travail. Mysticism, with its marvellous power of making common things strange to us, and the supple antinomianism that always seems to accompany it, moved him for a season; and for a season he inclined to the materialistic doctrines of the "Darwinismus" movement in Germany, and found curious pleasure in tracing the thoughts and passions of men to some pearly cell in the brain, or some white nerve in the body, delighting in the conception of the absolute dependence of the spirit on certain physical conditions, morbid or healthy, normal or diseased. Yet, as has been said of him before, no theory of life seemed to him to be of any importance compared with life itself. He felt keenly conscious of how barren all intellectual speculation is when separated from action and experiment. He knew that the senses, no less than the soul, have their spiritual mysteries to reveal.

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Experientia does it —as papa used to say  
Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*

## Introduction

In this article, I am concerned with problems of jazz historiography and criticism and particularly with the absence of analytical methods with regards to modes of musical production from the experiential perspective of the improvising musician. Although my writing takes the form of a bibliographic essay (it identifies and evaluates some of the core literature about jazz), in this article I follow Georgina Born's influential essay on interdisciplinary musicology (Born, 2010), to argue for a more relational study of jazz. In so doing, I offer some thoughts on the current state of jazz studies, as well as the shape of jazz studies to come. Like Born, I count myself lucky to be working in an age of diversity in scholarship, in which scholars from a plethora of disciplines aspire to achieve some kind of fruitful interaction or convergence; an urge to reconfigure jazz studies and redefine what understanding jazz is. My focus here has more to do with the latter. I argue that, although the analytical tools used to study jazz and the subject itself are being questioned frequently, their relation remains problematic, and the challenges presented by their mutual engagement often prevents a more significant advancement on this front.

I continue with a personal confession: one that readers will be pleased to know is among few in what follows. There have been times recently, in the last few years

or so when, as a graduate student, disheartened at participating in activities of music making, I have found myself in emotional strain, merely sighing at listening to music; in moments when the ideas that motivate my actions were with conflicting demands and implications. While music is, for most musicians I believe, a practical pursuit—something to be done—my engagement with the analytical and discursive practices of the new jazz studies and the subsequent neglect of the central core of my musicality, performing music, has been the cause of this tension. Suzanne Cusick has described a similar state, between what she views as her “musicological *habitus*” —a state in which she is inclined to think of the music’s fixed, text-like qualities— and the way her performing self makes her think about and respond to music (2008, p. 9). As a performer, I act on (and with) music with my body, whilst as a trainee musicologist I have been taught to act on music with my mind. I ask, how can these exist in separation?

My interest in engaging with the music’s more cerebral qualities begun from an interest in what, as a young thinker about music, I perceived as interdisciplinary work: not the relating of more than one branch of knowledge, but the relating of practices that I trusted to operate in the same field of action. A reconciliation of ideas, if you will. This rather optimistic stance aimed to relate my experience in making and responding to music to the knowledge to be gained from contemporary theory and musicological discourse. Specifically, it would allow me to present alternative models to the reading of jazz and its criticism; models that would help the telling of oral tradition and musical discourse to inform one another. For it has been my impression that the numerous critical strategies we have borrowed from other disciplines have not taken jazz scholarship as far as they have led research in other fields. Worse, these borrowings have taken us to oddly paralysing, rather than empowering, conclusions about what jazz is and how it came to be. Perhaps worst of all, these critical strategies have brought us to intellectually stimulating but ultimately unmusical places; to a setting in which the qualities in music that we so much cherished in the first place are often forgotten.

My reaction to the study of jazz has been rooted in personal involvements with the music. Having experienced an education in a number of highly appraised institutions, where the mythopoeia of ideas superseded, mistakenly, the most elementary foundations of meaning and usefulness in higher education, I have found myself in classrooms where the tools used to study jazz could not, surely, relate to what a young musician was experiencing in a vibrant music scene or even, more humbly, in a practice room. Of course, it is only relatively occasionally that the lack of scope and clear-sightedness necessary to throw real light on musical experience has been pointed out. But this is another story; one that has already been told. On the one hand, jazz courses in conservatoires (conservative jazz courses), focus on histori-

cal events in abstract form (on historical myths, legends and fiction) —not on the historicity of events, more precisely, even though the distinction is rarely made— at their moment of utterance and sometimes on their aftermath. The academic study of jazz in universities, conversely, has been injected with a vaccine so powerful as to dissolve the music's agitational force almost entirely, to use Edward Said's metaphor (1999), and is treated as an object concrete, detached from the music itself and, essentially, its human host. Scott DeVaux among others, in his influential essay on jazz historiography, has highlighted the fact that the grand narrative of jazz—the one celebrated in conservatoires and universities—has been artificially conceived through a selective process flawed by its reductionism (DeVaux, 1991). Still, jazz is not understood enough as the product of human labour and its study is not enough practice based.

This development has of course been the outcome of what is now considered a historical cliché of the greatest respectability, that the 1940s marked a period of change for jazz in what we came to know as the bebop era. Whether such special pleading on behalf of an entire decade can ever be justified, there is little doubt that, in the 1940s, jazz shed its populist impulses and moved up the cultural ladder in the consciousness of the public (Ramsey, 2013, p. 19), and the idea of jazz as art music gradually emerged. Notwithstanding the locomotive energies of the profitable enterprise of jazz criticism, the popularity of jazz in the curricula of institutions worldwide is a reliable measure of the respect that the music now attracts (Ramsey, 2013, p. 39). Boosted by its designation by the House of Representatives and the United States Senate as "a rare and valuable national American treasure", in this new jazz age universities bestow honorary doctorates on jazz musicians, whose names are now cited among that cadre of honourees as bearers of culture in what were otherwise dystopian times (Jackson, 2012, p. 1; Ramsey, 2013, p. 39). History classes and scholarly monographs, comprehensive recordings, music streaming platforms, movies and documentaries, jazz festivals, and the latest trends in promoting staged video performances on YouTube in the expense of, for example, an album, have all changed the way the music is perceived, promoting jazz, again, as a commercial industry and not the vanguard that it once needed to achieve in order to gain respectability. In this process, the highest echelons of the jazz world have been quick in establishing the ever-unstable dialogue between public enjoyment and critical acceptance, between audience demand and the critical canon (both necessary to keep the whole precarious business financially afloat). Critics, producers, and jazz aficionados—the role of which in this music business will perhaps one day be addressed with criticism—have all played their parts in constructing this, irredeemably artificial, yet international in scope, industry, one that appears in many guises. Alas, our appreciation of the

sonic riches and performative practices of the music account for a small proportion of this pedigree shift.

Amidst these developments, academics have had their say. In the remarkable flowering of interdisciplinary research on music of all kinds that we have witnessed since the 1990s, jazz has been pushed from the periphery of musicological enquiry back to the centre of attention. This was inevitable, perhaps, given the rapidly changing pragmatics of recent research; also, given musicology's determined love-affair with the "supply-side" of its subject, as Roger Parker, in terms equally applicable to jazz, maintains (2013, p. 33). Benefiting from this surge, scholars extended the validity of paradigms of research and the 1990s witnessed an impressive number of works that staked out new territories for jazz research. These trends, in their most recent utterance dubbed the "new jazz studies", appeared across a multitude of disciplines in the humanities that accompanied, but also challenged, a sizeable corpus of literature about primitivistic myths and legends, personal triumphs and disasters, the genius and the tragic, offering new and closer readings on the topic of jazz. As a result of such efforts, new questions have been generated, and exciting volumes have appeared under the aegis of jazz studies, which have been explored in edited volumes by Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, Farah Jasmine Griffin (2004), Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (2008), Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz (2013), to name but a few.

These positive prospects, however, have had very different implications for other areas of music research than they have for jazz scholarship. As Benjamin Givan notes, for Western art music interdisciplinary research developed on the heels of a long tradition of musicological enquiry, focused above all on *The Music Itself*, its numerous sub-disciplines and their discourse (2010). On the contrary, if your business was *The Music Itself* (and despite jazz's robust proclaim as 'art music', a since the 1940s), then jazz studies did not retain you long. For it was only half a century ago that jazz begun to be considered a field worthwhile of scholarship; yet, extramural pressures caused commentators to question whether it was appropriate to put its musical offerings at the centre of attention. On one occasion, for example, Amiri Baraka, in his memorandum *Jazz and the White Critic*, reasoned that jazz is fundamentally a sociological phenomenon, one only con-concomitantly musical (2010 [1968]). Gunther Schuller, eventually, did too (1968).

Baraka's argument was a response to André Hodeir's and Gunther Schuller's analytical work of the 1950s (Ramsey, 2013). Until then, musicologists spoke of jazz in terms appropriate for the analysis of European concert music, making jazz an imperfect version of classical music rather than something examinable in its own right (see Gabbard, 1995, p. 2). Following Susan McClary's observation that "within the context of industrial capitalism, two mutually exclusive economies of

music developed: that which is measured by popular or commercial success and that which aims for the prestige conferred by official arbiters of taste" (1989, p. 60), Guthrie Ramsey notes that the bebop-as-fine-art notion seems to have moved jazz from McClary's first musical economy to the latter. He notes that "successful music making in the United States has always depended on attracting and satisfying the needs of paying customers, and bebop was no exception" (2013, p. 23). More recently Dale Chapman has also commented on the corporate character of jazz, reminding us how jazz has been used by a plethora of organisations as a metaphor for democratic interaction and business dynamics, accounting for the relationship between political economy and social practice in the era of neoliberal capitalism (2018).

In the early years of jazz criticism, the "official arbiters of taste" were conventionally white, adding to the frustration of African American musicians and thinkers about how jazz was to be understood. The institutional centre of French, jazz criticism, Hugues Panassié, Charles Delaunay and Robert Gofin, had strong links to the primitivistic movement. Panassié wrote of black rhythm and white harmony, of black talent and white knowledge. For Panassié, the ability to swing resided in the biological predisposition of African descendants towards an overtly percussive musical style of African descendants (1936), which typified critiques during the interwar period (Jackson, 2002). Although such views fell out of favour with the influential cultural oriented school of jazz scholarship, Ingrid Monson reports that during her ethnographic research one of her interviewees remarked in passing: "If a black man knows some shit, that's talent. If the white guy knows the same shit, he's smart" (1994, p. 311). This stance was not exclusive to jazz. Langston Hughes, on one occasion was described as "an easily accessible writer", a poet of "plain, easy to understand language" and "an unsophisticated and provincial poet" whose "approach to poetry was far too simple and unlearned" (Jones, 2002, pp. 1146-7).

Such contests propelled a debate around the appropriateness of analysing jazz by using tools suited for the analysis of (white) European music, which confined the music to score-based, textual analysis (see Cooke, 2017, p. 17-18). Although, as Ken Prouty points out, from the 1920s instructional pamphlets and method books were already widely disseminated, providing information on how to develop improvisational skills like those of Louis Armstrong (2006), the most representative example of such sustained analysis is generally acknowledged to be Schuller's "Sonny Rollins and the Challenge of Thematic Improvisation" in 1958. Schuller, a highly trained classical musician and a long habitué of jazz through his collaboration with Miles Davis and Gigi Gryce amongst others, examined long range relationships, seeking to find unified attributes in the solos of Rollins: a method of enquiry that was to remain by and large a regular quest for jazz analysts. Early in the article the author outlined some of his evaluative criteria for judging a solo's worth:

To a very great extent, improvised solos [...] have suffered from a general lack of over-all cohesiveness and direction – the lack of a unifying force. [...] These have been the victims of one or perhaps all of the following symptoms: (1) The average improvisation is mostly a stringing together of unrelated ideas; (2) Because of the independently spontaneous character of most improvisation, a series of solos by different players within a single piece have very little chance of bearing any relationship to each other [...] (3) In those cases where composing (or arranging) is involved, the body of interspersed solos generally has no relation to these non-improvised sections; (4) Otherwise interesting solos are often marred by a sudden quotation from some completely irrelevant material (1958, p. 6).

Schuller acknowledged that some improvisations may succeed simply because they are “meaningful realisations of a well sustained over-all feeling” but was searching for something beyond. He was pleased to find that:

There is now a tendency among a number of jazz musicians to bring thematic (or motivic) and structural unity into improvisation. Some do this by combining composition and improvisation, for instance the Modern Jazz Quartet and the Giuffre Three; others, like Sonny Rollins, prefer to work solely by means of extemporization. Several of the latter’s recordings offer remarkable instances of this approach (1958, p. 6).

Schuller’s work attracted much criticism. He seemed not to be concerned with the processual nature of jazz and his musical preferences, in the quotation above, seemed to be culturally distant from the black vernacular music of the time; the Modern Jazz Quartet remains an exception as, at first glance, it appeared to accommodate its music to white-dominated concert hall standards, an accusation that has been made against successful black artists all too often. Givan notes that Schuller committed “the cardinal error of evaluating Rollins’s music by Eurocentric criteria that efface or distort the meanings it would have held for the saxophonist himself as a post-war African-American musician” (2014, p. 1). Since the eighteenth century, improvisation was repeatedly compared to composition, with clear prejudices in favour of the latter’s presumed advantages of unity and coherence in musical utterance (Lewis and Piekut, 2016). John Murphy explains that nineteenth-century concepts of originality, organic unity and the “distaste for derivativeness” were still part of our critical ideas in the twentieth century, pointing at the work of Schuller as a representative example that fails to question whether the musicians or their intended audiences shared these criteria (1990, p. 8). Murphy cites the work of literary critic Harold Bloom whose work, he argues, was a “justified” reaction to earlier approaches to the analysis of poetry

that ignored extra-textual data in favour of the syntactical relationships within a poem and argues that, similarly, the analysis of a jazz improvisation that treats the transcribed versions of a solo in the same way a Western art-music composition does much the same thing (1990).

Although the shift of attention towards the analysis of jazz and notated scores brought advantages to the enterprise of jazz criticism and played an important role in propelling jazz into an new area of respectability (Ramsey, 2013; Jackson, 2012), towards the end of the last century a backlash against the text-driven view of music began to strike. Partly it was a reaction against the idea that the accurate reproduction of a text produced an accurate representation of sound, or vice-versa. Partly it was a reaction against the idea that analysis could explain the meaning of musical works, and music began to be a representation of a culture rather than as a self-contained autonomous art form. Notably, under the disguise of postmodernism the humanities witnessed the rapid expansion of identity politics which further encouraged the shift of the focus of attention from The Music Itself, on the sociological character of jazz. These developments brought welcomed doses of realism into the world of jazz studies, allowing once again the possibility that performances, as events, might have something to bring to jazz, and forcing musicologists to admit that what music means depends not just on what it consists of but also, and to a very large extent, on who we are. Still, the debate concerning the inappropriateness of using analytical methods and criteria evolved specifically for the examination of Western art music for the investigation of jazz improvisation was to be continued and, in fact, has been one of the most treacherous areas of jazz studies. But whilst jazz acts on a variety of levels, the analytical bifurcation that came as a consequence prevented a more integrated engagement with the subtleties of the creative processes involved.

## **The Mind/Body problem**

Today I find such ideas impinged on the study of jazz, and to have some troublesome results. If changes were happening in the early 1990s, Born notes:

depending upon one's perspective, they were fed by a pincer movement in which the impact of humanistic feminist and critical theory in musicology was being matched by that of the emergent field in popular music studies [of which jazz is often considered as inseparable] which, influenced in turn by British cultural studies and its sociological orientation, was from the outset permeated by a range of post-Marxist problematics, including, centrally, the politics of race and class (2010, p. 208).



Following Baraka's statement and the modern resurgence of the jazz academy (circa 1990s), a significant outlay of critical energy was devoted to relating jazz to the political crises and moral issues by which the business of jazz had been historically permeated with. In so doing, scholars gave the field of jazz studies a primarily sociological orientation and ignored developments on a number of different fronts. An obvious example is the absence of influence of feminist theory, listed above by Born as a significant advancement of which the impact resonated in musicology but, more significantly for my purposes, the absence of commitment to embodied lived experience that feminist theorists have over the years represented. In response to these developments, the new jazz studies focused on the context of music making, the music's role as a social medium, and established a field of research that, oddly enough, discussed jazz in separation from the music, the product and manifestation of its subject of enquiry. Thirty years or so after Baraka's statement, the consensual view from within the broader humanities is that jazz is a cultural phenomenon, constituted of practices, concepts and perceptions that are grounded in social interactions and constructions, of which scope of influence can be experienced in its new social contract with the public and across a multitude of cultural institutions (O'Meally, 2004). Once controversial, this move has now, it seems fair to say, been institutionalised as the main locus of the discipline.

Without a doubt, sociological and culturally oriented scholarship has offered much to jazz. Deborah Mawer, whilst acknowledging that the new jazz studies have sometimes undervalued the musicians concerned, notes that the overwhelming outcome of this critical turn has been towards "viewing jazz positively rather than defensively across relevant wider arenas" (2014, p. 2). I argue, however, that although jazz is, certainly, more than a display of virtuosic bravado, 'hot playing' and frenetic danceable rhythms, the result of this work has been a bit monotonous and has further mystified the overly romanticised notion of the music's production. It comes as no surprise when John Gennari notes that "a recent study of jazz criticism declares that our direct experience of the music itself is finally illusive" (2006, p. 4).

Despite the progressive inroads of postmodern scholarship, jazz studies have privileged rational over emotional, theory over experience and, until recently, have shown little interest in discussing the music as embodied activity. This absence of commitment to embodied lived experience meant that we denied the bodies involved in those social or musical acts where jazz happens (the feminine represents the physical aspects of cognition, the intellectual, the masculine, as Cusick explains, although this, of course, is a relationship far more symbolic than literal, 2008, p. 16). There are, in addition to the political and class implications, moral consequences too. By ignoring the importance of bodily participation and the thinkers who pointed out the antinomies between the mind and the body, between the self and the other,

scholars denied not only the bodies in jazz (that is, the bodies that make jazz happen), but their own bodies and involvement in the modes of research too; the embodiment in both process and product, of both informant and analyst, and were unable to see the enormously symbolic and sensual power of the body in jazz.

This essay is conceived in response to these alternatives. My commitment to the value of insider knowledge places me at odds with some of the work that took shape in the 1990s and animates my concern at the seeming lack of participation of the scholars who produced it. A surplus of scholarship discusses jazz in an abstract form, working for the service of describing practices of the mind for the sake of informing other minds and, as a result, jazz studies took its position on one of our civilisation's most fundamental and enduring philosophical issues: what Cusick (2008) and Le Guin (2005) refer to as the Mind/Body problem. Scholarly thinking about jazz dealt in so much detail that it was unable to see the obvious; we perceived an art that exists only when bodies resonate, as an art of and for the intellect, and have rationalised jazz culture whilst running the risk of highly misrepresenting it.

Of course, the placing of the political among jazz scholarship's core concerns proved to be an immanently political act itself. By pressing politics on jazz, the new jazz studies perceived the political as something that was taking place outside the jazz scene and, 'pressing politics on jazz' quickly became synonymous with 'politics about jazz'. The internal politics of knowingness and the performative practices that blurred the elastic boundaries between jazz and its space of action were mostly ignored, whilst the bodies that carried, transformed and disseminated these politics in the music scene were mostly disregarded. Scholars formed an acceptable politic of knowledge internal to the field of jazz studies (rather than relational to jazz), one that, in time, seemed like it was concerned with setting the boundaries that defined how jazz was to be conceived and which subjects and musics should be studied; boundaries that in turn afforded varying degrees of legitimation. It was only until recently that the traditional toolbox of the new jazz studies, one profoundly influenced by the critical current borrowed by the New Musicology, had been designed for the work of constructing and maintaining a canon of acceptable topics, which could perhaps be labelled more appropriately as a sociology of music, "a sociology about how musical activity (composition, performance, distribution, reception) is socially shaped" as, in terms equally applicable, Tia DeNora maintains (2003, p. 36).

Too much work has been conducted at that "wrong level of generality"—to borrow a memorable phrase from Iris Murdoch (1985, p. 139). We must concentrate our efforts to move the discussion on to a level in which jazz can be portrayed in less general, more musically located terms. I consider this to be a theoretical advance for jazz research; a move with greater nuance in keeping with the musician's practice; a move towards specificity. The value of jazz remains centred in its act of participa-

tion and it is perhaps in this spirit of intellectual current that Givan argues: "without neglecting the manifold other modes of interpretation, we ought to rededicate ourselves to scrutinising musical details and surveying stylistic norms, if only out of respect for musicians' meticulously honed craft and empathy for their lived experience as performers" (2014, p. 229). Such stance can provide a structure upon which we may explore the music's cultural significance, an exploration that, according to ethnomusicologist Michael Tenzer, is limited without the basis structure provides. Tenzer maintains that "we need to hear structure to give our diverse personal interpretations a common orientation" (2006, p. 9). In fact, both Givan and Tenzer point at the need to give our studies a common orientation and argue for proximity in our practice; proximity becomes here an epistemological point of departure and return.

This call for specific physical experience has, of course, long been advocated in academic discourse and, as a means of developing understanding, has its roots in debates concerning the development of knowledge. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for example, rejected the prevailing view of the body in Western philosophies as separate from, and subordinate to, the mind. He argued that mind and body are mutually and continuously co-informing in complex ways, such that the notion of separating them is untenable (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Similarly, social theorist Antonio Gramsci explored the relationship between experience and knowledge and argued that: "The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding even without feeling and being impassioned" (1971, p. 418). Merleau-Ponty and Gramsci pulled the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice as modes of justifying knowledge, exposing the roots of how knowledge is organised in the academy, no less in the microcosmos of jazz studies. Citing Michel De Certeau, Dwight Conquerwood has returned to the issue within the context of performance studies and pointed at the chasm between the two routes of knowledge, which takes one official, objective and abstract form and one practical, embodied and popular, what he calls "the story" (2002, p. 145). He maintained: "Marching under the banner of science and reason [the enlightenment project of modernity] has disqualified and repressed other ways of knowing that are rooted in embodied experience, orality and local contingencies" (2002, p. 146).

The study of the physical aspects of musical performance is of special importance to jazz. Murphy had already suggested that some of the musical choices made by improvisers may be the product of learning physical motions (1990); yet, little work has followed his footsteps. Again, this idea is not new to ethnomusicologists. A comparison of this 'embodied' consideration with findings in scholarship on the pedagogy and transmission of musical customs in diverse cultures worldwide demonstrates that, although some aspects of performance are unique to jazz, others seem to be universal. As early as 1955 Blacking described how Congolese

flute players used habitual fingering patterns in performance and made identical observations on African Kalimba playing (1962). Similarly, Eric Von Hornbostel suggested that a performer of xylophone music sees a melody as an act of mobility (Baily, 1985), whilst Bell Yung (1984), working under the umbrella of comparative musicology, noted in his examinations of the physical practicalities of the Chinese guqin zither that players experience the performance as a sequence of motions. Elsewhere, I have made similar observations about the music of Milt Jackson. The vibist's many gifts included a photographic memory which influenced his navigation on an instrument in which visual contact must be maintained almost constantly (2015). Similarly, Deirdre Sklar supported scholarly participation in the actions of members of a culture to be observed as a means of promoting deeper understanding through kinaesthetic empathy with them—a practice that stimulates kinaesthetic learning—as opposed to rationalising the actions of groups and individuals from a distance (1994). Andrew Mead (1999) and Greg Downey (2002) demonstrated analogous methodologies. Equally, recent efforts have attempted to break superficial relationships; Travis Jackson's jazz ethnography, for example, has attempted to shift the emphasis away from representation (text) towards experience (2012).

Although the understanding derived through hands-on participation is not always explicit and, as Catherine Ingram and Russell maintain, it is often treated as a form of what Michel Foucault has identified as subjugated knowledge (2013), this viewpoint has been defended in other areas of study too. Elisabeth Le Guin, for example, has argued that the experience of identification that a performer undergoes when learning to perform a composition functions as a real relationship and that this relationship is essential to the scholarly study of music (2005). Le Guin is not alone in highlighting the scholarly underestimation of the value of feeling and experience. Cusick has noted that "to deny musical meaning to things only the performers of a work will know, implicitly denies that performers are knowers, knowers whose knowledge comes from their bodies and their minds" (2008, p. 16). Le Guin's carnal musicology, as much as Cusick's feminist music theory, refuse to leave out the whole realm of complex and nuanced meaning that is embodied, hidden but tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised and co-experienced simply because it refuses to be articulated with the available modes of critical analysis. These observations make a radical departure from some formal approaches to musical content in suggesting that a non-formal element (the bodily motion) may account for the felt significance of sound.

With changing times, scholars have emphasised the importance of engaged listening in jazz and specifically the kinaesthetic learning that results from somatic modes of understanding. One such example is the work of David Sudnow, whose

auto-ethnographic account of his own acquisition of improvisational skills on the piano accounts how in the early stages of learning to improvise he developed pathways to facilitate his navigation through different harmonic contexts, linking therefore the physical aspects of understanding to a more theoretical level (2000). Equally, Givan's influential *The Music of Django Reinhardt* (2010) amounts to a growing interdisciplinary and reflexive movement that interrogates the historical constitution of jazz by musical expertise. Givan investigates the physical processes that constitute a musical improvisation and, by situating himself into the analytical process, sheds light on what the relationship between Reinhardt's disfigured hands might have been in performance. Marko Aho examined gypsy swing music as a medium for virtuosic gestures from the physical perspective of the performing musician (2013) and, like Givan, demonstrates how using one's body can assist the understanding of the performative practices in jazz. This is reminiscent of Michael Chanan's commentary, who cites evidence from neuroscience to argue that Barthes' *musica practica* is essentially musical knowledge deriving from musical practice (1996, p. 28). These works, each in their different social and musical worlds, show (to borrow Amanda Kemp's memorable phrase) the usage of performance "both as a way of knowing and as a way of showing" (1998, p. 116).

## **The Jazz Studies are Dead, Long Live the Jazz Studies**

I want to take the issues raised in a slightly different direction than the authors from whom I have quoted thus far. I want to stress the lack of commitment to embodied lived experience in jazz studies, what this absence signifies, how it constitutes a political act in itself, as well as how it withholds from us a deeper understanding of the modes of creativity with which jazz has been bounded. I argue that *now's the time* to cast doubts on the dominant conceptual boundaries that have underpinned the hegemony of jazz studies but, even more, that it is now appropriate to move beyond the established discipline. Although, as Born argues, popular music studies — a discipline that has maintained a complicated relationship with jazz studies — is among those disciplines acknowledged to have transformed our conception of what the musical object is by bringing the bodies that mediate musical experience into the frame (2010), I argue that in jazz studies this dimension has not been sufficiently exercised in its intensifying dialogue with musicology. As such, and to paraphrase Born, it is in the relative legitimacy and therefore institutional presence accorded to the new jazz studies that the politics of 'new jazz studies' and the reproduction of hegemony have been most evident since the 1990s, and that I wish to question today.

Any configuration of the 'newer new jazz studies', and the redistribution of legitimacy in our methods necessitates, as Born argues, "the presentation of cogent and compelling intellectual and creative justifications for a redistribution of attention to new objects of study, new perspectives on old disciplinary objects, and new conceptual and methodological resources relevant to all musics" (2010, p. 208). Born maintained that, while such move springs from "a self-conscious dialogue with criticism of, or opposition to, the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical or political limits" of the canon, it also implies "a transposition of Chantal Mouffe's stress on antagonism as constitutive of the political onto the plane of the politics of knowledge" (p. 211). Such move does not *a priori* imply a conflict between the emergent and the established scholarship. Rather it advocates the need for us to overturn the philological-historicist stance of jazz studies, to adopt new practices to transcend its epistemological and ontological foundations, to expand its disciplinary horizons, to reimagine the boundaries that have underpinned our scholarship and, as creative members of an orthodoxy, outgrow the discipline. In a similar intellectual current, Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist have long now called for an accommodation between established methodologies and new horizons, and a musicology of the provisional that challenges its own disciplinary past (1999).

More recently, practitioner-scholars have taken important leadership roles in the field of jazz studies (see, for example, Kwami Coleman, Steve Lehman, Sherrie Tucker, Alex Rodriguez, Nina Eidsheim, Jairo Moreno, Vijay Iyer). Reflecting on the position of experience in discussions of jazz improvisation, however, it is worth noticing that, more often than not, such scholarship is found under the umbrella of performance, or critical improvisation studies rather than the new jazz studies. Despite its historical significance and potential to enliven current debates, improvisation — a practice central not only to jazz but also to several musical cultures worldwide — features fleetingly in modern jazz scholarship. Are jazz studies destined to remain a cultural and sociological oriented discipline? Lewis and Piekut discuss "the important historical role played by music in the practice of improvisation" (2016, p. 2); in keeping with a larger cultural history in the United States, is it not down to jazz studies to recognise the important historical role played by jazz improvisation in the practice of twentieth century Western music? Do not 'mind' and 'body' each offer different modes of knowledge that are essential in making sense of jazz? As musicians, we seem to be involved in a sort of power struggle with our scholarly thinking about music, one that, in the world as we know it, is destined to lose.

An important question to ask ourselves then is: do we reshape the foundations of our system in order to allow practising musicians to appropriate themselves into the scholars' world, whilst asking for scholars to learn the ways of 'being-in-the world' (as Martin Heidegger argues) of jazz, to disappropriate themselves in order to

appropriate our subject of enquiry? Propositions such as this are often assumed to have no answer because they invoke something we all regard as untouchable; yet, they are not meant to be triumphantly rhetorical. Making the study of jazz more relational to the practice of musicians sounds self-evidently sensible and yet it is to the musicians' practice that we now need to turn to expand on the serious study of jazz. A more immediately available tactic would be for scholars to engage in collaborative research with artists. Musicians are perennially involved in research projects of their own, plunging into various repertoires and traditions, transcribing the work of their forebears and engaging in sustained apprenticeships and collaborations. The fact that such carefully cultivated knowledge is treated by scholars as perpetually secondary to musicological analysis remains problematic. We are called therefore, to situate our theorising on musical praxis; not only due to the knowledge that musicians share, but if anything to the new music that is constantly performed in this new century. For now, this idea brings me back to the opening paragraph and my conclusion of this essay: as scholars of a music that is very much alive, we must finally accept that it is impossible to separate our own subjectivity from the reality which we try to understand and that, as such, it is necessary to place ourselves among our subjects of enquiry, to better understand, to better represent, jazz. In similar spirit, Nietzsche argued that a philosopher's system of thought always arises from his autobiography; we ought to make our subject of enquiry, jazz, part of our autobiography too, to avoid theorising in a cultural void.

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