

A Rotary Treatise:

Double Bill!

Featuring the Mingus—Zupancić – Nietzsche – Prince Quartet

and the

Collier-Harman-Shakespeare Trio!

To have all of the divisions – all of the subdivisions within one beat the same size can be a little bit limiting ... a lot of the most exciting grooves, in the world, have, you know, the the divisions aren't exactly straight ... it adds a momentum on an alternative axis to the axis of harmony ... it's a new way of generating sensations ... I theorised it in a number of ways. So you can split the beat into five, you know, and then have three and two. You can split the beat into seven, and have four and three. There's a whole host of ways you can divide a beat up. But really, if you look at the fundamental reason why that feels good is because – I think it's because things that are straight and organised and regular: that's not the way the world is, that's not the way life works. I think that if you listen to somebody deliver an idea in a very regimented way ... part of that, for me, isn't as necessarily vulnerable or open than if it has space in it, if it's wonky ... there are definitely ways you can achieve "wonks" by theorising ... Actually, I invented a new sort of terminology, a new way of writing out time signatures. Where you know you'd normally have, like, 4/4. And I figured there was a number missing at the top, which is like the number of beats within each beat. So, you know you can have 4/4, but you can have like 5/4/4. And then 7, like 7/4/4. They are still in 4/4.¹

That which is in locomotion must arrive at the half-way stage before it arrives at the goal.²

I have been studying how I may compare
This prison where I live unto the world:
And for because the world is populous
And here is not a creature but myself,
I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out.
My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
My soul the father; and these two beget
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
And these same thoughts people this little world,
In humours like the people of this world,
For no thought is contented. The better sort,
As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd
With scruples and do set the word itself
Against the word:
As thus, 'Come, little ones,' and then again,
'It is as hard to come as for a camel
To thread the postern of a small needle's eye.'
Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
Unlikely wonders; how these vain weak nails

¹ Jacob Collier, interview by June Lee, *Interview: Jacob Collier (Part 2)*, June 17-8, 2017, YouTube, accessed October 21, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b78NoobJNEo>.

² Zeno, in *Physics*, Aristotle, VI:9, 239b10.

May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls,
And, for they cannot, die in their own pride.
Thoughts tending to content flatter themselves
That they are not the first of fortune's slaves,
Nor shall not be the last; like silly beggars
Who sitting in the stocks refuge their shame,
That many have and others must sit there;
And in this thought they find a kind of ease,
Bearing their own misfortunes on the back
Of such as have before endured the like.
Thus play I in one person many people,
And none contented: sometimes am I king;
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am: then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then am I king'd again: and by and by
Think that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing: but whate'er I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing. Music do I hear?³

Where does a “beat” end? That, I suppose, depends on who you ask. Perhaps when the next “beat” starts? If you are quantizing, that would seem to be a satisfactory answer: a rhythmic grid is developed in such a way to delineate each beat cleanly and independently to create a “groove” (that is, for now, a series of regular “beats”). Except that is, of course, explaining away the joke: *analysing the groove is believed to kill its bodily pleasure, to drain its essence*.⁴ But we are getting ahead of ourselves. These remarks are inseparable from an emergent discourse on groove, and that’s question-begging first class.⁵ Coincidences of these articulate divergences of aesthetic ideology, here relating problematised (trans)national notions of rhythm and groove are, for us, distractions. Ornette Coleman never met Joe Harriott (more’s the pity), but the coincidentalness of their corresponding styles is not a fugitivity in the constitution of rhythm, or the tyranny of the saxophone

³ William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.V., ll. 1-41.

⁴ Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (London: Quartet Books, 1998), 7.

⁵ We can, like so many before, attack the notion of “groove” or “not-groove”, of a Deleuzian disequilibrium that creates “groove” through in-stable repetition, unpicking the influence of sampling, supplementary difference, participatory discrepancies or rotary perception. As Collier notes above, you can theorise it in a number of ways. Myriad examples abound. See: Davide Sciortino, “Why Would You Quantize All of This?: J Dilla: The Perception of Groove and the Re-Definition of Hip Hop and Electronic Beats”, *Institute of Contemporary Music Performance*, April 2014; Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 19-23; Anne Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure: The Funk Grooves of James Brown and Parliament* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2006); Keil, Charles. “Participatory Discrepancies and the Power of Music.” *Cultural Anthropology* 2, no. 3 (1987): 275–283; Charles Mingus, *Beneath the Underdog*, ed. Nel King (New York: Penguin, 1971), 251-2. This is a handful of the countless articles, books and scattershot ideas on groove available.

– though both played a part – but an endeavour unified in aesthetic striving which we can approach with guarded celebration.

*constant time signatures, a steady four-four tempo, themes and predictable harmonic variations, fixed division of the chorus by bar lines and so on, we aim to retain at least one in each piece. But we may well, if the mood seems to us to demand it, dispense with all the others*⁶

*the musical sensation of unison ... harmony, melody, speed, rhythm, time and phrases all have equal position in the results that come from the placing and spacing of ideas*⁷

So we must ask again: when does a “beat” end? As is often the case, for reasons of its supposed root at the base of the other arts, theatrical theory can offer an insight.⁸ The screenwriter has a different conception of the beat. In script and on screen, a beat is a specific timing measurement; moreover: *the smallest element of structure... (Not to be confused with...an indication...meaning 'short pause')*.⁹ “Beat”, in other words, is atomic and is, therefore, premature and postexpectant, anticipatory and retrospective.¹⁰ Viewed as the smallest building block of a temporal structure, we can understand how the conceptual “beat” has been mishandled as an identifiable property of a study-object (piece) presumptuously animated as synecdochal or metonymic to the object itself, a processual overturning of itself.¹¹ A “beat” nor “groove” cannot be reduced to its components of which it is made, nor to its effects it has on other forms; it is more of what our “knowledge” of it can tell us, since “knowledge” is always an oversimplification, placing objects into the categories of “what it is” and “what it does” which reduces it merely to a bundle of properties.¹²

Where have we arrived? Where we started. Historical focus on “groove” has been fruitful, but a methodological constant which has augmented the literalist rationalisation of the musical act.¹³ We

⁶ Joe Harriott, liner notes to *Abstract* (Capitol Records: ST 10351), 1962.

⁷ Ornette Coleman, “Prime Time for Harmolodics” in *Down Beat*, July 1983: 54-55. See also: Ted Gioia, *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁸ While a common conception, one with which I disagree. “The craft of acting”, writes Graham Harman, citing Stanislavski and with Meisner, Brook and Boal whispering in his ear, “insists one try to *become* the object one portrays as nearly as possible”. (Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican Books, 2018), 83-5). Harman’s point revolves around the theatricality of metaphor, but I believe should be inverted. Theatre is not at the root of the other arts, but wields them; as Wagner saw in his aesthetics, theatre is a composite, not a totality. For brevity’s sake I will not expounded this argument here. But see variously: Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Sanford Meisner, *On Acting* (London: Vintage Books, 1987); *The Performance Philosophy Journal*, variously.

⁹ Robert McKee, *Story* (New York: Regan Books, 2006), 35-8.

¹⁰ To borrow from Nathaniel Mackey, *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2018).

¹¹ Again, examples abound, particularly in the literalist musicological tradition that seems to posit that an elucidation of any music(‘)s identifiable features equates to the music-object itself. In short: music, or a piece of music, does not equal its properties, but manages a tense relationship to those properties. See for example: Matthew Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven’s Late Style* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006); Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009); Jerrold Levinson, *Music, Art and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² See: Harman, 35-44.

¹³ Charles Kiel talks of “groovology’s” “unambiguous and urgently needed contributions” in “Groovology and the Magic of Other People’s Music”, 2005, accessed October 21, 2018: <http://musicgrooves.org/articles/GroovologyAndMagic.pdf>; Mark Abel, *Groove: An Aesthetic Measure of Time* (New York: BRILL, 2014), 18-60; Garry Tamlyn, *The Big Beat: Origins and Development of Snare Drum Backbeat and Other Accompanimental Rhythms in Rock ‘n’ Roll*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1998).

must, in simple terms, dig deeper. Because several notions about “beat” must be remembered as provisional to any radically ordinary rendering of “groove”, and “beat” is our focus – the kernel, seed, of any groove:

- 1) Consider: people rebel as much against “groove” as they do against reason, law, understanding
- 2) *Divisibility and overlapping of musical headings in “beat”, as “groove-becoming-before-groove” may point toward a deconstruction of a Eurocentric horizon.*¹⁴ Too little too late, perhaps, but a crucial step: a clearer conception of “beat” can help (re)conceptualise the musicological sphere beyond Western Art Music.

To speak to both points, I defer to Daniel Barenboim in conversation with Edward Said:

*Furtwängler believed implicitly in the fact that it was not only permissible but necessary to have certain fluctuations of tempo, not only to achieve the expression of each individual molecule but, on the other hand, paradoxically, to achieve a sense of form, in order to have the ebb and flow. You needed to have these imperceptible fluctuations in order to achieve the sense of formal structure. Obviously, they have to be imperceptible. This means that one of the main principles of making music is the art of transition.*¹⁵

For Furtwängler, music is object-transience, the syntax of which is appositional and asymptotic, but these “beats” *must be imperceptible*.¹⁶ How can this be so? In Barenboim’s description we see most clearly how a “beat” does not become what it is. Its inner limit is itself contained by it, it itself belongs to it. “Beat” is an encounter with the past and the future, affecting both, it is an eternity not as circular but when circularity appears. *Nietzsche’s notion of eternity, as well as of infinity, is not that of an endless-albeit-circular stretching of time, but that of a “timeless moment”.*¹⁷ One’s mind turns to Mingus’ spatiotemporal antifoundationalism¹⁸, cemented in timeless moments taking root from within one’s self, one’s noumena:

There was once a word used – swing. Swing went in one direction, it was linear, and everything had to be played with an obvious pulse and that’s very restrictive. But I use the term “rotary perception”. If you get a mental picture of the beat existing within a circle you’re more free to improvise. People used to think the notes had to fall on the centre of the beats in the bar at intervals, like a metronome, with three or four men in the rhythm section accenting the same pulse. That’s like parade music or dance music. But imagine a circle surrounding each beat – each guy can play his notes anywhere in that circle and it gives him a feeling he has more space. The notes fall anywhere inside the circle but the original feeling for the beat

¹⁴ Herman Rapaport, “Of Musical Headings: Toscanini’s and Furtwängler’s *Fifth Symphonies* 1939-54”, in *Thresholds of Western Culture: Identity, Postcoloniality, Transnationalism*, ed. John Burt Foster Jr. and Wayne Jeffrey Froman (New York: Continuum, 2002), 67.

¹⁵ Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), 74.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Alenka Zupančič, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Two* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 21.

¹⁸ See: Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 86-118. See below for discussion on noumena.

*hasn't changed. ... The pulse is inside you. When you're playing with musicians who think this way you can do anything.*¹⁹

So we must ask again: when does a “beat” end? I should, perhaps, be more candid for I have no intention of answering this question. There are better questions at which we have reached but have not landed upon: when does a “beat” begin? What is a “beat”? From where we came to where we arrived we can best say this: a “beat” is a thing. I do not see this as a cheat’s answer of immeasurable affirmative lack. To seek the essence of a thing is not a disciplinarian’s enfolding. A “beat” is a multitude, but a reality – any theory or analysis taking into account only “pure” or “absolute” musics, as many do, collapse before they can even begin in labyrinths of qualitative ontologies.²⁰ Such theories dissolve in contact with air; reality is always where these theories struggle and so it must be revered. To comprehend the “beat” fully one must reject any teleological notion potentialised in “groove”, for to have somewhere to get to means that the arrivant never arrives.²¹

José Esteban Muñoz:

*Facts claim a certain knowledge of the world, a knowledge that fixes things, frames the world in a naturalistic sense. To make such empirical, positivist, or “objective” claims about the world is to presuppose some sort of epistemological field that “enfolds” the world. To take one’s time, or use time itself, outside of some naturalistic teleology, and describe our affective field of perception, that is to “unfold” the world. Phenomenology encourages one to take one’s time to observe and describe because to do so is to interrupt a seamless flow of description, and isolate in that seamless flow, as a certain claim about a world but not the world itself, a naturalistic semblance of world. Thus we need to interrupt certain modes of description that do not offer us phenomenology’s “unfolding” and merely claim world, which is to enfold it, limit it, foreclose on a horizon of possibility and instead organise things in relation to discourses like science or disciplinarity. It is a problem to simply make claims about the world without really describing it.*²²

But:

when the critics first came ... they did not respond by trying to seek the level on which it dealt, but sought to pull it away from its foundation ... limiting it to a set of conditions foreign to its nature. but not only that, the critics placed a ceiling of definition on the music that could only force it to remain in the state they found it, and thus stagnate ... now with all this information (words), the critics, and the majority or their readers and listeners, were

¹⁹ Mingus, 251-2.

²⁰ See, for one example, the otherwise insightful: Maria José Alcaraz León, ‘Music’s Moral Character’, in *teorema* 31 (2012): 179-191.

²¹ I thank Moten for this insight, 268.

²² José Esteban Muñoz, “Phenomenological Flights: From Latino Over There and Cubania’s Here and Now”, talk and unpublished manuscript (2006): 2. Quoted in Moten, 267-8.

*bound to fail: their level of consciousness was never awakened as to the essence*²³

We can therefore treat “beat” like Kant’s thing-in-itself, Heidegger’s Being or Lacan’s Real. There is an extent to which “beat” is inevitably unknowable in its totality. The crucial development that must be made here is in relation to “groove”. For as we (will) have seen, entanglement in metrical detail ruptures the mathematical individuation into an incalculable falsification. Here we must think as Object-Oriented Ontologists (OOO) if we are to further our debate. *Objects never make full contact with each other any more than they do the human mind.*²⁴ Each “beat” is mutually withdrawn, to use Heideggerian terminology, mutually autonomous and mutually dark. The primacy of the human mind in the world is an anthropocentric imbalance that must be challenged. In unfolding the concept of “beat” this way, we can see a path against the impossible anthropocentrism of Western philosophy, from Descartes and Kant to now, which holds that we cannot speak of the world without humans or of humans without the world, only a primordial correlation between the two.²⁵ We hold that the world exists outside of humanity’s per/con/ception of it: Music exists.²⁶ That is, Music exists not just as an object *for* the consciousness of the thinking mind.²⁷ Western musicology has historically ignored this fact, or been blind to it, and has then attempted to perform an oscillating irruption which is a begging itself of several questions; being, primarily: how would one go about studying nothing’s real presence? How to examine the nothing that is? Through the failure to confront these questions, literalist musicology further failed its own affirmative impulse of (im)possibility.

Of course, this view does not hold for Music, or “beat” alone, but all objects: *anything with a surplus beyond its constituent parts and beneath its sum total of effects on the world.*²⁸

²³ Wadada Leo Smith, *notes (8 pieces)* (Leo Smith, 1973), 12.

²⁴ Harman, 12.

²⁵ A fault of philosophical thought Quentin Meillassoux calls “correlationism”, *After Finitude: Essay of the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. R. Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

²⁶ There is a subtle but important difference to be drawn here between my position and those of certain musicological ontologists (be they subscribers to music as “action”, “type” theorists or otherwise): namely, that such views all hold the same flaw, being an over-reliance or dependence upon the human in relation to the music. I put it simply that Music exists. It does not matter whether or not we are there to experience it. See: Carl Matheson and Ben Caplan, “Ontology”, in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*, eds. Theodore Gracyk and Andrew Kania (London: Routledge, 2011), 38- 47 for a quick overview and a long reading list.

²⁷ For two specific examples: Matthew Spitzer’s *Music as Philosophy*, quoted above, discuss metaphorical mapping in relation to musicological perspectives, but misses two tricks. Firstly, the cultural metaphors of understanding we hold in Anglophone countries is emphatically visual, regardless of which sensory engagement is at stake (see how this feels, see what this sounds like, see what the temperature is, and so on...). Secondly, and more importantly, the emphasis he places on cultural metaphors anchors his epistemic base right into the veracity and primacy of the human thinking mind – ie. exactly what we are assiduously moving against.

This second point is shared by Aaron Ridley in his *The Philosophy of Music: Theme and Variations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 1-10. While he does not fall so far into the trap of anthropocentrism in his musical analysis, he does miss the *mutual* darkness of objects, claiming a relational development which I claim to be impossible.

To further emphasise, this is not a Schopenhauerian resignation to the Will in direct copy, for each direct noumenal access is a new compound object, not the object’s inwardness manifest. See: Alex Neill, “Schopenhauer”, in *The Routledge Companion*.

²⁸ Harman, 51.

Here we can counter Muñoz with our next step, since from this position it follows that there can be no direct knowledge of anything, since knowledge – through our objects and ourselves – is not a direct presence of reality. This is no bad thing. Music, as an art, is not a form of knowledge (it tells us neither what anything is, nor what it does, nor is descriptivist) but is a cognitive form. Our realism rears its head again, since indirect reality is always different to how we formulate it, and the value of cognitive forms that are not forms of knowledge must be stressed. The mathematical, literalist history of musicology and music theory epitomise this gap. Hence we see existing a gaping disc[h]ord between modern, neo-liberal critical analysis and the non-Western musical act.²⁹ Countless practitioners and academics have explicated such a claim on countless occasions.³⁰ Orthodox-critical teleological analysis most often falls into the vocabulary of the fawning fan or documentarian description, or resorts to Jacobian nihilism in an attempt to “explain” the music.³¹ Often, academic discourses of any discipline – from musicology to physics and even those established to tackle this very issue – fails to successfully encapsulate what *music* is.³² Hegemonic pedagogical and analytical epistemologies of Western Classical music – the source of whichever prefixed -musicology one chooses - often fall short of comprehending anything other than their own articulated forms.³³ Despite his situational distance, Nietzsche’s observation still rings true: “how much of [music] can be counted, calculated, brought into formulae ... what would one have grasped, understood, recognised in it! Nothing, almost nothing, of that which is really ‘music’!”.³⁴ We can now understand Nietzsche’s statement not as frustration, but of acknowledgement of inevitability, affirmative resignation.

If this is our position, how are we able to save ourselves from a series of unverifiable claims? How do we prevent any criticism becoming a shout into the void? We can short-circuit our acceptance of indirect reality through an excerpt of José Ortega y Gasset’s “Essay in Aesthetics by way of a Preface”:

Everything, from the point of view within itself, is an “I” ... Imagine the importance of a language or system of expressive signs whose function was

²⁹ See: Kofi Agawu, *Representing African Music* (London: Routledge, 2014), xv, xii.

³⁰ Various: Robert Linden, *Harmony of Jazz* (London: Garant/Central, 2015), 99; Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop* (London: University of California, 1997), 263-4; Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz* (London: University of Chicago, 2009), 510; see also the continuing work of Philip Tagg: <http://tagg.org/texts.html>.

³¹ Krin Gabbard, ‘Introduction’, in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, 10-1. Also: See: Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). I use ‘orthodox-critical analysis’ to denote the Western epistemological, ontological and pedagogical hang-ups from Enlightenment thinking – a Jacobian nihilism, in which an explicit indefatigable progression of knowledge can be seen as an endless regression into conditions identified as conditions identified as conditions... *ad infinitum*. Traditionally Western discourses, by their very nature, serve the impossible task of heightening particularity to clarify with ever more precision. For this particular topic, my chagrin is best demonstrated by an example. Paul Cherlin and Geurino Mazzola’s *Flow, Gesture and Spaces in Free Jazz: Towards a Theory of Collaboration* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), attempts to reduce free jazz interaction to a formula: ‘This hot spot is based upon the $n!$ permutations of skeletal digraph sequences that generate the hypergesture space $\Gamma\pi(1) \rightarrow @\Gamma\pi(2) \rightarrow @ \dots \Gamma\pi(n) \rightarrow @X'$, 92. In musicology, such an approach suffers from a fetishisation of the ‘canon’ and the ‘Great Composers’, a symptom of the cult of the Romantic Genius, as well as a misguided equation of ‘music-as-score’ with musical experience. See: Graham Lock, ‘Postscript 1’, *Forces...*, 294-307; Anthony Braxton, *Tri-axium Writings 3* (Synthesis Music, 1985), 1-5; Pamela Burnard, *Musical Creativities in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1-5; Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 1-17.

³² See: Fernando Benadon, ‘Slicing the Beat’, *Ethnomusicology*, 50/1, (2006):73-98.

³³ In musicology and philosophy. See: Tagg; Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 285-332.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 3. 626, quoted in Bowie, 299.

*not to tell us about things but to present them to us in the act of executing themselves. Art is just such a language; this is what art does. The aesthetic object is inwardness as such – it is each thing as “I”.*³⁵

To understand the relevance of Ortega y Gasset, we must unfold what he means by “I”, and in so doing briefly (re)turn to Kant. We must indulge Kant for his exposition of noumena and phenomena, by now thoroughly examined.³⁶ Aesthetics is a term Kant only uses once, in relation to his ethics, which concern themselves with how we treat other people: there is no ethical dimension to how we treat objects. The reason for this, for Kant, is simple – humans have both a noumenal (things-in-themselves) and phenomenal side and experience one through the other. An ethical life, for Kant, relies upon “I” having also a sense of noumenal freedom, of unknowable, irreducibility. But how do we encounter non-human objects, if not noumenally, or as noumena? Certainly, I have no more knowledge of the “book-ness” of a book than I do the “me-ness” of myself. The true inwardness of anything I encounter, be it a book, a human, the Olympics of 2012, the Apple Corporation, is no more accessible through third-person description or first-person reflection. That is, objects have a noumenal aspect. Elaborating this concept, then, requires us to inject an ethical dimension to our encounters with objects. Here aesthetics comes in: aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human. Is this not the point Ortega y Gasset makes when stating that everything for itself is an “I”? For it has nothing to do a special apparatus, invisible and indivisible, called “consciousness” but because each thing simply *is* something, inexhaustible in introspection (first-person) or description (third-person). Every “I” is an ungraspable inwardness, out of our reach; it is not a transcendent quality – of, say, the otherworldliness of music – but a quality rooted in *reality*, beyond humanity’s interference.

(A qualification is in order. To identify as an “I” the “I” must split itself, preceding reflection. Yet to see “I” as “I”, “I” must also have awareness of itself pre-split. How to resolve this tension? Here, we borrow from Hölderlin, who denies that “I” can represent its inwardness, but can know more by reflection via an object. *It is a matter of the I not simply remaining in interaction with its subjective nature, from which it cannot abstract* through first-person introspection *without negating itself*.³⁷ The solution for Hölderlin is “poetic individuality”, the free spontaneity of (aesthetic) choice in an external object. Objects chosen are external to “I”, but choice of object is the most fundamental act of “I”, free choice, through which our compounds come to be. In choice of object – object-ive investment – “I” escapes the imagined through engagement with a freely chosen object, exploring subjectivity in abstraction with and reflection upon itself via the object.³⁸ “Poetic individuality”, what we re-term object-ive investment, relates to the Hegel/Schelling/Hölderlin trio’s “Oldest System Programme of German Idealism”, in which “the highest act of reason” was “an aesthetic act”.³⁹ Hölderlin’s conclusion is that solely “I”, in free choice, can apprehend (or create) objects aesthetically. Aesthetic investment becomes, as Kant hinted in his hapax legomenon “aesthetics” via Ethics, an ethical step – producible only through the noumenal “I”. We simply go further and

³⁵ José Ortega y Gasset, “An Essay in Aesthetics by way of a Preface”, in *Phenomenology and Art*, trans. P. Silver (New York: Norton, 1975), 134-9.

³⁶ I also rely on the following below: Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. G. Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Critique of Judgement*, trans. N.K. Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987); *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

³⁷ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke Briefe Dokumente* (Munich: Winkler, 1963), 518-9.

³⁸ See: Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 85-9.

³⁹ A document of unknown authorship, though in Hegel’s hand, and dated 1796/7. Appendix in Bowie, 334-5.

say: well what of the object's "I"? Any "poetic individuality" of Hölderlin's, we maintain, is mutual. Aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human.)

*A work of art affords the peculiar pleasure we call aesthetic by making it seem that the inwardness of things, their executant reality, is opened to us.*⁴⁰ Here we must depart from Ortega y Gasset for his use of "seem". Aesthetics, as we will (have) see(n), grants us momentary access to that noumenal realm, by forging a compound between absent objects and ourselves as real objects. This is how we mean to unfold the metaphorical nature of music. Ortega y Gasset avers that any engagement, any looking at things or use of them reduces them to a shadow.⁴¹ Music is not something Ortega y Gasset discusses, but is a perfect example here, because you cannot engage with it synchronically. An art work is consumable all-at-once, music is not. I mean not that listening does not equal engagement, in Ortega y Gasset's terms, or that listening equates to direct access, but rather you are already limited. You bring an awareness of your limitation, that what you engage with is a mere fragment, at best metonymic, rather than falsely assuming an isochronically consumable art is a totality.⁴² Music is metaphorical since in metaphor the object at stake is always absent, since it is not just the object at stake, but the object in its executant inwardness, which can be present in metaphor no more than it can be in thought or perception. Nonetheless, metaphor works because a real object must always engage with the present subject qualities, so that these qualities are not sutured to an inscrutable void. *There is nonetheless one real object that is never absent from our experience of art: we ourselves.*⁴³ The presence and qualities of the subject of metaphor is embraced by us ourselves, else it falls into nothingness.

Metaphor's asymmetrical and non-reciprocal nature (one subject's quality is transferred to another, but not vice-versa) entrenches and enacts the deep divides between an object and its qualities by engendering a recognition of the latter without the former.⁴⁴ Homer writes of a "wine-dark sea", not a nonsensical "sea-dark wine", for example. Which ensures that the present real object – the self – provides us not with a descriptive perception of the subject, nor absent object, but the absent object in its own right as a new compound. *In the case of a successful metaphor, we are able to experience a new entity.*⁴⁵ Each metaphor is a coupling, a creation of a new compound – one of which is always the self as present real object; the object at stake is neither absent object nor the noticing human but a *new amalgamated reality formed from the reader (posing as real-object) and the subject qualities.*⁴⁶ Art, and music in particular, holds a non-relational autonomy not just to us, but to itself and all other things.

The musician or conductor is no more free from their "stepping in" to the role than the audience is, and studies on performance and physicality, embodied cognition, and the role of the audience for a

⁴⁰ Ortega y Gasset, 139.

⁴¹ In contrast to, say, Husserl, who believes that an object's inwardness can be grasped eventually if observed lucidly enough.

⁴² I of course echo here Heidegger's notes on the true inwardness of the true object being missed in a work of art. See: "Origin of the Work of Art", in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴³ Harman, 83.

⁴⁴ Connections here are readily drawn to the function of metaphor in poetry and the poetic contract entered by a reader with a poem. See Don Paterson's searingly brilliant *The Poem: Lyric, Sign, Meter* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018).

⁴⁵ Harman, 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 88. Again, Paterson is salient here, and often discusses how metaphor can provide a new, blistering way of saying "yes, that's it!", short-circuiting epistemic centres to show you the "depth and surface, the strangeness and accuracy of the comparison simultaneously" (*The Poem*, 78), i.e. a new object to admire.

performer go a long way in demonstrating this argument.⁴⁷ Watch Monk dance; dancing is movement at risk.

At times it looked as though he was hiding behind the instrument ... in retreat from or at least in quiet battle with the unwanted and unseemly distractions of the real world⁴⁸

Or, to return to our WAM benefactor Furtwängler:

How did Furtwängler conduct? His high-raised right arm made him look like the incarnation of Jupiter tonans. How did an orchestra sound under Furtwängler? This question touches on some essential considerations. Threatening gestures and demands for metrical rigour were not his way. Instead his right hand described gentle, circular movements, like the shaping, modelling hand of a painter or sculptor. He did not chisel at unyielding stone; he gave form to a soft, malleable substance⁴⁹

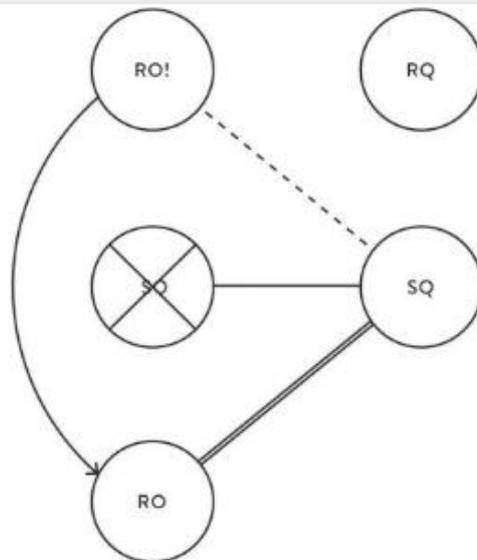


Figure 2 — Metaphor

In this diagram we initially have the normal case of a sensual object with its sensual qualities. By assigning improbable but not impossible new sensual qualities to the sensual object – such as the metaphorical 'wine-dark sea' rather than the literal 'dark blue sea' – the sensual object 'sea' is cancelled (hence the crossing out of SO above), being unable to uphold such unusual qualities. A mysterious real object is needed to do the job. But since sea as *real* object withdraws inaccessibly from the scene (hence the exclamation point! on the uppermost RO above), the sensual qualities of the metaphor are supported instead by the only RO that is not withdrawn from the situation: I myself, a real experiencer of the metaphor.

Figure 1. A demonstration and elucidation of the function of metaphor and our investment in it. From Harman, 84.

⁴⁷ See: Monson; Vijay Iyer, "Embodied Mind, Situated Cognition, and Expressive Microtiming in African-American Music", in *Music Perception* 19/3 (2002): 387-414; David Ake is a great proponent here, see: *New Jazz Conceptions: History, Theory, Practice*, eds. Roger Fagge and Nicolas Pillai (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 99-102.

⁴⁸ Ake, 99.

⁴⁹ Karl Dietrich Gräwe, "Fixing the Moment: The Conductor William Furtwängler", liner notes for William Furtwängler, *Recordings: 1942-44 Vol. 1*, Deutsche Grammophon CD Mono 471 289-2, 2002.

We engage with music in this way, as metaphor in which we play a vital role, through “beat” and “groove”, to effect perpetual deferral of apperception.⁵⁰ It is not a Deleuzian becoming, a lateral Derridean *différance*, a Husserlian or Latourian correlation, but a positive emphasis on being.⁵¹ Presence is not a deferral of existence through a/effect or difference to other things, slipping into an endless recursive multitude never existing at all, but presence is a translation of an absent real object which can never appear in the flesh without becoming something else.⁵² We can return to Ortega y Gasset, featuring sideman Walter Benjamin, sympathetically echoing one and other’s musical phrase

*Every objective image, on entering or leaving our consciousness, produces a subjective reaction – just as a bird that lights on or leaves a branch sets it trembling ... nothing can exist for us unless it becomes an image*⁵³

*No work of art may appear completely alive without becoming mere semblance [Schein] ... the quivering is what constitutes the beauty of the work; the paralysis is what defines its truth*⁵⁴

The difference is clear: Benjamin backs away from his own conclusion; Ortega y Gasset is happy to embolden it. As should be clear, we side with Ortega y Gasset since we ourselves are the real object at stake in aesthetic experience, stepping in for the inevitably absent object and embracing the qualities of the apparent subject. *If I do not step in and attempt the electrifying work of becoming the absent object, thus taking on the subject qualities no aesthetic experience can occur.*⁵⁵ Even though each object presented to us in an aesthetic experience is merely a shadow of the true absent object, one must be fully invested, else no aesthetic experience can take place. The real object – ever absent by necessity in the aesthetic experience – in all experience is the I myself; consequentially, my objective involvement and investment in the aesthetic experience must grasp at a noumenal level, that is, in replacing the absent real object with myself as real object I become *inwardly* invested not just as a shadow, Benjamin’s *Schein*. Aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human.

Having journeyed this far through a philosophical tundra, we can now understand and corroborate musicians’ own statements on their music, executing itself at its point of conception, holding in the very trumpet’s breath its genesis and eschatology:

Evan Parker: *music is not what you hear in analysis, it’s what you hear in the real time of performance.*⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Mackey’s premature postexpectance.

⁵¹ Respectively: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, ed. Judith Butler (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Edmund Husserl, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970); Bruno Latour, “Irreductions”, in *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. A. Sheridan and J. Law (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁵² The deferral point vis a vis William James, *Pragmatism* (London: Routledge, 1992); Charles Sanders Pierce, *Philosophical Writings of Pierce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 2011).

⁵³ Ortega y Gasset, 136-44.

⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings 1935-38*, eds. Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 224.

⁵⁵ Harman, 87.

⁵⁶ Evan Parker, quoted in *Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age*, by David Borgo (London: Continuum, 2007), 54.

Anthony Braxton: *the physical universe particulars of a given postulation are necessarily connected to the life of that postulation*⁵⁷

Brad Mehldau: *No one really cares about music's unexplainable aspect until they start trying to explain it. Only then does it take on a numinous aura of otherness ... If language privileges music in one sense by assigning it a transcendental status above and beyond itself, it also suggests its own failure as a mode of communication.*⁵⁸

What is a "beat"? We are perhaps no closer, but should be happy about that. A "beat", between suspension and submergence actively couples the beholder to the aesthetic object to compose a new compound, ensuring subjective responses to objective actions, a literal object-ive subject-ivity and subject-ive object-ivity, an unfolding of one onto another, a dividuation, a plaimpsestic interval that is unique and universal simultaneously, the state of which one is always trying to inhabit – the magic of the musical moment, which takes such investment that it can happen maybe *once or twice a year, if you're lucky*.⁵⁹ Aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human, which – music existing, and beneficially so for ontological discursion as unparaphrasable⁶⁰ – the human invests in and creates the new compound object-ive subject-ivity. Perhaps we are rephrasing, though our object-ive subject-ivity – the performance emergence of self through aesthetic (object) investment and replacement – an answer to Schleiermacher's (a great non-literalist) non-inferential dimension of the self?⁶¹ Music is music only when it conveys *movements of self-consciousness, to the extent that they are not ideas, but states of life*; or, when object-ive investment manifests a new compound.⁶²

If, dear reader, you have stayed with me – for my mind runs so far ahead of itself I must eat like an ouroboros or collapse over myself – it will be clear why we stress Mingus' internal pulse in relation to Nietzsche's eternity. Time, centred around the mourning and birthing "beat", arises from an object-ive (that is, the self as interpolating the absent real object in metaphor) investment in the musical act – *think this way and you can do anything*.⁶³ By committing to the necessary involvement, the magic of musical creation proper can occur. I cut off Mingus unfairly earlier. He goes on:

*If one in the group has loses confidence, somebody hits the beat again ... In the old days when we got arrogant players on the stand we'd do just that – just stop playing and a bad musician would be thrown*⁶⁴

As we have seen, here confirmed, the object-ive investment in the musical act is crucial: without respecting music's existence beyond a correlationist perspective, if the self is not at stake, you are lost.

⁵⁷ Braxton, *Tri-axium Writings 2* (Synthesis Music, 1985), 1.

⁵⁸ Brad Mehldau, 'Music and Language', accessed August 26 2018, <http://www.bradmehldau.com/essay-progression/>.

⁵⁹ Dizzy Gillespie.

⁶⁰ See again: Paterson, regarding "denotative" writing, what we call here "third-person" or "description", 15; and Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1947) regarding the "heresy of paraphrase".

⁶¹ See: Bowie, 183-220.

⁶² F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *"Hermeneutics and Criticism" and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 394.

⁶³ Mingus, 252.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche and Mingus have a few more deep cuts that are worth unboxing here, because they both love opening lines:

*In other words, I am three*⁶⁵

*Who am I? ... I am both [I am a doppelganger]*⁶⁶

Both see the rupture and cauterisation of self in self-representation, that reality is an internal fracture, a split of representation within a radically decentred self – one which must travel not to recognise oneself but recognise oneself in the Other, to take the place of the Other, in order for the subject to happen at all, in the point of the Other.⁶⁷ That is, only through object-ive investment (the Event, in Zupančič's vernacular) can the real come to be, only through an anthropodecentricising of one's understanding to become what one is in a paradox existing as its own antecedent. These positions cannot be separated, but can be examined temporarily apart from each other, it presents an oscillation of self reliant upon object-ive investment in its totality. To attempt to centre aesthetic (or other) experience on a cemented foundation-stone that does not take this redoubling into account cannot reach its subject. The flaw of musicology is to assume otherwise, to speak as if the properties, the synecdoche, can, through diligent analysis, unfold the inwardness of the music - as parallax or otherwise.⁶⁸ This is what is meant by "Music exists".

*It implies that the relationship between subject and event should be written SUBJECT – EVENT – SUBJECT ... the event is precisely the "crystal" of this duality; it is the moment when the subject, encountering itself, splits... the event exists only in this montage of these two subjects*⁶⁹

This statement explains Nietzsche's doubling, but what of Mingus' trichotomy? The temporality of truth in object-ive placement accents the same pulse, but Mingus plays a polyrhythm: he is a black male, Othered socially prior to his own subjectivisation or object-ive predicate. As a black male, Mingus lacks the luxury of the social Real and must oscillate between a third identity, that of his Althusserian objectivisation prior to interpellation. His temporal reliance upon object-ive investment is complicated by his pre-being a theat, a black male, which is social and – therefore – an external manacle around his being.⁷⁰ He is a black male and therefore always-already *bound up with the radical impossibility and undesirability of detaching the fetish character of the commodity from the commodity*.⁷¹ As a socially-Othered being, Mingus' interpellated resistance to an oppressive power predates that power. Is this not what the character of Diamond in Pras and kris ex's *Ghetto Supastar* exemplifies, in the vexed possibilities of being unable to resist prior interpellation? Moten, as ever, is perspicacious

He noticed a beat cop eyeing him knowingly.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, preface to *Ecce Homo*, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kauffman (London: Vintage, 1990).

⁶⁷ I rely here on Zupančič's reading of Nietzsche, 13-20.

⁶⁸ One could say that contemporary musicology relies too much on the analytic, the literal, even the thought of Edmund Husserl and (for clear reasons) Theodore Adorno than any requisite ontological matrix.

⁶⁹ Zupančič, 19.

⁷⁰ Think on his publicised relationships with white women, for clear examples.

⁷¹ Moten, 30.

With all this in mind, we can provide a satisfactory theorisation to Prince/"Love Symbol"/SLAVE/



's self-labelling. Prince, more so than any other musician in the Western music industry, understood and embodied his object-ive investment, by proclaiming himself as object, as less-than, as-slave of these wider – externally imposed – pre-subjectivised identities. In so doing, Prince was campaigning simply for that luxury of *passion attachment*, that Mingus could never afford.

*

In his interview with June Lee, Jacob Collier goes some way to attempt to deepen our understanding of rhythm through a new methodological framework, that of deeper time signatures. While this effort must be lauded, since any methodological analysis of rhythm would be well-received, it is, however, innately flawed. Collier's solution does not disappear the problem, it is the problem. That is, an attempt to not just notate but syncretise a "wonky", *more vulnerable* perception and understanding of rhythm in theory, in a literalised information matrix.⁸⁰ By choosing to place more specificity upon the metrical grid in which he tinkers, Collier merely adds another complication to a falsifying taxonomy, to which one can ask impudently: where does the "beat" end? By digging further down in search for an answer, Collier cauterises the object-ive investment in a musical performance, in which the no-longer-operative blind trust to the ear (that is, a listener's object-ive investment) becomes secondary to the solution to the mathematical (and thus, knowledge-fuelled) puzzles Collier deliberately places into his music. Enjoyment becomes a challenge, not an investment. If it appears that Collier, in his calculated movements, his informed precision, moves us closer to a general understanding of the gathering and dispersal of "wonky", *more vulnerable* music it is not because of its authenticity and centrality, but because it specifically enacts the (metric) marginality of authenticity and centrality that is understood as a generative principle of differentiation.⁸¹ It is not clearer, it simply enacts what he assumes clarity looks like. Collier's rhythmic taxonomy is asking Mandelbrot for a definition of his name as an acronym; an infinite recursion into Jacobian nihilism. Like Richard II, Collier mutates the (musical) cell into the world through the very condition that is supposed to allow that, solitude (rhythmic isolation), is the undoing of what that condition is supposed to provide. It is sovereignty trapped in a deictic prison of its own devising.⁸² ?uestlove, quoted by Collier, avoids these pitfalls totally, retaining the (apparent) mysticism of the artistic act by *playing drunk*.⁸³

So with all this information, hold Wadada Leo Smith's polemic in mind

I wanted to find the courage to put the information I'd gathered across my whole life just to one side for a second and then, just, write some songs.

⁸⁰ Collier, interview with June Lee.

⁸¹ Incidentally, a comment on Collier and "open"/"vulnerable" musics: if one is human, by sheer cosmic change or biological ferocity, then to become *more* human is to become *more than* human, which – an impossibility – must mean that at some point what was felt was *less than* human. Is being-human anything other than being more and less than itself?

⁸² A nod with thanks to Moten, 269.

⁸³ Amir "Questlove" Thompson, 'An Intimate Lecture', Red Bull Music Academy, accessed October 20 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23e1GbatgTQ>.

*And, inevitably, what comes out is information. But, my goal was not to build it from the information's point of view*⁸⁴

Does Collier succeed? Does it matter? Lives are not lived merely by deferral and art is not ultimately theoretical; it is too inextricably linked to reality.

There is, then, a concluding irony in our position: that far from our faith in Being, in reality, causing us to lose our voices shouting into the regressive void, it is Collier's theoretical specificity, his dispersal of continual (un)making of the immeasurable, that is every earthliness that continues unregulated by human distinction and distinctiveness. It is this recursivity, this paranoia of theory, that we are able to by-pass. In wielding the tools of OOO, we can instantiate our subject and ourselves on its own terms. Music exists; aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human. Our position is not a stretch to present a new totality but a move towards erasing the multitudinous potentialities that have coagulated over the object itself. Music exists. An engagement with aesthetics is how we access it and ourselves. Aesthetics is the ethics of the non-human. Let it speak. *Let it sing!*⁸⁵

Recommended tracks:

Laurie Anderson, "Ethics is the Esthetics of the Few-ture" (Lenin), *Two Songs for Tape and Bow*.

⁸⁴ Collier, interview with Lee.

⁸⁵ Again, a nod to Nietzsche, who understood the ludic possibility of the poetic more clearly than most. Nietzsche, "On Music", in *From My Life* 1858.