What is this Revenant Called Jazz?

Nostalgia, Value, and Racialized Listening

[SLIDE SHOW - Things Called Jazz That Are Not Jazz]

Hi, all. I’m excited to kick off this year’s colloquium series with my talk today. I want to express gratitude to the Department of Music here at Case Western Reserve University for employing me for yet another academic year, and to thank Dr. Brittan for the invitation to share some developing research. What follows–or, at least the themes and some framing–is a bit of ongoing research culled from a book project I’m embarking upon. That said, it’s unfinished and some issues I’ll raise are as yet unresolved. But that’s the point. Quite a lot of what I’m sharing today handles issues of race, power, domination, and the like, and isn’t always comfortable to think or talk about. And that’s the point. For what it’s worth, I identify as a cis het white man descendent of settler colonists working to better understand my and my discourse’s relationship to the raced histories and power relations we inhabit and reproduce every day; that have shaped my vocational and professional paths. My ideas presented here are developing, as is how I know how to talk about these topics, and I’m going to make mistakes. And–I think–that’s at least part of the point of doing this work, anyway. That being said, thank you for the opportunity to share these ideas with you about music and communities I love, and I look forward to ongoing conversations.

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[VIDEO - “Jazz Is Dead” by Theo Croker ft. Gary Bartz, Kassa Overall]

In the final chapter of T Storm Heter’s recent book, *The Sonic Gaze: Jazz Whiteness, and Racialized Listening* (2002), the philosopher and drummer brings a number of condemnations of Whiteness from Black existentialist philosophers to bear that are worth quoting at length: [SLIDE]

> Among Black philosophers of existence, the White problem is formulated as a problem of reality, knowledge, and value. Whiteness allows Whites to invert reality, evade knowledge of themselves and others, and flee from moral responsibility for White violence. In *Darkwater*, Du Bois asks White readers, “But what on earth is Whiteness that one should so desire it?” In [Lewis] Gordon’s variation, “the White problem…is that there doesn't seem to be any salvation for Whites in a racist world once racism is admitted to be oppressive.” Fanon admonishes, “Let us have the courage to say it: *It is the racist who creates the inferiorized*.” In all of these formations, Whiteness is understood as death. As Gordon maintains, “To be Black may mean to suffer, literally and figuratively, on an everyday basis, but to be White may ultimately mean–at least when moral reflection is permitted to enter–to be condemned.” (2022, 104-5)

The word “jazz” has been variously characterized as a racially-informed means by which to pigeon-hole and commoditize a heterogeneous world of cultural expression informed by the Black experience in the United States. [SLIDE] Croker, Bartz, and Overall, who we’ve just heard, join notable artists such as Duke Ellington, Max Roach, Charles Mingus, and Miles Davis in demanding not to be labeled a “jazz” musician. Nicholas Payton has offered the appellation “Black American Music,” or, “#BAM” [SLIDE] to describe his work. Jazz, for Payton, is a four-letter word, a slur related to white supremacy and histories of Black oppression - and something that died, he says, in 1959. Referring to his own music and the legacy from which he draws influence as Black American Music is an act of self-determination and agency. Furthermore, he recognizes his methods and attitudes to be in a socio-cultural and historical alignment with a way of navigating the world that is necessarily informed by the Black experience in America.

In Los Angeles, something called Jazz Is Dead [SLIDE] is enjoying a large audience and growing notoriety. Not just one thing, Jazz Is Dead is something like a large umbrella project helmed by Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad that features related endeavors including Younge and Muhammad’s band The Midnight Hour, the event agency ArtDontSleep, the all-analog recording studio Linear Labs, and the eponymous concert series and record imprint. From what I can tell, their understanding

of "jazz"—in name and in concept—is a big tent; a constellation of mutually inflecting musics related a-historically in a mutually-constituting loop. This broad definition of jazz has helped occasion a community of listenership in Los Angeles that is oriented around Black American Music, but not monolithic in its constitution. Rather, folks from many positions across fields of power as defined by their class, race, education, access, and exposures to music have been part of this community – coming together in a room on Los Angeles' near-East side to enact a living, dancing archive of musical memory. And, in a benevolent act of perfect timing for my talk today, they happen to be gracing the cover of Downbeat magazine this month.

The overall claim of my talk today is that any framing for whatever "jazz" is that is conditioned by Whiteness is DEAD. I'm interested in gaining a better vernacular for describing what that means, investigating examples, and moving toward recommendations for practical change. [SLIDE] It's worth noting that racialization is not the only field of power to be addressed in terms of historically conditioning dynamics of power and value in the jazz space as gender and ethnicity, among others, also loom in significance. To be sure, those issues are part of my larger project. However, I've chosen to limit my comments today to focus on racialization. To that end, I'll be exploring Heter's concept of racialized listening as a schema that will frame short discussions about nostalgia as well as the production of knowledge and value in the culture of institutional jazz pedagogy.

1. Drawn-Out Prolegomenon

[SLIDE] I haven't wanted to write about "jazz." In fact, apart from an article that was published in the *Journal of Jazz Studies* in 2019 I haven't wanted to formally engage much with jazz studies in recent years. Don't get me wrong, I have been and continue to be invested personally and professionally in whatever "jazz" is, though I've been loath to identify as a jazz musician or as a jazz scholar. I tell myself that I haven't been overwhelmingly attracted to much of the topics and methods of jazz studies. This is most likely to my own detriment. What more, as an early-career scholar, one tends to be pigeon-holed by one's first few publications and I've wanted to spend time engaging

with other spaces of popular and experimental music–an attitude that informs articles and even book projects still very much in-progress. But, I’ve decided it’s time to talk about jazz some more.

In spite of the very real danger of a “what is jazz” book project to have “jumped the shark” in this department, [Goldmark/Ake Book] if not this discourse, it seems I can’t get away. I am, after all, deeply implicated in some of what I understand to be the cring-ey or otherwise problematic manifestations of “jazz” as a Jazz Studies Master’s Degree holding musician/scholar. I am - or at least have been - what’s been termed a “jazzbro.” A recovering jazzbro? More about that later. [SLIDE] In any case, in the US American context, the chasms between jazz as studied, jazz in the cultural imaginary, and jazz as practiced continue to grow. These differences are bound up in complex histories of material and social relations and power, as much as less tangible histories of pleasure and desire.

Much of the “jazz studies” that I’m aware of is characterized as White people - myself included - studying Black music and assuming to create valuable specialized knowledge about Black culture and the significance of that community’s cultural production - often housed and reproduced in institutions gatekept from those very communities. Furthermore, official histories of this heterogeneous and globalized music have often been penned by white critics for a white audience for whom the music has been assumed as “for,” naturalizing and invisibilizing white spectatorship. This has manifested in modes of categorization and commoditization; even in the genre name “jazz” which many Black musicians have historically refused and whose boundaries are never not contested.

More and more, this sticks in my craw. Driving the point home: when, in March of 2020 Matthew D. Morrison stood on this stage discussing his work on Stephen Foster and the Legacy of Blackface, he’d asked white musicologists who study Black music to do some reflecting on who they thought they were in relation to that work and its role in “knowledge” and “value” production in the academy. I felt that. Morrison is right. Who is

this work *for*? What's it *do*? What is my relationship to it? Who does it invite and who does it exclude? How can one's musicological work engage in reparative justice and coalition building?

Moving forward…what do I mean by White and Black as racialized categories? For the purpose of this paper I will deploy "race" to refer to a historically situated and socially constructed field of relation that conditions power relations between subjects and communities. More than skin tone or other perceivable physiognomic characteristic, traces of what we call race are also located in variances of speech, style, food culture, music and dance–any and all spaces in the complexity of human lifeworlds. Problematizing this further, it might be argued that race is acquired and produced through one's socialization, but furthermore manifest through one's adoption and performance of such historically and culturally contingent comportments in a complex lifeworld - though it may not even be that simple.

Furthermore, we might also consider modes of thinking and being in the world - what I'll call epistemes, ontologies, and phenomenologies - to be raced. For example, during the Age of Imperialism, disembodied systems of knowledge and regimes of truth were mobilized to justify the superiority of European imperialists and the necessity of the modernist project. It might be argued that such a positivist worldview associated with enlightenment period liberalism and imperial domination is very White. Counterposed to this Eurocentric comportment, the African, Black way of being in the world has been coded as embodied, primitive, and free - though it may not even be that simple.

In any case the perceived necessity of "race" as a category of identity has historically relied upon notions of difference whether understood biologically or culturally; often deployed as a means of justification for ongoing practices of domination most often related to imperialism, colonialism, and an assumption of White supremacy. Previously dominant ideas of ethnic essentialism, modes of performative *being* assignable as authentic, and historically sedimented socioeconomic, legalistic, and social relations continue to animate race as a social fact in the United States. With respect to US

American history, Blackness and Whiteness comprise a dominant binary that overdetermines social relations. My talk today is concerned with how the continued invisibilization and naturalization of raced power dynamics in jazz's expressive practices and cultural products are implicated in the reproduction of that historical overdetermination. However, I hope these same practices and products may also serve in its diffusion, dissolution, and eventual disarticulation.

2. Racialized Listening: The Sonic Gaze

[SLIDE] Helping to complementarily frame and augment the previous ideas here is the idea of racialized listening that I'm borrowing from philosopher and jazz drummer T Storm Heter's recent book, [SLIDE] *The Sonic Gaze: Jazz, Whiteness, and Racialized Listening* (2022). I encountered this book soon after it was published this year and it knocked me out. Honestly, I'm still wrapping my head around the implications of Heter's extended analysis of listening as related to the construction of racialized subjectivity and jazz.

Briefly stated, Heter's study develops existential and phenomenological frameworks from primarily Black scholars in an attempt to learn from how colonized peoples have been heard, not only in how they have been seen; often saying "No" to how they have been defined by the White sonic gaze. This framing does not allow the White auditor and scholar an "escape" from Whiteness. Furthermore, we should remain suspicious of anyone claiming to "benevolently" speak on behalf of Black folks as "Whites of good will." Rather, writing his book, as he says, mostly for an audience of other White people, Heter wants create an opportunity for reflection, to turn from the study of Blackness in jazz to a study of how Whiteness is constructed and reproduced through historic strategies of White listening, and how this racialized identity–even when supposedly inhering in allyship with historically dominated racialized groups–reproduces the conditions of that domination. He reminds the reader: "Being White means having White power, although Whites habitually obscure this fact, adhering to corrosive myths of colorblindness, meritocracy, and exceptionalism" (2022, 5). Sitting with the discomfort of having to be *seen and heard as* White, he suggests, offers a valuable moment for

reflection, similar to the existential "shock" of the objectifying phrase: "Look, a Negro," that opens Frantz Fanon's essay "The Fact of Blackness" ([1952] 1986); a moment that might instigate reflection and a modification of what being-White-in-the-world does and can mean.

In the book, Heter develops a taxonomy of patterns of "bad faith" White listening, including: white minstrel listening, white savior listening, white hipster listening, white revivalist listening, white colorblind listening, and white ecstatic listening. [SLIDE] "Bad faith" here is in reference to an existential concept in the Sartreian sense: a flight from freedom; a means by which to lie to one's self; to evade the responsibility of discovering and understanding one's authentic self (Sartre [1943] 1956). Forty years earlier, W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) had developed a related idea as part of his schema of "second-sight" that occasions Black double consciousness: a capacity for Black subjects to see themselves not just as they are, but as seen by White America.

[SLIDE - Let's look at these for a moment (See Table 1)]

Heter notes that due to their dominant cultural majority, White Americans don't often experience this double consciousness as they have the privilege of gazing only outwardly at a world of Others who are always already assumed to be *for* them. Confronting the White problem, Heter says, means addressing the irony that Whites in America "have formed White identities largely through stories, beliefs, and assumptions about others whom they lump into the category of 'non-White people" (2022, 27). As I've noted, this normalization functionally erases White power and domination through colorblindess, meritocracy, and exceptionalism, whether raced or ethnic. Each of these listening patterns, he suggests, is implicit in a kind of bad faith whereupon White Americans have, from the plantation to the academy, "made race with their ears" (60), often reproducing deleterious elements of racialized domination in the process.

White Minstrel Listening	conflates actors with their roles, stereotypes Black people, emplaces minstrel images and sounds assigned to Blackness as components of White psychology

White Savior Listening	characterized by the attitudes of a White public fascinated but disturbed by jazz; praised White musicians for having tamed and cultivated the primitive raw material of jazz (e.g., Paul Whiteman)
White Hipster Listening	self-congratulating attitude pleased for being beyond “commercial” jazz; fetishized Black and Creole folk musician; desiring contact with non-White “others,” leaving the killjoy world of Whiteness behind (e.g., Mezz Mezzrow)
White Revivalist Listening	collectors, festival organizers; archival pleasure-seekers rediscovering “lost” sounds; reproduces the logic of racial essentialism and purity through the uncritical supposedly “authentic” encounters with others; not mutual, but a one-way street of discovery and celebration by Whites of previously hidden or lost Black “knowledge”
White Colorblind Listening	Normalization of jazz as White by musicians, critics, and audiences uncomfortable being perceived while listening to jazz music as Whites; motivated by grievances of White shame; “You can’t hear race” as a crutch for colorblind ideology (e.g., Leonard Feather)
White Ecstatic Listening	related to “classical” listening; codes Black people and listening as noisy, fleshy, and embodied while coding Whites as disembodied intellectuals able to transcend the flesh by closing their eyes and quietly entering trance; listening hierarchy; highbrow/lowbrow; myth of Absolute music

Table 1

Whether understood as primitive and exotic as it so often was in the first half of the 20th century, or later as cultivated and a model of democracy, jazz music has been defined and characterized by White critics, academics, and musicians in the recording industry, the cultural imaginary, and institutions for their own purposes. Responding to this normalized kind of academic knowledge production in 1994’s *Black Noise: Rap Music and Contemporary Culture in America*, Tricia Rose reminds us to be suspicious of the limitations of theorists who reduce Black cultural signs and codes to the “white voyeuristic pleasure of Black cultural imagery” (5). This is just what Heter suggests much of jazz studies has been doing through its racialized “sonic gaze.”

The relatively recent “discovery” of Whiteness as an historically constructed and contingent racial category in music study - not an assumed natural or neutral racialized status - necessitates means by which we might understand its historical production and reproduction in relation to perceived others. This is particularly important if we want to better understand how we got here, how to engage in reparative justice, and what to do next.

Relatable to Matthew D. Morrison’s insights that inform his framing of Blacksound - more about that later - Heter suggests that the production and performance of Whiteness is bound up with performances of Blackness with both dependent upon the construction and maintenance of the perceived Other as a means of identification and differentiation. My professor Dr. Friedrich Ulfers at NYU, a Nietzsche scholar, would have called this a “chiasmic unity” - a kind of paradoxical unity of opposites favoring neither negation nor affirmation, because, as a medium that permits “Yes” and “No” to interpenetrate, it affirms them both equally, leaving affirmation affirmed precisely to the degree that negation is. If that’s confusing, you’re doing it right. There’s no resolution to this quandary here, though it may be helpful in allowing us to locate the relationship and perhaps stop pretending that Whiteness is neutral, and recognize its implication in the reproduction of racialized domination in this space of cultural expression marked by ideas of either pleasure and desire as much as resistance and refusal.

Institutional reactions to racism are often characterized by ostensibly well-intentioned means by which to fix past mistakes and work collaboratively across racial lines through DEI efforts and ideologies of inclusion. However, these moves often reproduce racism against historically racialized people in the long run. What may be more effective is the difficult work of rethinking what the academy is and is *for*, what our historically raced modes of musical value bear within them and how we might think, work, listen, and *be* otherwise. Without that work and discomfort we will simply be able to return listeners who listen with White bad faith to a happy place “where they can listen to jazz archives in peace and treat colonialism a thing of the past” (Heter 2022, 17). What’s necessary instead are means by which to engage with reparative justice, disarticulate this racial binary, and rethink race and power in local spaces of relation as much as larger systems.

To start I turn to a few examples of nostalgia and its relationship to the erasure and invisibilization of raced domination in histories of jazz past and present that may

perpetuate colorblind politics and the uncritical reproduction of the violence associated with said histories. [SLIDE]

3. Nostalgia: "'Member?"

A little more than a week ago on September 1 of this year, Eric Weinstein, a mathematician, public intellectual, and harmonica enthusiast seen here performing for Joe Rogan, found himself unhappy with President Biden's speech about MAGA Republicans and the threat of anti-democratic movements in the United States. In response, Weinstein tweeted out to his 693.5K Twitter followers [SLIDE]:

> "I just don't see any path back. At least tonight. I was not looking forward to this speech. And it was bad. We seem determined to continue to unravel this amazing country. Gonna go listen to some live blues where no one cares about race. Thankfully there is a 2 drink minimum…"

Like many, I was incredulous that this was, it seems, a totally earnest sentiment. I thought: "2010 called. They want their post-racial naivete back." Even satire magazine The Onion was on this already in 2000. [SLIDE] Of course, Weinstein was summarily roasted by folks attempting to explain to him how the blues is, in fact, deeply informed by racialization. At time of this reporting, this thread remains unresolved. Another recent example of colorblindness related to musical strategies in the internet world is Tariq the kid who loves corn. With nearly 2.5 million views on YouTube since its release in early August, 2022, Tariq's love of corn was quickly set to music by the Songify This crew, famous previously for Autotune the News among other things. [VIDEO] Only a few weeks old, this adorable song itself already has about 2 million views. But the internet does what the internet does and, following quickly on the heels of this success came Robyn Adele Anderson's "but make it jazz" version of "It's Corn." [VIDEO] Now, calling this "jazz" feels cringe and makes me want to roll my eyes and say uncharitable things. However, it'd be unfair to throw Anderson under the bus here. She's a lovely person, a successful internet influencer and solo performer and is affiliated with Postmodern Jukebox, a popular touring and recording nostalgia act that versions contemporary popular songs in older, often "jazz" styles. This is an economy and has an audience.

One in which I, too, am implicated as you can see in this video taken by a crew member and posted to Instagram during a tour date with Postmodern Jukebox in Dubuque, Iowa in February of 2019 wherein I'm performing a "jazz" arrangement of George Micheal's "Careless Whisper" with Robyn. [VIDEO] As they say, "cat's gotta eat." Nobody's hands are clean here. And while I was happy to cash the check from PMJ in the precarious months before I moved to Cleveland to join the department here at Case, I've never not felt conflicted about the kind of whitewashed and colorblind aesthetic and ethic it deploys and its nostalgic "jazz age" marketing. As we saw in the Weinstein tweet earlier, there's a very real danger of erasure that occasions the forgetting of histories of racialized domination, admitting amnesia about wrongs of the past at best and allowing the reproduction of echoes of that same racialized domination in the present at worst.

If nothing else, by not explicitly acknowledging its absolute reliance on Black American Music, this mode of nostalgic performance echoes a kind of minstrelsy, coddling the comfort of Whiteness. Postmodern Jukebox and the many nostalgia acts like it are animated almost exclusively by Black American music styles. While this reality doesn't always have to be front and center in one's aesthetic engagement with the music, anything calling itself "jazz" that by accident or omission allows White supremacy to go unchallenged is anathema, effectively fighting for the wrong team.

In this way, nostalgia acts that favor pure entertainment are dangerous as they may act as Trojan Horses bringing with them not only enjoyable aesthetic markers of the past, but perhaps outdated attitudes and ethics. The team at South Park illustrated this when, in season 20, they introduce an absurd sentient fruit–"'member berries"–that both taste good AND mollify consumers with nostalgic popular culture prompts. These are oriented here mostly toward 1980s and 90s nostalgia. Harmless, right? [VIDEO] However, things get…weirder. [VIDEO] My point here is not that any of these folks in PMJ, etc., are intentionally engaging with erasure or courting xenophobia and racism. But by intentionally presenting deeply historically raced strategies and aesthetics of music production devoid of that context, listeners are invited to engage with elements of what

Heter might call White Minstrel, Hipster, Revivalist, and Colorblind Listening practices that allow a culture of forgetting and fabulation. [SLIDE]

4. Value: Memes and Institutional "thing-ification"

I turn now to a discussion of value. Here I'll investigate a few facets of specialized knowledge as a kind of cultural capital and consider the "thing-ification" using jazzbro meme culture as a point of entry to formalism and the slipperiness of online interface interaction. To get started, let's check out a tune that's ubiquitous in jazz education. I'll play it for you:

[AJ demonstrates "Giant Steps" on tenor saxophone]

So, that was a bit of me navigating John Coltrane's composition, "Giant Steps." I played the melody, the first choruses of Coltrane's recorded solo from 1960, and a few choruses of my own. As a student of the tenor saxophone and jazz music, I learned this tune and transcribed and analyzed Coltrane's solo as an important Urtext in grad school. The eponymous track on John Coltrane's 1960 release, "Giant Steps" was a manifestation of his boundary-pushing play with tonality, improvisation, and saxophone technique. Basically, it's a fast-moving tune that cycles through three tonal centers equidistantly a Major 3rd apart with some pseudo-functional root-movement concatenations that ascend by a minor 3rd, fall a Perfect 5th, topped off with some tonicizing "ii V I"s. [SLIDE] It was revolutionary at the time and its harmonic novelty was challenging, to say the least. Pianist Tommy Flanagan famously flubbed his recorded solo on the date because he'd been practicing it much more slowly and hadn't developed the strategies Coltrane had to navigate the composition's peculiarities. Namely, deploying pentatonic patterns that allow him to not get too "in the weeds" in any one key-center or get stuck in cliches. Building upon and including some of the logic of bebop, this virtuosic improvisational strategy was a combination of musical cells and formal patterns that might serve as improvisational fodder, conditioning one's muscle memory and musical imagination.

Understood this way, there's quite a lot a patient student might analyze in terms of formalist structural thinking, and boy, have they. [SLIDE] During his lifetime, Coltrane himself reharmonized standards such as "Body and Soul" and "How High the Moon" with logic of his "Trane Changes" like those heard in "Giant Steps." Writing contrafacts, versioning, improvising, remixing - these are all part of the Afrological experimental music tradition. As a practice of remixing, improvising, flexing, and just "playing," students of Coltrane's compositional and improvisational strategies then and now have enjoyed deploying Trane Changes in just about any place one might imagine. Recent trends in internet culture show us how this has accelerated and changed in meme space, demonstrating not only humor and love bordering on obsession, but also the baked-in assumptions, elisions, and biases of the supposedly post-racial logic of institutional jazz pedagogy.

David Ake noted in 2010: "College programs have replaced the proverbial street as a primary training grounds for young jazz musicians and also replaced nightclubs as the primary professional homes of hundreds of jazz performers and composers" (103). Thus, we can assume that attitudes and practices normalized in educational spaces inform the greater musical, material, and less tangible imaginaries and political economies of the artistic practice. I speak particularly of a focus on formalism, virtuosity and technique, an orientation toward licks as objects, and the un-critical assumption that revered jazz musicians thought the same way contemporary students do and experienced similar lives.

["Giant Steps" Meme Video]

So, who's making and watching these deep formal analyses and memes? "Jazzbros" [SLIDE]; a term for today's young jazz aficionado. In 2013 Nate Chinen wrote a short pieces for JazzTimes describing the jazzbro as a [SLIDE]:

> …self-styled jazz aficionado, overwhelmingly male and usually a musician in training himself, who expresses a handful of determinative social

> behaviors. Among these are a migratory pattern from the practice room, where they often nest alone, to the jazz club, where they travel in packs…

The demographic [SLIDE] of the average jazzbro described here with regard to gender and race matches the data for the average jazz degree holder as evidenced by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System's numbers for 2017. [SLIDE] As we can see, the conditions determining who can afford to go to college for jazz in terms of sunken investment and outcomes leading to risky career opportunities favor an overwhelmingly white and male community.

[SLIDE] I'm certainly not anti-meme. I like memes. I think you can tell a lot about trending structures of feeling by the memescape. What more, like improvisation, memes are playful with form, overflowing with signification, and depend on one's familiarity with a space of intertextual meaning to "get it." In short, I argue that the logic of hypersignifying social media space is epiphenomenal of a greater institutional culture that may unintentionally work against efforts of anti-racist action and decolonization. In the next few minutes I'll locate and quickly address just a few of these. Issues include a post-racial, colorblind pedagogy often coupled with an institutional idea of music as formal object autonomous of the social structures in which it was originally created, as well as uncritical engagement with Blacksound and digital blackface – both normalized forms of minstrelsy.

In his 2014 book, *School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity*, Eitan Wilf reminds us that "[j]azz's entrance into academia has taken place in tandem with the increased representation of white middle- and upper-middle-class players in the jazz world. Against the backdrop of contentious American racial politics, white educators may be reluctant to introduce the history of exclusion, segregation, and bigotry that have been an integral part of jazz's own history" (160). In an effort to move beyond histories of inequity, colorblind and post-racial pedagogy disincentivizes students—especially white students—from engaging in

conversations about race, leaving the real, material inequities unaddressed and unchanged (Warren 2012).

Furthermore, much of this has come to take place in institutional pedagogical settings that have forced a music with a vernacular apprenticeship pedagogical model into a European conservatory model that platforms theory, formalism, and analytical strategies informed by notions of aesthetic autonomy (Tomlinson 2002), sometimes in institutional settings that were initially racially segregated. Said framing can preclude the import of subjectivity and agency of revered artists, conflating and subsuming what were certainly heterogeneous and personal musical choices under the aegis of specialized institutional knowledge. Heter might refer to this as White Savior or Colorblind Listening, but I’ll add here another category: White Specialist Listening.

Of this, Wilf suggests: [SLIDE] “Educators’ strategies of [formalist] interpretation strengthen the link between the school’s expert knowledge and the legendary past masters.” For example, by demonstrating the theoretical perfection of an exemplar solo, “educators deify and further validate the past masters. Consequently, this deification increased the masters’ role as authorizing agents for the school’s institutionalized terminology when it is demonstrated time and again in class that the masters ‘had thought’ all along in the terms of this terminology in the course of their playing” (Wilf 2014, 157).

The student of formalist institutional thinking is authorized to imagine they are inhabiting the mind of the master; that the musician being studied thought just as they are being taught to think. Instead of considering improvisation as a socially and historically situated cultural expression of personal agency, the student is authorized to believe that exemplary musicians of the past were— to caricaturize a bit—engaged in solving creative math problems and were worried about chordscale relationships and shedding just like themselves [SLIDE].

I’ll also quickly mention the relevance of unintentional instances of blackface minstrelsy in schools and meme space normalized and made invisible by this post-racial, colorblind, and formalist pedagogy as well as the disembodied and impersonal nature of digital culture. [SLIDE] Understood as a sonorous analog to blackface minstrelsy, Blacksound is an object of study as well as a methodology introduced by Matthew D. Morrison that demonstrates how the construction of raced sound comprises American popular music; most often to the benefit of non-Black artists and at the expense of the Black artists and communities whose ingenuity is appropriated.

An uncritical performer can engage in the performance of raced modes of musical production while not having to inhabit the marginalized space of racialized power structures. This allows the non-Black subject to put on Blackness - not with burnt cork, but with musical gestures and vocabulary. Seeking to learn from and sound like Black master musicians is, of course, not a bad thing. However, in this case, the admiration and performance of Blacksound—if not informed by critical engagement with the history of Black music in America—does not immediately translate into a conscious alignment with anti-racist practice.

Finally, in the digital space of social media and meme space, the potentially negative implications of all of this logic can be obfuscated in the encoding and decoding occurring between ambiguously related meaningful structures (Hall 1980). [SLIDE] This results in a form of blackface minstrelsy that is a memetic sort of “critical fabulation” (Hartman 2008) that works to ventriloquize Blackness as social media’s logic of disengaged engagement allows for the mediation or obfuscation of the identity of the author.

The impersonal nature of meme space permits the immediate exigencies of still-present racialized power structures to be seemingly neutralized with issues of race lost in the disembodied activity of interface interaction. Memes allow for a substitution or erasure of the “real thing” with a stylized version or interloper that, in the case of jazz memes, allows the replacement of the actual artist’s intent, personal symbolic world, and social

exigencies with a whitened version the reflects the values of contemporary economies and performances of Blackness in the supposedly post-racial, colorblind culture at large.

Conclusion: Creolization and Coalition

[SLIDE] There's a lot more to talk about, but I'm going to attempt a kind of conclusion here. South African philosopher Mabogo More (2019) suggests: "Jazz's only *telos* is to discover, create, and attempt to define what it means to be human…*In this sense jazz is an existential art*" (147). If such a telos can indeed be assumed in the concept and practice of whatever "jazz" is, it may also be oriented towards the dissolution of this overdetermining racialized binary that's characterized my talk today. An obvious point of irony, or, self-referential incoherence in much of what I've presented today is the deployment of Eurocentric modes of inquiry to locate the trace of Eurocentric world building in the long term goal of decentering it. Is this helpful in the long-term? I hope the point of doing this is not to shore up the boundaries of racialization, but to be able to see them; to begin to recognize that Eurocentric, White mode of inquiry as one mode of knowledge production among many possible modes, to ethnicize Whiteness and divest it from its previously invisibilized notions of universality, neutrality, and objectivity, to give away cultural and symbolic capital stockpiled and hoarded through centuries of violent guarded privilege.

Not addressed today have been other issues of identity politics present in this space, gender and ethnicity being perhaps the most looming. I am inspired by the work of [SLIDE] Sherrie Tucker and Tracy McMullen who, among others, have and continue to trace the lack of representation of women and non-binary contributors to the jazz space in terms of historiography and theory as well as praxis. Moreover, the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice helmed by celebrated drummer Terri Lyne Carrington, the Women in Jazz Organization led by saxophonist Roxy Coss, and the "This Is A Movement" organization all seek to create an equitable music industry through an intersectional feminist provocation. I admire this work and hope in a small way to contribute to it.

[SLIDE] Furthermore, this world of musical expression is transnational and creolizing, engaged from the beginning in synthesizing modes of being and feeling from the received rubble of postcoloniality and globalized cultural flows. Ongoing interventions informed by these cultural and material realities will, I hope, continue the disarticulation of the overdetermining racialized binary of Black and White in US American social relations toward growing respect and identification with regard to the polyphonic play of identity.

I want to end with some big ideas to chew on as we look forward rather than backward: Addressing the need to respond to the ever-changing reality of music as a complex expression of raced cultural identities, George Lewis (2017) points beyond pluralism in a short essay, “The Situation of a Creole.” Speaking to developing modes of music that might transcend received category definition, he locates in the fungibility of new musical forms a mode of creolization that annihilates previous appeals to universalities, monolingualism, and purity. He calls for new musics and modes of thinking that exceed the limiting logics of remixing and postmodern pastiche as much as the mollification of institutional pluralism. Rather than only making space for perceived “Others,” such a creolization would work to refuse inherited politics of purity and to delixicalize the foreign as “other.”

A resonant idea can be found in Elizabeth Gould’s (2013) work that develops Donna Haraway’s idea of companion-able species to a similar end, one that rejects the discourse of “inclusion” of the other that often works to reinscribe dominant power structures. Rather, if we relinquish our “collective obsession with a pervasive discourse of inclusion that relies on bringing ‘others’ to the profession as it currently exists”—to the extant conversation table—we might instead work to create spaces in which to “co-create together a contingent, dynamic table of potentialities...” (197).

Finally, framing the urgency for coalitional interventions to address similar raced relations in cultural and institutional spaces perhaps even more honestly, [SLIDE] Jack

Halberstam (2013) is worth quoting at length in his introduction to Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's book: *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*:

> The mission then for the denizens of the undercommons is to recognize that when you seek to make things better, you are not just doing it for the Other, you must also be doing it for yourself. While men may think they are being "sensitive" by turning to feminism, while white people may think they are being right on by opposing racism, no one will really be able to embrace the mission of tearing "this shit down" until they realize that the structures they oppose are not only bad for some of us, they are bad for all of us. Gender hierarchies are bad for men as well as women and they are really bad for the rest of us. Racial hierarchies are not rational and ordered, they are chaotic and nonsensical and must be opposed by precisely all those who benefit in any way from them. Or, as Moten puts it: "The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?" (10)

In closing, I'll say that if "jazz," understood by the raced formulation I've discussed, is dead: good riddance.

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