

~~real-time musical discourse, often approaching an explicitly improvisative sensibility.~~

Along with his associates, Cage was responsible for the entrance into musical history of the term “indeterminacy.” Cage’s essay on indeterminacy from *Silence* (Cage 1961, 35–40) presents examples of “indeterminate” elements in European music from the last two centuries, from Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück XI* to J. S. Bach’s *Art of the Fugue*. According to Cage, Bach’s non-specification of timbre and amplitude characteristics identifies these elements not as absent but simply as non-determined but necessary material, to be realized by a performer. The construction as indeterminate of non-specified elements in the Bach work allows “the possibility of a unique overtone structure and decibel range for each performance” (35). The performer’s function in this case is “comparable to that of someone filling in color where outlines are given” (35).

Later descriptions of indeterminacy, such as that advanced by Elliott Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey (1993) in their survey text on “music since 1945,” define a musical factor as indeterminate “if it is dictated by chance and operates without any links to other factors” (92). Cage’s own initial definition of indeterminacy, however, did not necessarily include the use of chance as a salient factor. In *Silence*, Cage (1961, 35) provides several methods, unranked as to preference, by which the performer may realize the indeterminate aspects of the *Art of the Fugue*: “feeling his way, following the dictates of his ego . . . following his taste . . . employing some operation exterior to his mind: tables of random numbers . . . or chance operations, identifying there with no matter what eventuality.”

Another of Cage’s lasting contributions to both compositional and improvisative method is the radical use of these “chance operations.” The 1951 *Music of Changes* was composed by Cage using the ancient Chinese oracular method known as the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, to generate musical material within parameters chosen by the composer. The object of the use of the *I Ching*, as described by the composer himself in explaining his compositional process for the *Music of Changes*, is the creation of “a musical composition the continuity of which is free of individual taste and memory (psychology) and also of the literature and ‘traditions’ of the art” (Cage 1961, 59). In this regard, Cage consistently maintains that “sounds are to come into their own, rather than being exploited to express sentiments or ideas of order” (69).

Cage, though perhaps not the first to promulgate the concept of the experimental in music, did provide, in his important manifesto, *Silence*, several working definitions for the term “experimental music.” The composer has written that “an experimental action is one the outcome of which is not foreseen” and is “necessarily unique” (39). Cage’s notion of

spontaneity and uniqueness was informed by his studies of Zen and in particular by his attendance at Daisetz Suzuki's early 1950s lectures on that subject in New York City (Revill 1992, 108–110).

That this view of music would have social implications was fully recognized by Cage himself. Indeed, Cage's social and philosophical views form a prominent part of the literature about him. In the Kostelanetz interviews from 1987, Cage explicitly addresses his own essential anarchism at several points (Kostelanetz 1987, 266). Connecting his view of sound to his anarchism, the composer expresses his need for "a music in which not only are sounds just sounds but in which people are just people, not subject, that is, to laws established by any one of them, even if he is 'the composer' or 'the conductor.' . . . Freedom of movement is basic to both this art and this society" (257).

Cage's notion of social instrumentality, however, does not connect this very American notion of freedom—perhaps reminiscent of the frontier myth—to any kind of struggle that might be required in order to obtain it. The composer denies the utility of protest, maintaining that "my notion of how to proceed in a society to bring change is not to protest the thing that is evil, but rather to let it die its own death. . . . Protests about these things, contrary to what has been said, will give it the kind of life that a fire is given when you fan it, and that it would be best to ignore it, put your attention elsewhere, take actions of another kind of positive nature" (Kostelanetz 1987, 265–266).

In terms of social location, composers such as Cage and Feldman located their work as an integral part of a sociomusical art world that explicitly bonded with the intellectual and musical traditions of Europe. The members of this art world, while critiquing aspects of contemporary European culture, were explicitly concerned with continuing to develop this "Western" tradition on the American continent. The composer's "History of Experimental Music in the United States" (Cage 1961, 67–75) identifies as relevant to his concerns both European and American composers and artists, including the European Dada movement, composers such as Debussy and Varèse, and later European experimentalists such as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Nono, and Luciano Berio. Among the American composers that Cage mentions as being part of America's "rich history" of music are Leo Ornstein, Dane Rudhyar, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and Virgil Thomson.

Though these and other composers do earn criticism, the only indigenous music that receives sharp denunciation from Cage is the African-American music that he frequently refers to as "hot jazz." Criticizing the expression of Henry Cowell's interest in this and other American indigenous traditions, Cage appropriates the then-current conventional wis-

dom about the opposition between “jazz” music and “serious” music: “Jazz per se derives from serious music. And when serious music derives from it, the situation becomes rather silly” (Cage 1961, 72).

We may regard as more rhetorical device than historical fact Cage’s brief account of the origins of jazz. In any event, despite such declarations as “the world is one world now” (Cage 1961, 75) or “when I think of a good future it certainly has music in it but it doesn’t have one kind . . . it has all kinds” (Kostelanetz 1987, 257), it is clear that Cage has drawn very specific boundaries, not only as to which musics are relevant to his own musicality but as to which musics suit his own taste. The Cageian tendency is to confront this contradiction through the use of terms that essentially exnominate or disguise his likes and dislikes as such: “some music . . . which would not be useful to me at all might be very useful to someone else” (Kostelanetz 1987, 257).

The composer does, however, make allowance for the fact that others may draw different boundaries: “I can get along perfectly well without any jazz at all; and yet I notice that many, many people have a great need for it. Who am I to say that their need is pointless?” (Kostelanetz 1987, 257). This basic reference to freedom of choice, however, can hardly be extrapolated to argue that Cage is characterizing himself as possessing a culturally diverse musical sensibility. Rather, the composer is reaffirming a relatively mundane truism concerning the diversity of personal taste, while simultaneously making clear that, for him, a “need for jazz” would indeed be pointless.

Exnomination

Despite Cage’s disavowal of jazz, however, the historical timeline shows that Cage’s radical emphasis upon spontaneity and uniqueness—not generally found in either American or European music before Cage—arrives some eight to ten years after the innovations of bebop. And it is certain that bebop, a native American music with a strong base in New York City, was well known to what has come to be known as the “New York School” of artists and musicians of which Cage and Feldman were part. In the case of visual artists from that social circle, such as Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline, the connection with jazz has been remarked upon in a number of essays (see Mandeles 1981, 139).

The composer Anthony Braxton’s pithy statement concerning the disavowal of Afrological forms by the art world that nurtured Cage’s work advances the essential issue directly: “Both aleatory and indeterminism are words which have been coined . . . to bypass the word improvisation and as such the influence of non-white sensibility” (Braxton 1985, 366).

Why improvisation and non-white sensibility would be perceived by anyone as objects to be avoided can usefully be theorized with respect to racialized power relations.

Commentators such as the media critic John Fiske, the cultural theorist George Lipsitz, and the legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris have identified "whiteness" as an important cultural construct in American society. For Harris and Lipsitz, whiteness is a historically emergent phenomenon; for Lipsitz, whiteness appears in large measure "because of realities created by slavery and segregation, immigration restriction and Indian policy, by conquest and colonialism" (Lipsitz 1995, 370).

Both Lipsitz and Harris have recourse to economic terms in describing the role of whiteness. Harris traces the evolution of the construction of whiteness as a form of legally constituted property, while Lipsitz refers to a "possessive investment in whiteness." Quoting legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, Harris (1993, 1759) utilizes the language of investment in referring to the "actual stake in racism" that the previously Balkanized European ethnics developed, through the legal and social privileges that attend their classification as "white."

For Fiske, whiteness is "not an essential racial category that contains a set of fixed meanings, but a strategic deployment of power. . . . The space of whiteness contains a limited but varied set of normalizing positions from which that which is not white can be made into the abnormal; by such means whiteness constitutes itself as a universal set of norms by which to make sense of the world" (Fiske 1994, 42). Fiske identifies "exnomination" as a primary characteristic of whiteness as power: "Exnomination is the means by which whiteness avoids being named and thus keeps itself out of the field of interrogation and therefore off the agenda for change. . . . One practice of exnomination is the avoidance of self-recognition and self-definition. Defining, for whites, is a process that is always directed outward upon multiple 'others' but never inward upon the definer" (42).

It is my contention that, circumstantially at least, bebop's combination of spontaneity, structural radicalism, and uniqueness, antedating by several years the reappearance of improvisation in Eurological music, posed a challenge to that music which needed to be answered in some way. All too often, the space of whiteness provided a convenient platform for a racialized denial of the trenchancy of this challenge, while providing an arena for the articulation of an implicit sensibility which I have termed "Eurological."

The anthropologist and improviser Georgina Born presents the circumstantial case:

Some of the main elements of experimental music practice—improvisation, live group work, the empirical use of small, commercial electronics in performance—were pioneered in the jazz and rock of the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, the politics of experimental music are similar to those of the advanced black jazz of the '60s. Its musical collectivism, for example, was prefigured by the Chicago black musicians' cooperative, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), which became a model for later progressive, cooperative music organizations. The fact that these influences often remain unacknowledged and subterranean, even within experimental music, signals their status as deriving from an "other" culture and the reluctance of the postmodern sphere of legitimate music to admit its indebtedness to the "other." (Born 1995, 351, n29)

The sociologist Howard Becker, using an example from jazz, identifies an explicit aesthetic system as being useful to an art world by conditioning competition and justifying access to resources:

It ties participants' activities to the tradition of the art, justifying their demands for the resources and advantages ordinarily available to people who produce that kind of art. To be specific, if I can argue cogently that jazz merits as serious consideration on aesthetic grounds as other forms of art music, then I can compete, as a jazz player, for grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and faculty positions in music schools, perform in the same halls as symphony orchestras, and require the same attention to the nuances of my work as the most serious classical composer. (Becker 1982, 132–133)

In a transnational, transcultural musical environment where exchanges of musical information are increasingly commonplace, ethnicized or racialized grounds for classification of musical discourse, though not explicitly named, nevertheless become disclosed. Advocates of particular aesthetic systems are rarely as explicit as Becker would have it about class and race grounding, often preferring to couch support of certain musical forms and disavowal of others in "objective" terms. Despite Baraka's contention that bebop was the African-American musical form that obliged the larger society to confront Afrological aesthetics in creative black music itself as "art" (Jones 1963, 190), the fact that both Bird and Cage expressed an experimental bent in describing their respective creative processes has not, so far, induced the authors of music history texts concerned with "American music since 1945" to classify the output of these two composers according to their relationship with the experimental.

Instead, texts appropriating the term "experimental music" construct this classification as denoting a particular group of postwar music-makers who come almost exclusively from either European or European-American heritage. Michael Nyman's important book *Experimental Music*

(1974) is representative. This text, like most others, presents this group of composers as the intellectual heirs to what is vernacularly known as the “classical” or “Western” tradition, even when this tradition is subjected to critique through its inheritors’ music.

Coded qualifiers to the word “music”—such as “experimental,” “new,” “art,” “concert,” “serious,” “avant-garde,” and “contemporary”—are used in these texts to delineate a racialized location of this tradition within the space of whiteness; either erasure or (brief) inclusion of Afrological music can then be framed as responsible chronicling and “objective” taxonomy. The passing reference to the Art Ensemble of Chicago in the Schwartz and Godfrey text on *Music Since 1945*, for example, was necessary “because their music was as much ‘serious’ or avant-garde music as jazz” (Schwartz and Godfrey 1993, 202). The quote demonstrates the role assumed by whiteness in defining the Art Ensemble as not quite so “other” as some of the others.

The improviser-theorists Malcolm Goldstein (1988) and Derek Bailey (1992) both discuss the decline and eventual near-disappearance in the nineteenth century of improvisative development in European music. Both authors refer to a gap of about 150 years in the European intellectual history of improvisation, from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. As with a number of texts dealing with Eurological improvised music, however, the composer and theorist David Cope feels obliged to mention that despite an apparent gap in the improvisational record, improvisation has indeed been part of European musical history.

In particular, two long-dead musical practices, the use of figured bass and the performance of cadenzas, are invoked by Cope (1993, 127) to assure the reader that improvisation indeed has a long tradition in European music. The third major stream within European improvisation, the small yet persistent French school of organ improvisers, is not mentioned in the Cope text. Bailey (1992, 29), writing about improvisation in various world musical traditions, identifies this group as representing practically the only improvisative activity in European music from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth.

In any event, survivals or retentions of improvisative traditions in present-day Eurological improvisation have only begun to be identified and researched. Information about those survivals that have been found would, so far, appear insufficiently well-documented or disseminated to provide a historical or cultural basis for the reemergence of improvisation in Eurological music in the mid-1950s. In this light, Cope’s cautious claim that “the circumstances under which more recent improvisation developed are less clear. . . . Interest in this century may be rooted in jazz” (127) may be viewed as an excellent illustration of Born’s remark about the re-

luctance of commentators on Eurological music to admit indebtedness to "the other."

Exemplifying the sort of exnomination of whiteness that Fiske and Born identify, the Cope text rigorously avoids extended, serious treatment of major figures in postwar Afrological improvisation, while devoting considerable attention to something called "contemporary" improvisation. Improvisers of worldwide stature—such as Parker, Coltrane, Taylor, and Coleman—are (at best) mentioned in passing, while pages are devoted to the work of relatively obscure individuals whose written descriptions of their improvisations far outpace in quantity their audio documentation.

The reader is encouraged to assume that this kind of "contemporary" improvisation, despite the fact that a number of its proponents "are or were actively involved in jazz" (Cope 1993, 127), must have developed *sui generis*—perhaps in a sort of immaculate conception. According to Cope, the likeliest origin of this sort of improvisation lay, not in any kind of musical miscegenation with jazz, but in "classical" performers' "inability to realize correctly the complexities of recent music; the composer, perhaps out of frustration, perhaps because the result was the same or better, chose to allow a certain freedom in performance" (127).

~~*Jazz as Epistemological Other*~~

~~Eurological modernist music criticism, while erasing the practitioners of Afrological improvised music from postwar histories of "contemporary" music, has nonetheless felt obliged to present a series of ongoing critiques of its construction of "jazz." Such critiques may represent an attempt to create what social scientists Somers and Gibson term an "epistemological other." According to Somers and Gibson (1994, 38), social groups often perform such constructions "to consolidate a cohesive self-identity and collective project."~~

~~The construction of the epistemological other may be viewed as the contrapositive aspect of the construction of whiteness, particularly when coded appeals to racial and ethnic solidarity are involved. John Cage's critique of jazz—well presented in his 1966 interview with the jazz critic Michael Zwerin—is of relatively little value as music criticism but may serve us well here as a textbook example of the power relationships that Fiske has recognized. In response to Zwerin's query about his thoughts on jazz, Cage replies, "I don't think about jazz, but I love to talk, so by all means, come on up" (Zwerin 1991, 161).~~

~~To this African-American observer, situated in the 1990s, the interview should perhaps have ended there. From a 1960s perspective, however, we~~

Freedom

The advent of various strains of “free” improvisation—including “free” jazz, which emerged in the early 1960s, as well as the European “free” improvisation which emerged in several cultural strata in the 1970s—placed “freedom” back on the musical agenda. In the case of “free” jazz, the tumultuous push for human rights in the United States had clear analogues in the music, as remarked upon by politically active musicians such as Archie Shepp. With regard to the improvisations of musicians such as Vinko Globokar and Cornelius Cardew, where improvisation itself became a symbol for freedom, the events of May 1968 in Paris and other European capitals could be seen as germane⁴ (Globokar 1979, 29–30).

As with the theme of spontaneity, notions of freedom and control differ markedly between Eurological and Afrological viewpoints. “Free jazz” was, as one can readily observe from the drummer Arthur Taylor’s interviews with Afrological improvisers (Taylor 1993), quite controversial among jazz musicians. Whatever the viewpoints of the musicians on free jazz itself, the responses of several improvisers on the topic of “freedom” are instructive. In particular, the Eurological discourse concerning “rules” for improvisation is almost entirely absent. Rather, the improvisers seem to agree that freedom in Afrological improvisation is perceived as being possible only through discipline, defined as technical knowledge of music theory and of one’s instrument as well as thorough attention to the background, history, and culture of one’s music.

Drummer Elvin Jones puts the case succinctly with regard to his own involvement in what some people called “freedom music”: “There’s no such thing as freedom without some kind of control, at least self-control or self-discipline. . . . Coltrane did a lot of experimenting in that direction . . . even though it gave an impression of freedom, it was basically a well thought out and highly disciplined piece of work” (quoted in Taylor 1993, 228). The bassist Ron Carter, on the same subject, maintains that “you can

4. In 1968, a number of European cities experienced student and worker strikes, riots, and other disturbances. These events proved to have a trenchancy of effect and affect that was at first severely underestimated, both by traditional governmental authority and by the European intellectual establishment of the day.

In analyzing the causes of this new militancy, both commentators and participants agreed that the unrest could be viewed as a revolt against various forms of societal repression. The more conservative, technocratically oriented J. J. Servan-Schreiber (1969, 21) ascribed the citizen activism to “the confrontation of a particularly rigid social order with an accelerating technological, scientific—and therefore intellectual—transformation.”

Perhaps more in tune with the aesthetic and cultural currents of the period, the famous French leader of the May 1968 Nanterre student strikes, Daniel “Danny the Red” Cohn-Bendit, attributed the power of the movement to “an ‘uncontrollable’ spontaneity” (Bourges 1968, 103).

play as free as you want, only you should have some kind of background to relate to this freedom. Otherwise you're putting yourself into a corner" (quoted in Taylor 1993, 61).

Another view constructs freedom as always being present through improvisation. The drummer Philly Joe Jones insists that improvisation is itself perfectly free and not in need of any license: "Everybody's been playing free. Every time you play a solo you're free to play what you want to play. That's freedom right there" (quoted in Taylor 1993, 48). Echoing this theme, pianist Randy Weston says of "free music," "I don't see how this music is more free than another. I've heard Monk take one note and create unbelievable freedom. Freedom is a natural development" (quoted in Taylor 1993, 27).

Among improvisers from the Eurological standpoint, freedom is sometimes framed in terms of European music's traditional composer-to-performer hierarchy. According to Chase (1988, 15), "improvisation is the free zone in music, where anything is permitted and considered acceptable. You are responsible only to yourself and to the dictates of your taste." Similarly, preparation for improvisation is described in terms of the need to "free ourselves from those negative attitudes that inhibit us."

A much more widespread view that has evolved in Eurological music circles with regard to improvisation is the notion that, to be musically coherent, improvisation cannot be left as "free," but must instead be "controlled" or "structured" in some way. The composer and critic Tom Johnson's characterization of Cage's indeterminacy is typical: "Cage began referring to work indeterminate of its performance because to have called his work 'improvisations' would have implied that the performers were not guided by goals and rules" (Johnson 1989, 207–208). Another reason for asserting this necessity for rules is exemplified in the complaint by Berio (1985, 81) that "improvisation presents a problem in that there's no true unanimity of discourse among the participants, only, once in a while, a unity of behavior."

In any event, the most common Eurological method of providing these rules is the construction, by a composer, of autonomous, often culturally ad hoc systems of specified musical behavior options. These systems typically leave certain dimensions intentionally unspecified and presumably available for filling in as desired. Diether De la Motte has outlined a number of rule-specification strategies used by 1960s and 1970s European composers into whose works improvisation has been "included" ("einbezogen"). De la Motte includes his own comments and critiques about the procedures used. For example, Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Tempus Loquendi* (1963) for flute solo uses nine phrases already created by the composer. If the soloist wishes, he or she is "encouraged" ("ermuntern")

to improvise “personal” versions from the given material (De la Motte 1979, 45).

Sometimes the rules concern not what to play, but what to think. Stockhausen’s description of his “intuitive” music, as exemplified by his composition “Aus den sieben Tagen,” rejects any notion that his “intuitive music” might be regarded as a pseudonym for improvisation. His justification for distancing his “intuitive” work from improvisation resurrects a version of the motif theory: “One always connects improvisations with the presentation of underlying schemata, formulae, and stylistic elements”⁵ (Stockhausen 1971, 123). For Stockhausen, music should come directly from the intuition, manifesting a unity of mood, which he describes in a play on words of the meanings of “einstimmen” (to agree) and “Stimmung” (tuning or mood):

The orientation of the musicians, which I have also called “Einstimmung” [unanimity of mood/tuning], is, however, not an arbitrary or purely negative one—excluding all musical thought in certain directions—rather, it is at any given time concentrated through a text written by me, which provokes the intuition in a completely definite fashion.⁶ (Stockhausen 1971, 123–124; translation mine)

Even a simple set of these ad hoc formalisms, however, would still require a certain amount of preparation for their performance—presumably reducing their capacity for inducing spontaneity or provoking intuition. Moreover, despite the apparent attempt by many Eurological commentators to differentiate these performer choice systems from Afrological improvisative systems, the systems described by De la Motte in particular often seem reminiscent of the African-American practice of using chord progressions, appropriately named “changes,” as musical behavior options systems. Though the Eurological “choice” systems do not necessarily present harmonic sequences, they nonetheless function in analogous ways in promoting, guiding, and conditioning real-time choice, thereby producing “changes” in the content of the music.

In any event, performer choice and “intuition” systems, as promulgated by Stockhausen and other Eurological composers, do indeed turn out to be somewhat different from improvisation in the Afrological sense. These systems seem to take account of the absence of pedagogy in the Eurological music education system with regard to improvisation. At the

5. Da man mit Improvisation immer auch die Vorstellung von zugrunde liegenden Schemata, Formeln, stilistischen Elementen verbindet.

6. Die ‘Orientierung’ der Musiker, die ich auch ‘Einstimmung’ nannte, ist aber nicht eine beliebige oder nur negative—das heißt, alles musikalische Denken in bestimmten Richtungen ausschließende—, sondern sie ist jeweils konzentriert durch einen von mir geschriebenen Text, der das Intuitive in ganz bestimmter Weise herausfordert.

very least, they are designed to compensate for this lack by mitigating, for the performer, the “terrifying prospect of being free to play whatever comes to mind” (Small 1987, 302), by providing material to supplement or even to supplant the performer’s own creative lexicon.

My own view is that in analyzing improvisative musical activity or behavior in structural terms, questions relating to how, when, and why are critical. On the other hand, the question of whether structure exists in an improvisation—or for that matter, in any human activity—often begs the question in a manner that risks becoming not so much exegetic as pejorative. It should be axiomatic that, both in our musical and in our human, everyday-life improvisations, we interact with our environment, navigating through time, place, and situation, both creating and discovering form. On the face of it, this interactive, form-giving process appears to take root and flower freely, in many kinds of music, both with and without preexisting rules and regulations.

Personality

One important aspect of Afrological improvisation is the notion of the importance of personal narrative, of “telling your own story.” Berliner’s subchapter on this topic identifies this metaphor of the story as underlying the structural process of many improvisers (Berliner 1994, 201). Erroll Garner encapsulates this viewpoint well: “If you take up an instrument, I don’t care how much you love somebody, how much you would like to pattern yourself after them, you should still give yourself a chance to find out what you’ve got and let that out” (quoted in Taylor 1993, 97).

Part of telling your own story is developing your own “sound.” An Afrological notion of an improviser’s “sound” may be seen as analogous to the Eurological concept of compositional “style,” especially in a musically semiotic sense. Moreover, for an improviser working in Afrological forms, “sound,” sensibility, personality, and intelligence cannot be separated from an improviser’s phenomenal (as distinct from formal) definition of music. Notions of personhood are transmitted via sounds, and sounds become signs for deeper levels of meaning beyond pitches and intervals. The saxophonist Yusef Lateef (1985–88, 44) makes it plain: “The sound of the improvisation seems to tell us what kind of person is improvising. We feel that we can hear character or personality in the way the musician improvises.”

Crucial to the creation of a personal sound is the development of analytic skill on the part of an improviser. For the beginner, this process almost always commences with the emulation of other improvisers. Fraser (1983, 141) quotes Gillespie to the effect that an improviser starts by

"playing exactly like somebody else." Such emulation amounts to a version of music analysis for music based in orature and the body. Fraser further maintains that "the prospective improviser . . . is enculturated into a way of listening and of regarding the environment. . . . A way of hearing develops, a preferred musical language, the terms and patterns of which one subconsciously employs to listen to the world" (81).

Interestingly, Cage's critique of jazz also likens it to personal storytelling. Cage's description of jazz seems to liken the music to a ring shout: "The form of jazz suggests too frequently that people are talking—that is, in succession—like in a panel discussion. . . . If I am going to listen to a speech then I would like to hear some words" (quoted in Zwerin 1991, 162). This perceptive comment from a composer who could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be portrayed as possessing any affinity with Afrological musical forms, provides some intersubjective justification for the notion that one of the central aesthetic demands made on Afrological improvisers is that the improviser "tell a story."

In any event, Eurological improvisers have tended to look askance on the admission of personal narrative into improvisative activity. I believe that, for postwar Eurological improvisers, the ideas of Cage have, again, had the greatest impact in this regard: "What I would like to find is an improvisation that is not descriptive of the performer, but is descriptive of what happens, and which is characterized by an absence of intention" (quoted in Kostelanetz 1987, 222). Interviewing the members of AMM, the composer Christopher Hobbs states that one of the joys of listening to the group is that "you can't distinguish who is playing what, and that it is completely unimportant one way or the other" (Childs and Hobbs 1982–83, 40). British composer Gavin Bryars, who moved away from improvisation during the 1970s, maintained that "one of the main reasons I am against improvisation now is that in any improvising position the person creating the music is identified with the music. . . . It's like standing a painter next to his picture so that every time you see the painting you see the painter as well and you can't see it without him" (quoted in Bailey 1992, 115).

In some respects the distancing of personal narrative updates the concept of a post-Kantian "autonomous significant structure" identified by Subotnik in her essays on contemporary Eurological music. This autonomy is based on the assumption that "humans can build structures or domains that are complete and meaningful within themselves." Moreover, according to Subotnik (1991, 266), "the recognition of validity in such a structure is not thought to depend on the particular identity, power, habits, or values of those who create or receive the structure in question.

Rather, validity is supposed to inhere in the ability of a structure to carry out its own laws with consistency."

Subotnik believes that this ideal of autonomy is a fiction; the popular understanding of Gödel's theorem concerning the impossibility of a logical system's self-description in its own terms would seem to provide some corroboration. In any event, Bryars's painterless painting, as well as the Cageian notion of "sounds as themselves"—possessing only frequency, loudness, length, overtone structure, morphology (Cage 1961, 14), divorced from social or cultural implications—would seem to harmonize well with this concept of autonomy.

As with the motif theory of improvisation, even in Eurological music the notion of personal narrative and autonomy has been the subject of debate. Though the members of the innovative improvisation group *Musica Elettronica Viva* (including pianist Alvin Curran, electronic improviser Richard Teitelbaum, trombonist Garrett List, and pianist Frederic Rzewski) have all had close associations with Cage, their ideas about group improvisation—as with other "post-Cage improvisers" such as Malcolm Goldstein—seem to part company with Cage's views. Frederic Rzewski's "Description and Analysis of a Process" maintains that the music of MEV is "based on friendship. This element of friendship is communicated in the music; it cannot be concealed" (Rzewski 1968, 3).

Earlier in this passionate, brilliant, yet somewhat rambling treatise, Rzewski states that "Any unfriendly act on the part of some individual threatens the strength of the music we are all trying to create" (3). Malcolm Goldstein (1988, 10) is even more direct than Rzewski, maintaining, with Erroll Garner, that the improvisative act demands from the improviser that an answer be created to this important question: "Who are you? How do you think or feel about this moment/sounding?" Perhaps the most trenchant conception of what improvisation can be is to be found in this testament by Charlie Parker: "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn" (quoted in Levin and Wilson 1994, 24). The clear implication is that what you do live does come out of your horn.

My sincere thanks go to Bonnie Wright of Spruce Street Forum in San Diego; to Prof. Jann Pasler, my colleague at UCSD; and to Muhal Richard Abrams, all of whom made useful suggestions about the text. Thanks are also due to Isabelle Lytton, for information on the German critic Bert Noglik.