

I Love You With An Asterisk: African-American Experimental Music and the French Jazz Press, 1970-1980

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Introduction

Beginning in the 1970s, the French jazz press became the first community of critics to consider seriously the new African-American experimental music of Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton and other members of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM).¹ More than any other aspect of their compositions and improvisations, the incorporation of instrumentations, concepts, and musical forms normally associated with Western art music challenged assumptions within both the European and the American jazz communities. The response to these musicians in publications like *Jazz Magazine* and *Jazz Hot* was complex and multi-dimensional. A genuine fascination with this new music was nevertheless tempered by received notions about race and musical idiom. The political climate in France after the student demonstrations of 1968 provided a context which also may have been important for at least some French jazz critics.²

Such coexisting and often contradictory streams of influence produced mixed messages in the French jazz publications which appeared between 1970 and 1980. One finds not only articles praising various members of the AACM, and interviews intended to demonstrate connections between jazz musicians and new music composers such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Philip Glass, but also record and concert reviews which criticize African-American improvisers for what is seen as an inauthentic interest in contemporary classical music. Writing about an early performance by the Creative Construction Company (Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, Leroy Jenkins, and Steve McCall) French jazz critic Pierre Cressant is typically dismissive:

For me, the 'subversive' musical tactics of this group seem quite weak...drawing from a typically occidental aesthetic [. . .]. They are amusement for bourgeois intellectuals, contemporary music concert goers. (6-7)³

The French tradition of support for music and musicians who fit under the "jazz" rubric has been well documented.⁴ It is generally accepted that such music plays a more prominent and visible cultural role in France than it does in the United States and perhaps anywhere else in the world. For this reason, the reception of musicians like Leo Smith, George Lewis and Ornette Coleman by the French jazz press during the 1970s is especially revelatory in demonstrating how, even in an environment considered to be highly receptive to their work, musicians of this stature met resistance when their music crossed tacit cultural boundaries. In particular, the articulation, by these musicians, of an Afrological understanding of improvisation in which careful preparation, formalism, and intellect co-exist with spontaneity proved particularly problematic for the French jazz press throughout the 1970s.⁵

In "Musical Improvisation: A Systems Approach," Csikszentmihalyi and Rich show how innovations are legitimated in order to maintain domain boundaries:

[Artistic] changes will not be adopted unless they are sanctioned by some group entitled to make decisions as to what should or should not be included in the domain. These gatekeepers are what we call here the *field*. In physics, the opinion of a very small number of leading university professors was enough to certify that Einstein's ideas were creative. Hundreds of millions of people accepted the judgment of this tiny field, and marveled at Einstein's creativity, without understanding what it was all about. According to Tom Wolfe (1975) ten thousand people in Manhattan constitute the field of Modern Art. They decide which new paintings and or sculptures deserve to be seen, bought, included in collections—and therefore added to the domain. (47)

Csikszentmihalyi and Rich go on to apply the field concept to improvised music, where it includes performing musicians, listeners, professional critics and both public and private foundations with the economic resources to sustain a large influence. The resistant attitudes of the French jazz press regarding improvised music in France in the 1970s were in dialogue with conscious, counter-resistant improviser/composers who wanted to expand notions of African-American music. Based on archival research and interviews with both musicians and French critics and scholars, I will examine this dialogue in an effort to better understand how each community affected the other during the era in question.⁶

The French Jazz Press

In consideration of album and concert reviews from the early 1970s, it is clear that many French jazz journalists were influenced by prevalent racial stereotypes.⁷ Primitivist constructions of “les noirs” manifested themselves both explicitly and implicitly in both editorial decisions regarding visual imagery (advertising and cartoons) and critical language based on unexamined ideas about race and identity.

For example, the critical discourse surrounding musicians like Anthony Braxton and the Art Ensemble of Chicago reflects how many French jazz journalists subscribed to the notion that African-American music was best when it was most emotional or “instinctual,” and thus unfettered by intellect. Critical thinking and formalism were thought to be the domain of Western Europeans while emotion and raw talent fit into the domain of African-Americans. Even by 1969, however, few journalists would have been naïve or insensitive enough to openly state such essentialist assumptions about race and musicality. These attitudes were usually manifested more subtly, as when Phillipe Carles, in a review of an album by the Creative Construction Company which appeared in the November 1970 issue of *Jazz Magazine*, speaks of

A different way of proceeding, apparently parallel to certain trends in modern European music, and stripped of many compositional constants associated with African-American music, the most immediately perceptible omission certainly being that of all swing—the drummer here is nothing more than a percussionist. (“Anthony Braxton” 1970: 38)⁸

In the same review, Carles praises the Creative Construction Company for trying to find new modes of expression, though he eventually reduces the ensemble to what he calls a “black Domaine Musical.”⁹ Thus, he implies that the group has severed its ties with the African-American tradition of music making and is essentially derivative of twentieth century European composers.

This same view is expressed in both *Jazz Magazine* and *Jazz Hot* from the beginning of the 1970s and beyond. In a tepid review in the March 1972 issue of *Jazz Magazine* of a concert given by Circle (Anthony Braxton, Chick Corea, Dave Holland and Barry Altschul), Denis Constant remarks that “the interest [in this music] has more to do with the Occident—white America and Europe—than with the continents of color. The percussion is closer to [Les Percussions de] Strasbourg than to the tropical forests” (“La Quadrature du Cercle” 7).¹¹ In the January 1972 issue of *Jazz Magazine*, the same reviewer states that “Anthony Braxton performed some of his works for solo alto saxophone and these pieces [. . .] had almost no connection to African-American music” (“Anthony Braxton” 41).¹²

Constant’s statements were emblematic of the tacit understanding among the French jazz press at the time that African-American musicians should work within then-accepted forms of African-American music, and moreover that they should not make overt reference to European musical traditions. In essence, this mentality created a scenario in which African-American experimental improvisers and composers were forced by the French jazz press of the period either to define their work in relation to the racially coded musical stereotypes put forth by these journalists and others, or to risk having their music heard as derivative of contemporary white European or American composers. Reflecting on Anthony Braxton’s 1970 recording *This Time...*, Philippe Carles wonders if Braxton’s music is “Far from LeRoi Jones? Or right near John Cage?” (“Anthony Braxton” 1971: 33).¹³ Thus, African-American experimental music could be critiqued on the one hand for a lack of connection to stereotypical notions of blackness (often represented by LeRoi Jones), and on the other hand for being derivative of composers such as John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Though both the Creative Construction Company and the Art Ensemble of Chicago drew from an exceptionally diverse set of musical traditions, the compositions and, perhaps more importantly, the improvisations of the Creative Construction Company tended to incorporate musical elements which were no doubt very difficult for many French critics of that era to situate in the history of African-American improvised music. For example, Leroy Jenkins’s often non-diatonic, unaccompanied violin improvisations may have evoked, for some critics, the use of the violin in contemporary European art music by composers like Pierre Boulez and Olivier Messiaen. Furthermore, the music of the Creative Construction Company often incorporated “found sounds” or “noise” elements, like the heavy breathing into a microphone heard on the group’s first album, for the French BYG/Actuel label. This component of the group’s music, and their use of extended silences, also led many critics to draw parallels with the work of *musique concrète* composers such as Edgard Varèse, Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer. Moreover, the most disorienting element in the Creative Construction Company’s music may have been percussionist Steve McCall’s highly unusual approach to accompaniment and improvisation. Rather than consistently providing a steady pulse, McCall’s playing often incorporated long silences and an uncommon attention to timbral and textural variation. This

may well have made it impossible for most French jazz critics to connect the Creative Construction Company to any known African-American musical tradition.

The extroverted, theatrical and flamboyant improvisatory and rhythmic practices of the Art Ensemble of Chicago, on the other hand, were consistent with French expectations of African-American music. For example, in a very favorable review of the very first concert performed by the Art Ensemble in Paris, Daniel Caux vividly portrays their performance style:

[T]he audience was fairly surprised to see Joseph Jarman, his torso naked, his face painted, and passing among them, in their seats, murmuring a poem [. . .]. The four musicians are all capable drummers and execute, in turn or all at once, a percussive style of playing that's both effective and marked by a great richness of timbre [. . .]. Another time, on the other hand, this will be music [. . .] as on Monday the 16th, that is an ambiguous and violent Black-Power psychodrama. ("Le Delire et la Rigueur" 8)¹⁴

Thus, even though some extra-musical aspects of their performance may have "surprised" their audiences and the press, the Art Ensemble of Chicago did not effectively change critics' understanding of what African-American music should be. The group's dramatic use of costumes, face paint, humor, and collective improvisation, as well as the especially prominent role which they gave to percussion, was intended to evoke and pay homage to the great diversity of pan-African musical traditions; however, many French jazz critics wrongly understood the Art Ensemble's performance practice as reinforcing their own narrow views of African music.

Phillipe Carles's review of the Art Ensemble's 1969 recording *Message to Our Folks* makes note of the "most savage music and/or the most cultivated (Percussions de Strasbourg, for example), and the most African—no musician 'specializing' in drumming: each musician a very strong percussionist/time-keeper" ("Art Ensemble" 35).¹⁵ Carles's comments demonstrate once again to what extent the critical discourse of French jazz journalists reflected essentialist ideas about race and musicality that were prevalent at the time. Since his review of *Message to our Folks* is overwhelmingly positive, the implication is that Carles approved of the Art Ensemble's connection to what for him were the defining characteristics of African music.

Like much of the critical discourse in France surrounding both the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the Creative Construction Company, Carles's reviews perpetuated essentialized notions of both African and African-American musical traditions: (1) that all Africans, and more specifically, all African musicians have "natural rhythm" on which their music is founded and (2) that contemporary European music is derived from a cultivated and intellectual tradition from which contemporary African and African-American music is excluded.¹⁶ For Carles and other French jazz journalists of this period, the Art Ensemble's apparent confirmation of such notions of African-American culture was one of the most compelling qualities of this music. In fact, it could even be argued that all African-American experimental music was judged by this criterion in France in the early 1970s. For example, in a review of the 1970 album *The Art Ensemble of Chicago with Fontella Bass*, Laurent Goddet expresses his reservations:

'We miss the stimulation of the ghetto.' These are the words of Lester Bowie as reported by Valerie Wilmer, and this is exactly what one feels in listening to this disk: a certain gratuity, a lack of motivation, the absence of that force which holds the most essential place in the music of the four musicians from Chicago. ("Art Ensemble of Chicago" 33)¹⁷

Clearly critics like Carles and Goddet could have had differences of opinion as to the degree to which specific examples of the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago reflected the "ghetto" influences which they expected to hear. However, it is vital to recognize that critics did not in all cases subscribe to the notion that jazz was most compelling when explicitly demonstrating its connection to those characteristics of African-American music considered axiomatic by the French press. One example is the critical discourse surrounding French composer and theorist André Hodeir, whose *chef d'oeuvre Anna Livia Plurabell* is an extended, fifty-minute work based on James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and influenced by the work of Aaron Copland and Gunther Schuller. In a review that appeared in *Jazz Hot* in 1970, Gerald Merceron says that "the work of Hodeir indicates that [musical] paths other than those associated with instinct and spontaneity exist, and that this composer's thinking should occupy an important place in jazz" ("Sur Une Oeuvre" 27).¹⁸

Rather than being criticized for his affinity with contemporary European composition, as the Creative Construction Company was, Hodeir is praised for having discovered a new avenue for jazz. Implicit in Merceron's review is the idea that extended compositional forms in jazz are the domain of white European composers, while the virtues he describes as "spontaneity" and "intuition" are inherently tied to African-

American music. In a subsequent review, Merceron extends this argument and precludes any possible charges of racism:

There's very little chance that a black [musician], American or not, would one day admit the superiority of Hodeir [. . .]. We would cry racism, and with reason, if a white person told us one day that a black composer could never be greater than Beethoven, Debussy or Barraqué in the domain of erudite Occidental music, and yet we can't admit the idea, *a priori*, that a white musician could be greater than the best black jazz musicians in the domain of jazz ("André Hodeir" 35).¹⁹

In addition to praising Hodeir and classifying him as a seminal figure in the history of jazz, Merceron goes on to state that "We must hope that there will soon be a type of black Hodeir, since, obviously, the music of Hodeir can not replace the best of black jazz" (36).²⁰

Merceron's comments on Hodeir reflected the general position of the French jazz press during the period, which hailed Hodeir as an innovative and seminal composer in the history of jazz. Though Merceron takes pains to assert that musicians and composers, regardless of race, are capable of excelling in any musical genre, he inevitably betrays contradictory ideas about race and musical idiom. In making a case for Hodeir's musical superiority while simultaneously stating that his music could never replace "black jazz," Merceron is in essence asserting that the musical and compositional ideas represented by André Hodeir's music (extended form, through-notated composition, improvisations that draw from contemporary European music) are unconnected to black music.

The tenor of Merceron's review is consistent with the overwhelmingly negative response to the Creative Construction Company's use of Occidental musical techniques and with Philippe Carles's designation of the Creative Construction Company as a type of "black Domaine Musical." Moreover, while André Hodeir's extended forms and through-notated compositions were widely viewed as highly innovative by the French jazz press, through-notated works by Anthony Braxton and Ornette Coleman were not seriously acknowledged. Coleman's seminal orchestral piece, *Skies of America*, received nothing more than a two-paragraph review in the May 1973 issue of *Jazz Hot*, and Anthony Braxton's Composition 4 for five tubas received only a one-paragraph review in the May 1972 issue of *Jazz Magazine*.

Black Exotica

Both *Jazz Magazine* and *Jazz Hot* regularly printed advertisements, cartoons and article illustrations that would now be viewed in France as racially insensitive and even offensive. The original cover art for *Free Jazz Black Power*, written by Carles (a frequent contributor to *Jazz Magazine* and its current editor-in-chief) and Jean-Louis Comolli, features an absurd caricature of an African-American man, thrusting his fist in the air in some form of protest. This Calaban-like character, with his eyes bulging and massive tongue hanging in the air, suggests that the African-American led civil rights movement, with its connection to African-American music, was seen rather differently than other historic or contemporary French and American social and cultural revolutions were. As disturbing as the image is today, the sense that it was unremarkable to respected French jazz journalists and to their readership is all the more troubling.

In the 1970s, the overwhelmingly Caucasian readership of French jazz publications was bombarded with images and written accounts of the Black Panthers and their activity in the United States. This fascination can be attributed in large part to those music scholars, including Carles and Comolli, who were greatly influenced by the ideas of Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones) and Archie Shepp that drew connections between Free Jazz and the Black Power movement. The fascination went so far that *Jazz Hot* began to publish, on a regular basis, articles about the Panthers that had little or nothing to do with music. Laurent Goddet, the editor of and frequent contributor to *Jazz Hot*, provides the following rationale for the inclusion of these articles in the April 1969 issue: "We have always affirmed in these columns that in order to understand that which stirs the jazz of today a better understanding of the political, economic and cultural realities of Black America is necessary" ("Black Power" 17).²¹

Such articles represent the vast majority of the writing about African-American life during the period and may in part be understood as a continuation of the black exotica theme. Cultural historian James Clifford observes that, at the beginning of the twentieth century in France, "[non-European] others appeared now as serious human alternatives; modern cultural relativism became possible" (120). According to many writers, black culture in particular afforded the most prominent example of cultural relativism in France during the period commonly referred to as "interwar" Paris (1920-1940).²² The performance practice of jazz entertainer Josephine Baker and her troupe, particularly her *Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, came to represent the potential, as perceived by the French, for black culture to offer "what many saw as a new hedonism" accentuated by the fact that Baker evoked "the double taboo of mixing race and sex" (Jackson

28). In the period following World War II, Jean-Paul Sartre and other influential French thinkers developed an interest in jazz and other aspects of black culture, relating the racism in the United States and francophone Africa to existentialist notions of isolation and spiritual alienation.²³ By the 1960s, "America's problems, including the racial situation, had become the problems of the world," many French jazz journalists became interested in African-American experimental music during the 1960s and 1970s precisely because of its perceived connection to an African-American political agenda (Fabre 273).

In speaking about this phenomenon and its effect on the French jazz press in the 1970s, Alex Dutilh, the current editor-in-chief of *Jazzman* magazine, recalls that

There were a lot of French journalists who were obsessed with Archie Shepp, and Sun Ra, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Anthony Braxton. Enter the first records on the Incus label by Derek Bailey and Evan Parker. Almost all of the journalists hated them. The music wasn't so different...between Braxton and Evan Parker. But all of a sudden the ideological hook was gone. The hook of black culture was gone. The hook of oppression in the United States was gone... and I find that this was very symptomatic; it is almost a symbol of the spirit of people [in the jazz milieu] in that period. (Personal communication)²⁴

Dutilh's comments demonstrate how romantic notions of an essential black culture continued to exist among the French jazz press during the 1970s, perpetuating the legacy of black exotica in France, with Black Panther co-founder Huey Newton in the place of Josephine Baker.

May 1968 and its Influence on the French Jazz Press

Explicating the French fascination with the Black Panthers in the 1970s and the very limiting definitions of black identity which obtained at the time, both Alex Dutilh and Daniel Caux cite the events that unfolded in France in May, 1968, and the political climate that emerged in their wake.²⁵ Daniel Caux explains that, after the 1968 demonstrations,

You were either militant and political and with the people, or against them. The editor of *Jazz Hot* was a very militant and politically interested person, and for that reason he was interested in the Black Panthers. [. . .]. In the early 1970s you couldn't be an intellectual and on the side of the people. The intellectual was the guy up in an ivory tower while people were dying in the street...A lot of the popularity of Free Jazz in France can be attributed to the fact that jazz was considered to be a marginalized music and not part of the establishment, more than to the music itself. So, for Anthony Braxton to affiliate himself with contemporary European music, which was then associated with the political right, was considered to be a mistake by a lot of people. (Telephone interview)²⁶

Dutilh describes many of the same phenomena as Caux does:

It had to do with the weight of ideology...jazz was left and contemporary music was right. Contemporary music was recognized by the state, and had money. At the beginning of the 1970s there was an awareness of class. There were those who had power and money, and everyone else, the people protesting in the streets, without money. And jazz was on this side and contemporary music was on the other. So, for people between the age of twenty and forty at this time, it was almost like a betrayal to like the music of another class. (Personal communication)²⁷

In *Rationalizing Culture*, sociologist Georgina Born, describing France's cultural climate during the 1970s, echoes the ideas of Dutilh and Caux. According to Born, the 1970s government subsidy of the elite arts "came increasingly under attack" in France while "culture" more and more was associated with the perceived margins of society (72). This phenomenon no doubt contributed to the fascination among many French jazz critics with the Black Panthers and with the American civil rights movement more generally. In 1983, Mitterrand's Minister of Culture, Jacques Lang, succinctly captured the cultural politics of the period, stating that "all cultural action must be against power" (qtd. in Zeldin in Born 72).

Yet, in spite of this new opposition of a unified European elite to diverse marginalized cultures, one finds no dearth of articles about prestigious European composers like Stravinsky and Stockhausen in French jazz publications of the 1970s. This seems to contradict the notion that the editor of *Jazz Hot*, reflecting the changed political climate in France, favored articles whose content was supportive of the positions of the political left. Moreover, implicit in Dutilh and Caux's evocation of the bourgeois-versus-proletariat binary that existed in France after 1968 is the assumption that the African-American community is essentially monolithic. It is noteworthy that not one article published by the French jazz press in the 1970s refers to the

African-American middle and upper-middle classes, nor does any article examine the contributions of intellectual/academic African-Americans. The intense focus on the Black Panthers and the civil rights movement, together with the lack of any acknowledgement of African-American cultural diversity, reflects an extremely limited understanding of black identity during that era that allowed neither for the multitude of perspectives articulated by AACM members, for example, nor for the wide range of their musical influences.

In "Experimental Music in Black and White: The AACM in New York, 1970-1985," George Lewis states that,

Far from articulating resistance or class struggle, those who import the bourgeois-versus-vernacular binary dialectic unblinkingly into the complex world of black musical expression risk serving as the ventriloquist's dummy for corporate megamedia.

A conception of black cultural history that is forced to deny engagement with or influence from pan-European traditions would look absurd if it were applied to black writers or visual artists. Such a perspective cannot account for the complexity of experience that characterizes multiple, contemporary black lives. (77)

Lewis's statement is crucial to an understanding of the response of the French jazz press to African-American experimental music in the 1970s, and demonstrates how the attempts to theorize black music in relation to this bourgeois-versus-vernacular binary rely on an essentialized understanding of black life and culture in the United States, and perpetuate primitivist and romantic notions of the African-American musician as exotic other.

Defending Intellect: Musicians Respond

Just as jazz journalism is influenced by its cultural milieu and by the evolution of the musics with which it deals, it is also influenced by the attitudes of musicians. Thus, it is important to observe the space afforded to musicians to express their own thoughts on music, race and the representational power of the jazz press. From 1970 to 1980, literally scores of significant interviews appeared featuring African-American experimental musicians, including Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Leo Smith and Anthony Davis. These interviews allowed musicians to define the parameters of their own music and to respond to misconceptions in their own words.

Many musicians used these interviews to critique the limiting manner in which the French jazz press defined the new African-American experimental music. In an interview conducted in 1977, Muhal Richard Abrams comments that

People make the error of confining us in certain types of music. We are musicians. We can play everything, because we are capable of playing everything, because we listen to everything. [. . .] We don't study classical music: we study music. We don't study 'jazz': we study music, pure and simple. (qtd. in Bourget "Muhal Richard Abrams" 23)²⁸

With this statement, Abrams rejects the jazz/classical binary perpetuated by the jazz press and argues for a more contemporary and nuanced discourse around improvised music. In a 1974 interview published in *Jazz Magazine*, trumpeter Lester Bowie expresses a similar dissatisfaction and challenges the French jazz press to implement a new terminology when talking about African-American experimental music:

'Jazz' signifies something ugly. But people will continue to use this word as long as people like you—who control the means of information for this music—leave "jazz" in the titles of their magazines. [. . .] It's up to you to initiate this change; it's in your hands. The people who buy records, who go to concerts, will accept this change when they start reading it. (qtd. in Carles and Soutif 23)²⁹

In addition to calling for a new discourse surrounding African-American experimental music, many musicians made a concerted effort to point out the inherent flaw in evaluating the music based on immutable ideas about its essential characteristics. As George Lewis states,

It's on the contrary a tradition of our music to always be open, permeable to exterior influences, while still maintaining its popular character. And that's what's particular to a living music, to take outside influences and make them your own. [Charlie] Parker was fascinated by the music of Stravinsky. For me, it's Stockhausen, for example, who interests me. (qtd. in Flicker, 39)

By evoking Charlie Parker's affinity for the music of composers such as Stravinsky and Varèse, Lewis presents a direct challenge to the jazz/classical dialectic employed by so many jazz journalists at the time. Furthermore, Lewis's reference to Parker's connection to contemporary European composers establishes a precedent in which challenging Lewis's interest in Stockhausen or Braxton's interest in John Cage represents a falsification of the history of African-American creativity.

Lewis and, most notably, Anthony Braxton used interviews in French jazz publications to candidly address the racial stereotypes that were prevalent in the discourse surrounding their music. In speaking about the reception of his music by the French jazz press, Anthony Braxton's indignation is clear:

But to reduce my music by saying that I'm inspired by I don't know which European saxophonist, isn't only a slandering of my work, it's also dangerous [. . .]. For them, the black jazz musician is capable of playing with *feeling*, but he's incapable of thinking. Everything that's 'intellectual' can only be attributed to Occidental culture. (qtd. in Carles "Braxton" 14-15)³⁰

In a 1977 interview in *Jazz Magazine* George Lewis also reacts to the unfair situation:

Our work is often copied by so-called classical musicians who never mention their sources. And yet, in contemporary Occidental music I hear the contribution of cultures from the entire world [. . .]. People will only talk about 'research' and 'recreation', never of influence [. . .]. Classical musicians and composers have a position that is ideologically dominant and their view of us is ethnocentric. (qtd. in Flicker 39-40)³¹

These statements by Lewis and Braxton challenged the French jazz press to confront the connection between racism and the discourse surrounding African-American experimental music in the 1970s. More than simply responding to European claims to "ownership" of certain aspects of Western music, Braxton and Lewis articulate a new understanding of European musical ideas, one that is not a matter of appropriation, but of transformation through improvisation and composition. Moreover, this new transformational perspective is put forth in the context of an Afrological aesthetic which is culturally and historically inclusive, integrative, and non-hierarchical. Through such commentaries, African-American musicians working in France were able both to identify and to critically examine the complex network of influences affecting the reception of their music in the 1970s. The highly insightful and often subversive nature of the remarks made by musicians such as Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Muhal Richard Abrams, and various members of the Art Ensemble of Chicago allowed them to take an active role in redefining the discourse employed by the French jazz press.

In fact, musicians like Anthony Braxton and George Lewis were at times forced to emphasize the formal aspects of their music that were not traditionally heard as having a connection to African-American music making in order to have them acknowledged. Braxton and Lewis were essentially presented with two options: (1) to present and discuss their music in a way that could be viewed as consistent with European ideas about the history of African-American creative music, thus allowing the French jazz press to perpetuate their racialized notions, or (2) to emphasize those transcultural aspects not normally associated with African-American music making and definitions of blackness more generally. Since they chose to privilege the formal elements of their music in order to more clearly articulate the intellectual nature of both their compositions and their improvisations, Lewis and Braxton were then in effect caricatured as overly rational and academic musicians. By exceptionalizing the intellectuality of their music, the French jazz press was initially able to maintain its implicit categories and predetermined schemas.

There are countless examples of both text and imagery that focus on Braxton and Lewis as intellectuals, making this the defining characteristic of their music in the eyes of the French jazz press and its readership. In a 1978 record review that appeared in *Jazz Magazine*, Marcel Camier refers to George Lewis as "the intellectual in glasses that he tries so fiercely to portray" (58).³² This comment is especially problematic in that it emphasizes Lewis's intellectuality while simultaneously calling it into question. Gerard Bourgardier (1977) describes Anthony Braxton in a similar but kinder fashion: "he is a young man, well groomed, with tiny glasses, discreet, studious, applied, and polite [. . .]. who goes into his room [. . .] working on his scores, studying without pause" ("Anthony Braxton" 43).³³ Thus, in spite of these musicians' best efforts to accurately represent the totality of their music and its connection to traditions of African-American music while at the same time challenging reductive attitudes about the connections between race and music, the French jazz press was at first able to resist this challenge to their traditional ways of thinking about African-American music and its history.

The portrayal of Caucasian improvising musicians such as André Hodeir and Steve Lacy, however, while recognizing their affiliations with literary and even academic circles, by no means presents these links as the defining characteristics of their music. Whereas much of the imagery surrounding Anthony Braxton shows him playing chess, or, with a furrowed brow, scribbling mathematical formulas onto a sheet of staff paper, it was not necessary for the readers of *Jazzman* and *Jazz Hot* to see images of André Hodeir reading a book or smoking a pipe because his status as an intellectual figure was not noteworthy. However, as I will show in the next section of this paper, the efforts of musicians like Braxton and Lewis no doubt set a precedent which would empower future black artists to define their music in less limiting ways. Furthermore, as the cultural climate in France evolved over the course of the 1970s, the gap between Braxton's and Lewis's philosophies and French understandings of African-American experimental musicians began to close. Though initially deflected, Lewis and Braxton's conscious articulation of the co-existing and inter-related intellectual, emotional and spiritual components of their work as composers and improvisers provided the foundation for a discourse around African-American experimental music in which spontaneity and improvisation could be understood as intellectual endeavors as well as emotional ones.

Evolution in the Position of the French Jazz Press

Towards the end of the 1970s, though many French jazz critics continued to distinguish African-American from European creativity, others demonstrated a real evolution in their responses to African-American experimental music away from essentialized notions of race and musical idiom. The response to the work of Muhal Richard Abrams in the late 1970s reflects how many French jazz critics had begun to expand their notions of what constituted African-American creativity. In the May 1979 issue of *Jazz Hot* Laurent Goddet describes Abrams as

[a] fantastic pianist [. . .] who takes us to the land of Debussy and Schoenberg, and sometimes to the lands of ragtime, blues and gospel [. . .]. The passage of Muhal Richard Abrams [through Paris] was without a possible doubt one of the most important musical events. (Goddet "Le Père, Chez Nous" 41)³⁴

In the October 1979 issue of *Jazz Magazine*, Gerard Bourgardier echoes these sentiments:

The most beautiful piano recital was [. . .] that of Muhal Richard Abrams, who played a long piece entitled *Excursions in Pastel*, a lengthy piece belonging to, without a doubt, the tradition of jazz, but also to one, hybrid, of Gershwin, or even to one, completely 'classical', of Prokofiev. ("New York: Morceaux Choisis" 37)³⁵

These comments reflect a significant shift in attitudes within the French jazz press with regard to African-American experimental musicians who drew from twentieth century European art music. Instead of denouncing Abrams's allusions to Debussy and Schoenberg as being disconnected from African-American music, these critics recognize Abrams as an artist who is free of genre limitations and is able to combine disparate musical traditions to create innovative and original music. Furthermore, these comments assert that Abrams is able to draw from European idioms while simultaneously maintaining a direct connection to African-American traditions.

Similar changes in the attitudes of the French jazz press can be found in the critical discourse surrounding Anthony Braxton's music. Phillipe Carles's 1974 article on Braxton is an early example:

This music refuses a second alternative which would like to oppose body/spirit, sensitivity/intellect, shout/logic. In addition to those of Dolphy, Coltrane, and Coleman, Braxton and his friends have understood the lessons of Stockhausen and Cage. ("L'Aube de Braxton" 28)³⁶

Carles's comment is problematic in that it perpetuates the notion that intellect and logic are primarily white musical characteristics, while physicality and emotion are primarily African-American musical attributes. However, it is progressive in that it asserts that the music of an African-American is able to combine these musical elements into a coherent and innovative artistic whole. As opposed to conceptualizing the music of Abrams and Braxton as a combination of African-American and European stylistic elements, Jean-Loup Bourget (1978) goes a step further than Carles and makes the assertion that Braxton's music cannot be defined in relation to pre-existing musical genres: "this unclassifiable music (neither 'jazz' nor 'not jazz', neither totally improvised nor truly 'composed') [is] in between all barriers" ("Anthony Braxton" 52).³⁷

Bourget's comments reflect the fact that, by the end of the 1970s, Anthony Braxton had documented several compositions whose conceptual scope, incorporating hybrid structures drawing from both improvisation and

traditional notation, forced many French jazz critics to abandon the jazz/classical dichotomy when theorizing his music. Most notable among these pieces was his Composition 82 for four orchestras. In a 1979 review of the recording which appeared in *Jazz Magazine*, Michel Calonne comments that

One wonders if Braxton is not in the process of realizing a dream of [Charlie] Parker's. In fact, we know that Bird wanted to study with Edgard Varèse [. . .]. That is to say that the publication of these six sides can be considered to be a historical event. (4)³⁸

Calonne's statement positions Braxton as an innovative composer whose use of the orchestral format connects him to Charlie Parker, rather than interpreting Composition 82 as a Stockhausen/Ellington hybrid. Furthermore, Calonne's comments can be viewed as an acknowledgement of interviews in French jazz publications in which musicians like Lewis, Abrams and Braxton point to the historical precedent of musicians like Parker and Ellington, who were greatly influenced by contemporary European composers. Similarly, a 1979 review of Composition 82 by Laurent Goddet goes to great lengths to assert that this piece is separate from contemporary Western art music and from multi-orchestral works by, for example, Stockhausen: "I myself am not at all a specialist on Stockhausen's music but nevertheless, I know his music well enough to be convinced of a fundamental difference between the aesthetic universes of the two men [Stockhausen and Braxton]" ("Anthony Braxton" 41).³⁹

Further evidence of this evolution in the thinking of the French jazz press can be found in the reception of Braxton's music for string quartet. The very fact that several versions of Braxton's Composition 17 for string quartet comprised an entire concert program in France demonstrates a certain shift, not limited to the jazz press, in the cultural response to African-American experimental music at the end of the 1970s.⁴⁰ As Goddet points out in his 1979 review of the string quartet's Parisian première: "this was then, after years of waiting, after the widely known refusal of Gilbert Amy [then director of the Domaine Musical] to execute Braxton's music, the first public performance [in France] of one of Braxton's through-notated compositions" ("Braxton à Paris" 38).⁴¹

Goddet avoids using an African-American/European duality to theorize the music: "it was definitely completely braxtonian forms, structures and sensibilities that were given to the string players to read" (38).⁴² Perhaps more than any other aspect of Goddet's highly favorable review, his employment of the term "braxtonian" illustrates the fact that, by the end of the 1970s, many French jazz critics were beginning to develop new modes of discourse to address the specific needs of the new African-American experimental music. Furthermore, Goddet's reference to the formal, structural, and aesthetic uniqueness of Braxton's string quartet music implicitly acknowledges his ability to transform traditional European musical formats by drawing from an Afrological improvisatory aesthetic. Though much of the music for string quartet is through-notated, Braxton integrates graphic notation and mobile forms into the scores, thereby increasing the agency of the individual performers in a way that is consistent with Afrological traditions of improvised music. In performances of one version of Composition 17 Braxton himself often joined the Robert Schumann String Quartet as an improvising saxophonist.

A different type of evidence of the evolving consciousness of the French jazz press can be found in a 1979 article by Giuseppe Pino in *Jazz Magazine*. "Braxton at Home" is essentially a collection of photographs of Braxton at his home in Woodstock, New York, accompanied by text. As a representation of Braxton's domestic life, it is relatively free of racial stereotypes connected to black culture in the United States. In addition to showing Braxton with his wife and newborn son, one caption describes Braxton's daily routine in the following manner:

When he's not composing (on the drawing tables that he has installed in his studio) Braxton works on a book which should come out in September. Among other themes that will be developed: the black aesthetic, Occidental music, Schoenberg, John Cage, Parker, Ornette, creative music outside the USA, the current state of contemporary music. (30)⁴³

Pino's portrayal of Braxton is refreshing; unlike every other article addressing the everyday aspects of this cultural milieu which had appeared in *Jazz Hot* and *Jazz Magazine*, it presents Braxton without a negative sub-textual political or cultural agenda. Instead, Braxton is portrayed as both a scholar and an intellectual without this being seen as exceptional.

This examination of the evolution in the responses of certain members of the French jazz press to African-American experimental music over the course of the 1970s is not intended to assert that essentialized notions of race and musical idiom had disappeared by 1980. However, it is important to acknowledge the significant influence that the musicians themselves had in shaping the reception of their music. I have already pointed to the writings of those French jazz critics whose works provide the most compelling

evidence of the influence of musicians like Braxton, Lewis and Abrams on the critical discourse surrounding African-American experimental music. Other factors which undoubtedly contributed to this evolution include an increasing familiarity with the music in question and the marketplace prestige and credibility afforded to Anthony Braxton when Arista Records began releasing his music in 1974.⁴⁴ The creation of several massive cultural institutions such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, La Villette and the Opera de la Bastille during the 1970s and 1980s is seen by Georgina Born as representative of an evolution “within the polyvalent reigning ideology whereby it [was] proposed that centralization and fine art are compatible with populism” (73). These new institutions may also have provided a context in which French jazz critics felt more validated in acknowledging the importance of the work of African-American experimental musicians who drew from musical sources which they considered to be both elite and populist.

Conclusion

In many ways, the French jazz press and its evolution over the course of the 1970s demonstrate a kind of cultural nationalism. While not overtly racist, the attitudes and racially coded notions of creativity represented by these critics do seem emblematic of a conscious attempt to position certain cultural and musical domains, such as through-notated forms and intellectualism, as uniquely French or European. As has been noted in this article, the probably unexamined decision made by many members of the French jazz press to theorize African-American experimental music, and its presumed connection to the American civil rights movement in relation to socio-cultural divisions that existed in France in the wake of May 1968 may also have contributed to this cultural positioning.

In the 1970s, in France and elsewhere, many African-American experimental musicians wished to problematize antiquated and culturally nationalist notions of race and creativity. The influence of their efforts, while impossible to analyze fully in the context of this article, seems to have been quite significant even though their goals would never be completely realized. By 1979, racially coded notions of creativity remained prevalent in both *Jazz Hot* and *Jazz Magazine*. However, this year also marked the first performances of Braxton’s string quartet music in France, and attempts by some French jazz journalists to develop a new vocabulary to address the music of Braxton, Lewis, Anthony Davis, James Newton, and Henry Threadgill. Furthermore, a shift in French cultural politics towards a postmodern, postcolonial aesthetic may have also had a positive influence on the response of the French jazz press to these musicians at the end of the 1970s. In some ways, this complex, contradictory situation foreshadows the space that African-American experimental music would occupy in France’s cultural fabric in the 1980s and 90s.⁴⁵ Over the past twenty years, major jazz festivals and cultural institutions such as La Cité de La Musique have provided significant support to African-American experimental composers, including Ornette Coleman and Anthony Braxton.⁴⁶ Yet France remains a country that has never financed the production of a major orchestral or operatic work by an African-American composer.⁴⁷ My hope is that my research will illuminate some of the historic background to these evolving phenomena, and contribute to the growing body of scholarship which aims to critically examine the cultural significance of racially coded notions of creativity in the arts.

Notes

¹ The title phrase “I love you with an asterisk” is taken from a Henry Threadgill composition of the same name.

The term “African-American experimental music” is used here to denote works, both composed and improvised, by musicians such as Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, Anthony Davis, and others, that drew upon a variety of ideas, compositional forms, and instrumentations largely viewed as having little or no connection to what was then understood as the jazz tradition or African-American music making more generally. Seminal examples of such works include Ornette Coleman’s *Skies of America* (1972) for full orchestra, Anthony Braxton’s *Composition 82* (1978) for four orchestras, as well as his 1969 recording *For Alto* for solo saxophone, and Anthony Davis’s more recent opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (1986-1992).

² The student demonstrations that took place in France in 1968 are widely considered to have had a significant effect upon the subsequent cultural climate in France in the 1970s and beyond. See for example Dauncy, Kidd and Reynolds, Quattrocchi and Nairn, Reader and Wadia, and Servan-Schreiber.

³ “Pour ma part les actes ‘subversifs’ de ce groupe me paraissent bien faibles...procéder d’une esthétique typiquement occidentale [. . .]. Ce sont divertissements pour intellectuels bourgeois, spectateurs de musique contemporaine” (Cressant 6-7). This and all subsequent translations from the French are by the author.

⁴ See for example Gopnik, Jackson, Taylor, and Tournes.

⁵ For a discussion of the term “Afrological” and its usage see Lewis “Improvised Music.”

⁶ I began this study in 2002 with the generous support of a Fulbright research grant. As a saxophonist and composer who had collaborated and recorded with many of the musicians connected to my topic, including Anthony Braxton, Oliver Lake and Dave Burrell, I felt qualified to pursue such a scholarly investigation. Furthermore, my position during the 2002-2003 academic year as guest lecturer at the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieure de Musique et de Danse de Paris provided useful insights into the current understanding within academia of some of the issues addressed in this paper.

⁷ For a history of stereotypical representations of Africa and Africans in the French press see Bachollet et al.

⁸ “[. . .] une autre démarche, apparemment parallèle à certaines tentatives de la musique européenne moderne et débarrassée de plusieurs constants de la musique négro-américaine, la disparition la plus immédiatement perceptible étant bien sûr celle de tout balancement—le batteur n’est plus ici qu’un percussionniste” (Carles “Anthony Braxton” 1970 38).

⁹ Founded in 1954 by Pierre Boulez, the Domaine Musical was a new music ensemble specializing in the performance of contemporary European art music.

¹⁰ Les Percussions de Strasbourg is a new music percussion ensemble based in Strasbourg, France, specializing in contemporary European art music by composers such as Olivier Messiaen, Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

¹¹ “L’intérêt, en effet, porte plus vers l’Occident—Amérique blanche et Europe—que vers les continents de couleur. Les percussions sont plus proches de Strasbourg que du forêts tropicales” (Constant “La Quadrature du Cercle” 7).

¹² “Anthony Braxton a donné audition de quelque-unes de ses oeuvres pour saxophone alto solo et ces pièces [. . .] n’avaient que très peu de rapport avec la musique afro-américaine” (Constant “Anthony Braxton” 41).

¹³ “Loin de LeRoi Jones? Ou tout près de John Cage?” (Carles “Anthony Braxton” 1971 33).

¹⁴ “[L]es auditeurs furent assez surpris de voir Joseph Jarman, torse nu, le visage peint, passer lentement dans leurs rangs en marmonnant un poème [. . .]. Les quatre musiciens se passent de drummer et assument à tour de rôle ou simultanément un jeu percussive efficace et varié d’une grande richesse de timbres [. . .]. Une autre fois, par contre, ce sera une musique [. . .] comme le lundi 16, un ambigu et violent psychodrame Black-Power” (Caux “La Delire et la Rigueur” 8).

¹⁵ “[. . .] musique la plus sauvage et/ou la plus cultivée (cf. Percussions de Strasbourg, par exemple), la plus africaine (pas de batteur ‘spécialisé’): chaque musicien est un percussionniste/rythmicien en puissance” (Carles “Art Ensemble of Chicago” 35).

¹⁶ For a thorough examination of the origins and implications of the concept of “natural rhythm” see Agawu, and Radano “Hot Fantasies.”

¹⁷ “‘La stimulation du ghetto nous manque’ ce sont les propres mots de Lester Bowie rapportés par Valerie Wilmer, et c’est exactement ce que l’on ressent à l’écoute de ce disque: une certaine gratuité, un manque de motivations, l’absence de cette force qui tient la place essentielle dans la musique des quatre musiciens de Chicago” (Goddet “Art Ensemble of Chicago” 33).

¹⁸ “[. . .] l’oeuvre d’Hodeir indique qu’il existe d’autres voies que celles de l’instinct et de la spontanéité, et que la réflexion du compositeur doit occuper une place importante dans le jazz” (Merceron “Sur une Oeuvre de André Hodeir” 27).

¹⁹ “Il y a fort peu de chances qu'un autre noir, Américain ou pas, admette un jour la supériorité d'Hodeir [. . .]. Nous hurlerions au racisme, et avec raison, si un blanc nous disait que jamais un compositeur noir n'arrivera à dépasser Beethoven, Debussy ou Barraqué dans le domaine de la musique savante occidentale, et pourtant nous ne pouvons admettre l'idée, a priori, qu'un blanc puisse dépasser les meilleurs musiciens noirs dans le domaine du jazz” (Merceron “André Hodeir” 35-36).

²⁰ “Il faut espérer qu'il y aura bientôt une sorte d'Hodeir noir, car, bien entendu, la musique d'Hodeir ne remplace pas le meilleur jazz noir” (Merceron “André Hodeir” 35-36).

²¹ “Nous avons toujours affirmé dans ces colonnes que pour comprendre ce qui agite le jazz d'aujourd'hui une meilleure connaissance des réalités politiques, économiques et culturelles de l'Amérique noire était nécessaire” (Goddet “Black Power” 17).

²² See for example Archer-Straw, Fabre, Jackson, Martin and Roueff, and Stovall.

²³ For a history of the intellectual discourse in France around so-called primitive and colonized cultures as articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Derrida, see Kidd and Reynolds.

²⁴ “Il y avait beaucoup de journalistes français qui étaient obsédés par Archie Shepp et Sun Ra et l'Art Ensemble de Chicago et Braxton. Arrivent les premiers disques sur le label Incus de Derek Bailey et Evan Parker. Presque tout les journalistes les détestaient. La musique n'était pas si loin que ça...entre Braxton et Evan Parker. Mais tout d'un coup il n'y avait plus l'accroche idéologique. Il n'y avait plus l'accroche de la culture noire, de l'oppression aux États-Unis...et je trouve que c'est très symptomatique, c'est presque un symbol de l'état d'esprit des gens de l'époque” (Dutilh).

²⁵ For an examination of the perceived commonalities between so-called Free Jazz and the French demonstrations of May 1968 see Willener, and Wilmer.

²⁶ “Soit on était militant, engagé politiquement, avec le peuple, soit on était contre le peuple. Le rédacteur en chef de *Jazz Hot* était très militant et engagé politiquement, et pour cette raison il était intéressé par les Black Panthers [. . .]. Au début des années soixante-dix on ne pouvait pas être intellectuel tout en prenant le parti du peuple. L'intellectuel était l'homme dans le tour d'ivoire pendant que les gens crevaient dans la rue...un grand parti de la popularité du Free Jazz en France peut être attribué au fait qu'on considérait le jazz d'être une musique marginalisée, non pas liée à l'établissement, plus qu'à la musique elle-même. Donc, pour Anthony Braxton de s'affilier à la musique contemporaine Européenne, qui était à l'époque associé avec une politique de droite, était considéré comme une erreur par beaucoup de gens” (Caux “Telephone interview”).

²⁷ “C'est du au poids de l'idéologie...le jazz était de gauche et la musique contemporaine était de droite. La musique contemporaine avait la reconnaissance de l'état et elle avait du fric. Au début des années soixante-dix il y avait une conscience de classe. Il y avait ceux qui avaient le pouvoir et l'argent et il y avait les autres, qui étaient ceux qui manifestaient dans la rue et qui n'avaient pas du fric. Et le jazz était de ce côté là et la musique contemporaine était de l'autre côté. Donc, pour des gens qui avaient entre vingt et quarante ans, c'était presque comme une trahison d'aimer la musique d'un autre classe” (Dutilh “Personal communication”).

²⁸ “On commet l'erreur de nous confiner dans certains types de musique. Nous sommes des musiciens. Nous pouvons tout jouer, parce que nous écoutons tout [. . .]. Nous n'étudions pas la musique classique: nous étudions la musique. Nous n'étudions pas la musique de 'jazz': nous étudions la musique, tout simplement” (Abrams in Bourget “Muhal Richard Abrams” 23).

²⁹ “'Jazz' signifie quelque chose de moche. Mais on continuera d'utiliser ce mot aussi longtemps que des gens comme vous—qui contrôlez les moyens d'information sur cette musique—laisseront 'jazz' dans le titre de leurs magazines. [. . .] C'est à vous d'amorcer le changement, c'est entre vos mains. Les gens qui achètent des disques, qui vont aux concerts, accepteront ce changement à partir du moment où ils le liront” (Bowie in Carles and Soutif 23).

³⁰ “Mais réduire ma musique en disant que je me suis inspiré de je ne sais quel saxophoniste européen, ce n'est pas seulement calomnier mon travail, c'est dangereux [. . .]. Pour eux, le musicien de jazz noir est

capable de jouer avec *feeling*, mais il est incapable de penser. Tout ce qui est 'intellectuel' ne peut être attribué qu'à la culture occidentale" (Lewis in Flicker, 39).

³¹ "Notre travail est souvent copié par de prétendus musiciens classiques qui ne font jamais mention de leurs sources. Et pourtant dans la musique occidentale contemporaine j'entends l'apport des cultures du monde entier [. . .]. [O]n ne parlera que de 'recherche', et de 'recréation', jamais d'influence [. . .]. Les musiciens et compositeurs classiques ont une position idéologique dominante et le regard qu'ils portent sur nous est ethnocentriste" (Lewis in Flicker 39-40).

³² "[. . .] l'intellectuel à lunettes qu'il cherche farouchement à paraître" (Camier 58).

³³ "[. . .] lui, c'est un jeune homme bien propre, avec des petites lunettes, discret, studieux, appliqué, poli [. . .] qui remonte dans sa chambre [. . .] qui travaille ses partitions, qui étudie sans relâche" (Bourgardier "Anthony Braxton" 43).

³⁴ "[. . .] fantastique pianiste [. . .] qui nous menait au pays des Debussy et des Schoenberg, tantôt dans les contrées du ragtime, du blues et du gospel [. . .]. Le passage de Muhal Richard Abrams fut sans doute possible l'un des événements musicaux les plus considérables" (Goddet "Le Père, Chez Nous" 41).

³⁵ "Le plus beau recital de piano, ce fut [. . .] celui de Muhal Richard Abrams, qui joua un long morceau intitulé *Excursions in Pastel*, morceau-fleuve appartenant sans doute à la tradition du jazz, mais aussi bien à celle, hybride, de Gershwin, ou même à celle, toute 'classique', de Prokofiev" (Bourgardier "New York: Morceaux Choisis" 37).

³⁶ "Cette musique refuse une seconde alternative qui voudrait opposer corps/esprit, sensibilité/intellectualité, cri/logique. Outre celles de Dolphy, Coltrane, Coleman, Braxton et ses amis ont entendu les leçons de Stockhausen et Cage" (Carles "L'Aube de Braxton" 28).

³⁷ "[. . .] cette musique insituable (ni 'jazz' ni 'pas jazz', ni tout à fait improvisée ni vraiment 'composée') entre toutes les barrières" (Bourget "Anthony Braxton" 52).

³⁸ "[. . .] on peut se demander si Braxton n'est pas en train de réaliser un rêve de Parker. De fait, l'on sait que Bird voulait étudier avec Edgard Varèse [. . .]. C'est dire que la parution de ces six faces peut être considérée comme un événement historique" (Calonne 4).

³⁹ "Je ne suis quant à moi nullement un spécialiste de Stockhausen, mais je connais cependant assez sa musique pour être convaincu d'une différence de nature fondamentale entre les univers esthétiques des deux hommes" (Goddet "Anthony Braxton" 41).

⁴⁰ Composition 17 is an umbrella term for a string quartet that can be played in a variety of formations. The Parisian concert reviewed by Goddet in 1979 included a version of the piece with saxophone, as well as a version with just the quartet.

⁴¹ "Ce fut donc, après des années d'attente, après les refus signifiés par Gilbert Amy de faire exécuter la musique de Braxton, la première exécution publique d'une oeuvre écrite d'Anthony Braxton" (Goddet "Braxton à Paris" 38).

⁴² "[. . .] c'est bien des formes, des structures et une sensibilité toute braxtoniennes qui se donnaient à lire sous les cordes" (Goddet "Braxton à Paris" 38).

⁴³ "Quand il ne compose pas (sur les tables à dessin qu'il a installées dans son studio), Braxton travaille à un livre qui devrait paraître en septembre. Entre autres thèmes qui y seront développés: esthétique noire, musique occidentale, Schoenberg, John Cage, Parker, Ornette, musique créative hors des USA, réalités de la musique contemporaine" (Pino 30).

⁴⁴ For a detailed history of Anthony Braxton's association with Arista Records and the response of the American jazz press to his music in this period see Radano "Critical Alchemy."

⁴⁵ 1981 marked the first year in which the French Minister of Culture, Jacques Lang, allocated federal funding to jazz-related projects such as festivals and workshops.

⁴⁶ La Cité de la Musique produced a week-long event devoted to the music of Ornette Coleman in 1997, though it did not include his *Skies of America* for orchestra. A major chamber work of Coleman's was also performed at the Banlieues Bleues festival in 1994. Anthony Braxton was invited to perform with a 10-piece ensemble by the Vienne Jazz festival in 2001, and by the Banlieues Bleues Festival in 2002.

⁴⁷ After exhaustive research, I found no evidence of any such performance in France. In addition to archival research, I questioned literally scores of musicians, composers, arts administrators and music critics in France, none of whom could recall such a performance, and all of whom felt very certain that the performance of an operatic or orchestral work by an African-American composer had never taken place in France. In 2003 Wayne Shorter performed arrangements of his compositions at the Vienne Jazz Festival, the Opera de Lyon and La Cité de la Musique with the Orchestre Nationale de Lyon. However, he did not arrange the music performed by the orchestra, and for this reason, I do not consider these performances as representative of the production of a major orchestral or operatic work composed by an African-American.

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