Jazz in the Age of Anxious Modernist Aesthetics: Authenticity versus Kitsch

Christen Kold Thomsen
Odense University

1.

It was the then recently expatriated poet W. H. Auden who gave literary currency to anxiety as a short-hand diagnosis of the artistic New Yorker mentality after World War II. Auden's verse drama from 1947, The Age of Anxiety, dealt with four lonely characters in a New York bar who made timid contact while their minds probed the anxieties and potential happiness made possible by such relationships. Timidity and safety were moral judgments made by those who wanted to maintain, or re-claim, the antagonistic defiance of artistic modernism.[1]

The art critic Harald Rosenberg was especially effective in appro-

The contents of this article were first presented in a talk at a seminar about American jazz at the University of Aarhus, May 1, 1997.

1 Anxiety as a diagnostic term transferred from psychiatric literature to cultural affairs was also familiar from the activities of Harry Stack Sullivan – a controversial, and now all but forgotten American psychiatrist – who was once a voice that made the definition of modern man equivalent with sickness. Loneliness and isolation were central to Sullivan's – and after him countless other – descriptions of American social life and character in the 1940s and early 50s. To Sullivan the American character oscillated between "anxiety" (a rather open category that included all sorts of emotional trouble and suffering) and a resultant desire for "security" (cf Steven Marcus, *Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1984, pp. 231ff, esp. p. 238). Memoirs of Greenwich Village bohemia in the late 1940s and 50s suggest that "every one" was in analysis (cf. Anatole Broyard, *Kafka Was the Rage* (New York: Crown, 1993); and Dan Wakefield, *New York* in *the 50s* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).

priating "anxiety" for the state of mind of the modernist (i.e. avant-garde) artist who must be constantly on the alert against submitting to the material and esthetic dangers and temptations of that (widely assimilated) art which merely *imitated* and *posed* as the real thing.

> The anxiety of art is a philosophical quality perceived by artists to be inherent in acts of creation in our time. [...] It is an objective reflection of the indefiniteness of the function of art in present-day society and the possibility of the displacement of art by newer forms of expression, emotional stimulation and communication. It relates to the awareness that art today survives in the intersections between the popular media, handicraft and the applied sciences; and that the term 'art' has become useless as a means for setting apart a certain category of fabrications. Given the speed and sophistication with which the formal characteristics of new art modes are appropriated by the artisans of the commercial media and semi-media (architecture, highway design, etc.), the art object, including masterpieces of the past, exists under constant threat of deformation and loss of identity. [...] This can only mean that the art object persists without a secure identity, as what I have called an 'anxious object.' ('Am I a masterpiece,' it must ask itself, 'or an assemblage of junk?') Its nature is contingent upon recognition by the current communion of the knowing. Art does not exist. It *declares* itself[2]

Rosenberg's remarks usually found their occasion in the current situation of modern painting. He is, of course, famous in particular for coining the name 'action' painters for certain of the abstract expressionists of the New York art scene. But his essays are really reflections on the condition of modernist art after World War II in general. Rosenberg discerned even better than Adorno how the eclectic esthetics of modernism and its art objects were being readily assimilated and promoted by galleries and museums and were sponsored by the U.S. Government for exhibitions abroad and included in mass magazines such as *Life* as symbols of *the* American Way of Life.[3]

2 Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982 [1st ed. 1964]), pp. 17-18; italics in original.

3 "Unhappily for an art whose value depends on the authenticity of its mysteries, the new movement appeared at the same moment that Modern Art *en masse* 'arrived' in America: Modern architecture, not only for sophisticated homes, but for corporations, municipalities, synagogues; Modem furniture and crockery in mail-order catalogues; Modern vacuum cleaners, can openers; beer-ad 'mobiles' – along with reproductions and articles on advanced painting in big-circulation magazines. *Enigmas for everybody.* Art in America today is not only nouveau, it's news." H. Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (London: Paladin, 1970 [1st ed. 1959]), p. 45; italics in original).

The proliferation of galleries and museums in New York presented modern art as "event" and thus created the ready-made audience that enabled "some artists, and perhaps the best ones, to pass from unacceptability to acceptance without an intervening period of appreciation," as John Ashbery quipped in *Avant-Garde Art,* eds.

The language of Rosenberg's esthetics evoked a sense of permanent crisis, in which social and historical events became a question of the possibility of authentic self-expression. For him this meant that the painters of the New, if they were to reject both the mass market junk culture as well as the trendy, new audience of institutionalized modernism, must create "private myths."[4] Myths that were created by a ritualistically tinged dramatic enactment of the "artist's psychic state or tension."[5] Although Rosenberg couched his dramatistic ("action") esthetics in an existentialist vocabulary ("anxiety" was a translation of "angst"), he also linked it to a familiar Emersonian and Melvillian romanticism of adventure and conquest transformed into spiritual autobiography.[6]

> Art as action rests on the enormous assumption that the artist accepts as real only that which he is in the process of creating. 'Except the soul has divested itself of the love of created things...' The artist works in a condition of open possibility, risking, to follow Kierltegaard, the anguish of the aesthetic, which accompanies possibility lacking in reality. To maintain the force to refrain from settling anything, he must exercise in himself a constant No.[7]

The artist himself tends to replace his art work[8] – as well as become the ultimate judge of the authenticity of his action, namely the fact that it is not a reproduction of junk art – kitsch, as Clement Greenberg named it –

John Ashbery and Thomas Hess (New York, 1968, pp. 181-82; quoted in David Trotter, *The Making of the Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 150). The Musenm of Modern Art bought abstract expressionists as soon as they were exhibited in galleries, e.g. Pollock from 1943 onwards, cf. Diana Crane, *The Transformalion of the Avant-Garde: The New York Art World, 1940-1985* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 121. Cf. also Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983)

4 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New,* p. 42.

5 *ibid.* 38 (footnote). See also Rosenherg's essay on Pollock, "The Mythic Act," included in his *Artworks and Packages* (New York: Dell, 1969)

6 'The American vanguard painter took to the white expanse of the canvas as Melville's Ishmael took to the sea. "And, the new (i.e. 'action') painters take up 'the discipline of the Open Road of risk that leads to the farther side of the object and outer spaces of the consciousness." ('The American Action Painters' (1952); repr. in *The Tradition of the New,* pp. 41, 43.

7 *ibid.,* 42. The passage articulates and anticipates the Emersonian poetics of "a place elsewhere" and "the performing self' that flourished in the 1960s and 70s in Richard Poirier and Tony Tanner's essays.

8 "The innovation of Action Painting was to dispense with the representation of the state in favor of *enacting* it in physical movement.[...] In its passage on the canvas each ... line can establish the actual movement of the artist's body as an aesthetic statement." *(Tradition of the New,* 38, footnote)

or already institutionalized Masterworlts. Rosenberg's seminal essay ("The American Action Painters") is itself informed by the anxiety about how fluid the line between "apocalyptic wallpaper" (he must have thought of some of Pollock's work) and the genuinely transformative action art is. How anxious the essay is about how small the gap is between the status-ridden new gallery – and museum audience for modern art is, and the coterie of the knowing few (typically fellow-artists) who alone are competent to appreciate the genuinely new art making. The idea that modernist (i.e. avant-garde) art-making involves violent acts of de-creation (cf. Rosenberg's Melvillean "No" in the quotation above) not only readily dresses itself in a revival of romantic American frontier mytho-poetics – as also seen explicitly in Rosenberg's "Parable of American Painting" (1954), a humorous companion piece to "The American Action Painters[Mg] – but in general in images and situations involving violence, if only verbal, as in sardonic satire.

Rosenberg's friend, the writer, pedagogue, social planner, anarchist, and much else besides, Paul Goodman, captured the nervous restlessness produced by a characteristic mix of boredom and apocalyptic fears and longings. In the ominously entitled observation on the American urban character, "Modern War is Mass-Suicide without Guiltiness," Paul Goodman noted the paradox that despite unprecedented safety after the world war, the American dream life was troubled by feelings of anger and destruction:

> Never before has there existed such a state of non-violence, safety, and sterility. ... [But] psychologically the picture is more dubious. There is (...) little satisfaction, and there are signs of *acute anxiety.* The general bewilderment and insecurity of isolated individuals in a too-big society destroy self-confidence and initiative, and without these there cannot be active enjoyment. [...] (P)eople make and do nothing for themselves, except symbolically. The quantity of sexuality is great, the de-sensitizing is extreme. [...] Everywhere People are disappointed. Even on the surface, then, there is reason to smash things up, to destroy not this or that part of the system (e.g., the upper class), but the whole system en bloc, for it has no further promise, it has proved unassimilable in its existing form. The desire for final satisfaction, for orgasm, is interpreted as the wish for total self-destruction. It is inevitable, then, that there should be a public dream of universal disaster [...] At the same time, however, all overt expression of destructiveness, annihilation, anger, combativeness, is suppressed in the interests of civil order. Also the feeling of anger is inhibited and even repressed. People are sensible, tolerant, polite, and cooperative in being pushed around.[10]

9 Repr. in *The Tradition of the New.*

10 Frederick Perls, R.F. Hefferline, Paul Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy* (New York: Dell, n.d. [1st ed 1951]), pp. 347,348.

The compulsive urge to smash things up, and smash oneself up in the process, became more than a metaphor for an esthetics directed against boredom or assimilation of the once new in art-making. It became a life-style for artists who refused to make a distinction between themselves and the art-object.

2.

Writers other than Goodman and Rosenberg noted the numbness produced by the pretension that nothing had happened, that is that everyone's life was normal, and even affluent, and yet the apparently perverse need to throw away the strangling sense of the old moral and esthetic obligations and restraints, now felt as merely sentimental or habitual gestures or routines of no consequence. Among the many young men who wanted to be writers in order to break through to real and passionate "emotions" was John Clellon Holmes. His New York memoirs of the 1940s record the impressions of a young, imaginative, self-preoccupied student, with ambitions of writing a novel (suggested by the very fact of keeping a journal). "One wants desperately to feel things, to feel them cleanly and hardly, before one has to knuckle down to the cold dark age that is ahead," Holmes had confided to his unpublished journal in September 1948. He was trying to not forget all those horrors which ought to have made a difference to civilization after the war, which he felt everyone else was trying to put behind them. "Cominform" he bitterly called the ruling cast of the American mind in the late 1940s.[11]

Aesthetically, this became a general dissatisfaction with the conventions of "perfection" summarized in notions of the exactly right word, as well as with Jamesian demands for framed, "dramatized" narration as a criterion of realistic representation. These came to represent a smooth professionalism dictated by earlier masters and the pedagogues that transmitted their values in college. For writers like Bellow, Ellison, Mailer and Kerouac these conventions were increasingly

11 *Nothing to Declare* (New York: Dutton, 1967), 195, 190

felt as formal restraints. They wanted more than craft; they wanted their own experiences let into their writing. Norman Mailer told an interviewer that "craft", in the Jamesian sense, is too often a way of avoiding a "reality which might open into more and more anxiety and so present a deeper and deeper view of the abyss."[12]

Kerouac gave up what he felt was an imitation of Thomas Wolfe's manner in his novel of an American working class adolescent's way to New York Bohemian life, in *The Town and the City,* and instead embraced an esthetics of apparent spontaneity which must necessarily be conducted in the first person. In an interview, Kerouac once stated that he began as a writer in that tradition, spending his youth, "writing slowly with revisions and endless re-hashing speculation and deleting and got so I was writing one sentence a day, and the sentence had no FEELING. Goddamit, FEELING is what I like in art, not CRAFTINESS and the hiding of feelings."[13] Experience should not be subject to form, at least not the form dictated by the standards of James or Joyce. Novelists like Kerouac and poets like Ginsberg wanted to subordinate the reflective aspect of writing – the idea that a novel is a controlled, framed recreation of anterior events – to an attempt to create the immediacy of ongoing experience itself. Such ideas are associated with the lyric genre. Kerouac's writings after *The Town and the City* represent a characteristic swing toward the authority of subjective experience rendered in picaresque or rhapsodic form in which the very act of writing is foregrounded, often moving towards transgressive or ecstatic states .[14]

There is apparent in both Kerouac's and Mailer's rejection of form (i.e. as understood by James, Flaubert, Dos Passos, or Wolfe) a sense of imminent violence. To re-create a sense of raw immediacy of modem urban living involved not only esthetic abuse of earlier dominant, now academicized models of literary form, but also the need to explore excesses of subjective experience and action as material for writing – writing understood as drama or performance rather than as a record of anterior events.[15]

12 Quoted by Thomas Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press: 1991), 55.

13 Quoted by Schaub, pp. 53-54.

14 Cf. Schaub, p. 83.

15 It is interesting in this connection to think of the popular image of the Greenwich Village 'scene' in the 1950s: an anonymous young man beating a bongo drum in the street, or in a coffee house, perhaps

Kerouac makes the point in a brief moment in *On the Road* in which Sal Paradise is looking at Dean Moriarty's photos of family and friends – a nicely framed image, but as such in absolute contrast to the actual, lived experience:

> I realized these were all the snapshots which our children would look at someday with wonder, thinking their parents had.lived smooth, well-ordered, stablilized-within-the-photo lives and got up in the morning to walk proudly on the sidewalks of life, never dreaming the raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness.[16]

The "raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives" was however not so apparent in Kerouac's novels or John Clellon Homes' early "beat-generation" novel, *Go* (1952). It is, however, apparent in the somewhat neglected Chandler Brossard's work, which Mailer once paid a backhanded compliment in *Advertisements for Myself* for working along the same lines as he was.

The Double View [17](1960) deals with group of New Yorlcers who "drift" in various senses. Several of them have or seek secret experiences – or at the very least entertain various sinister or perverse desires that transgress their meek, conforming daylight personalities – fantasies that could turn into esthetic expression but in reality turn into self-destructive, " mad acts.

The ruling metaphor of the book is the condition of Carter who has committed himself to a locked psychiatric ward, apperently after having attacked, beaten or raped his wife. Insanity in the form of schizophrenia – understood in the novel as an amorphous or unconscious wish to be somebody else – is present in mild degrees in two conventional examples of outsiders, the Negro Hawkins and the Jew Phillips. But it is clearly present in the character Harry who challenges the "niceness" of his friends and acquaintances: "Niceness is sick, neurotic, and not, as you

accompanying a poetry reading by somebody equally anonymous. Ralph Ellison shrewdly heard a quality of "amateurish ineffectuality" in the style of one of the heroes of that scene – Charlie Parker. An amateurishness that Ellison diagnoses as typical of people who have artistic yearnings but not the talent or patience to the submit to the hard, sober work it involves as well as the necessity of separating the man from the performer or entertainer, the self from the 'work' produced. ("On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz", 1962; collected in *Slzndow and Act,* New York: Random House, 1964)

16 Viking compass ed.1972, 254; cf. also Schaub, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

17 Chandler Brossard, *The Double View* (New York: The Dial Press, 1960), p. 188.

seem to think, 'human."' (32) Harry, a character like a Dostoevskian nihilist, as well as a prototype of Mailer's "psychopathic" hipster (Brossard's novel was written before Mailer's "White Negro" essay), is the most obvious schizophrenic of all the characters. Where Carter has hidden himself in the mask of mental insanity, and the others only indulge in outrageous activities when drunk and then with a sense of shame, Harry lives the life of a street criminal in another part of town. The self-destructive bent of his double life becomes clear when he participates in the gang rape of a woman friend with an accidental Negro acquaintance – a college professor readily persuaded to become a hoodlum in the course of what appears to be a single conversation! – and is pursued and killed by the police.

Women – mainly minor characters – aspire to become sexual outlaws. Margaret – a socialite woman raped at the end of the novel – has for some time paid a young couple picked off the street at random to perform private live shows in her apartment before her in the course of which her own personality "disintegrates" in frenzied masturbation.

Although transgression is described coolly and satirically, the desire of all characters to really "know themselves" is quite evident.[18] And for most it entails going beyond timidity and decency in acts of violence. Only by submitting oneself, as it were, to a regimen of repetitive, outrageous acts can an authentic self be achieved. The idea that one's life is phony and dissipated in "nervously" therapeutic talk is the background to the transgressive acts which do not really change the person as much as create the sense of a "double", or secret, self.

Only the "madman" Carter is allowed to become very nearly a murderer (of his wife and his friend who have become secret, guilty lovers) and yet abandon the urge at the very last minute in order to determine a return to his childhood – "he would return to the particular fragrant spawning street of his childhood and begin there to search for the person he had been" – a move that the novel in no way has tried, or will try, to make real. It remains a desire for an innocence that the rest of the novel has denied exists. (188)

18 Dan Wakefield has Richard Lingeman – in the 1950s, a drop-out of law school, later editor and biographer – say that being in analysis was a "preoccupation with ... what people called finding yourself." (*Wakefield,* op. *cit.*), p. 216.

Brossard's earlier novel, *Who Walk in Darkness* (1952) explored another group of "chattering" Greenwich Village bohemians and would-be artists among sullen Italian working-class neighbors ready to beat up "fairies" and Negroes on the least pretext of provocation.[19] In Brossard's novel characters are drawn toward the "exotic," but authentic, Puerto-Rican mambo dance hall in Spanish Harlem.[20] Brossard's novel gave an early example of a character type, an intellectual with another double life on the margins symbolized by the obligatory generational trip to Harlem. In Brossard's novel there is an entirely minor, yet unforgettable, character who is an extreme version of double lives. He is appropriately called an "underground man" (as in Dostoevsky) – a "spiritual desperado" whose ideal is to "look like a street corner hoodlum and be the finest lyric poet in America at the same time."(Ch. xi)

It goes without saying that such desperados do not respect racial boundaries. In LeRoi Jones' short story "The Screamers," the protagonist, restless and dissatisfied with upward mobility via education, seeks out the black working-class dance-halls in Newark where local tenor and organ combos electrify' working-class negro youth out of their ordinary, timid selves by working them into an apparent frenzy of excitement on the dance floor – or so it looks to the narrator and protagonist of Jones' story, who is one version of the pale-face Negroes who populate Jones' early writings. One whose consciousness has been overloaded with education, reading, and scruple. Envious, he wants to share the early sexual and criminal adventures of the hip street-comer boys:

> I was too quiet to become a murderer, and too used to extravagance for their skinny lyrics. They mentioned neither cocaine nor Bach, which was my reading, and the flaw of that society. I disappeared into the slums, and fell in love with violence, and invented for myself a mysterious economy of need.[21]

Jones' surrealist prose enacts the outrageousness that enables the narrator to lose his thinly 'civilized' composure. In the drama *Dutchman,* another pale-face Negro whose life is made by books is confronted by a white

19 Cf. Diane di Prima's unreliable *Memoirs of a Beatnik* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1988), passim.

20 Aatole Broyard, who is fictively portrayed as an aficionado of such places in Brossard's novel, has given his own account as one-time cicerone to Delmore Schwastz and Dwight Macdonald in an Spanish Harlem dance hall, *Kafka was the Rage* (New York, 1993, Vintage Bks ed.1997), pp. 116ff.

21 LeRoi Jones, *Tales* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 74.

woman on the subway. A similar verbal assault to that in the story is let loose as he tells her off for the current admiration of Bessie Smith and Charlie Parker by white Greenwich bohemians:

> Old bald-headed four-eyed ofays popping their fingers...and don't know what they're doing. The say, 'I love Bessie Smith.' And don't even understand that Bessie Smith is saying, 'Kiss my ass, kiss my black unruly ass.' [....] Charlie Parker? Charlie Parker. All the hip white boys scream for Bird. And Bird saying, 'Up your ass, feeble-minded ofay! Up your ass.'[22]

Clay continues to harangue the white woman, his future executioner, with a "theory" that jazz displaces a murderous rage to kill white people.

Jones held similar ideas in his own name. In his jazz writings it is claimed that bop and "free jazz," as *Afro-America* genres of jazz, were acts of symbolic violence which aimed to transform a (black) self imprisoned in anxiety and shame.[23] In retrospect, Jones' jazz polemics will be read, as Harold Rosenberg's art writings must be, as displaced arguments and assertions about the American artist (particularly the American Negro artist) in a particular period: American culture after World War II. Still, there is no denying that Jones' work at the time was read by many as establishing an authentic discourse about jazz that white writing about jazz had held in trust until the real thing came along.[24] Jones' views had a strong impact on the reception of what was then known as the "new thing" in jazz, particularly in the 1960s when

r

22 LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman* (New Yorlc: Morrow, 1964), pp. 34-35.

23 Jones talks about Coltrane and Rollins as the "new generation's private assassins" because they kill off the old "cho dal jazz" and so free jazz for "free emotional statement." *(Blues People,* New Yorlc: Morrow, 1963), p. 228 And in *Black Music* – a collection of his music "reviews",Jones states that, "New Black Music is this: Find the self, then kill it." (New Yorlc: Morrow, 1967), p. 176.

24 The entry in *The* New *Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) for "Baralca" speaks of Baraka's "profund influence on jazz criticism." Ekkehard Jost, for one, in his "social history" of jazz asserts that (so-called) West Coast jazz was a style of jazz that relied heavily on composition at the expense of improvisation and therefore removed jazz from its Afro-American sources. It was jazz for the white middle class which consumed jazz as a sign of being modern *(Sozialgeschichte des Jazz in den USA,* (Frankfurt a.M., 1982), p. 153. Ralph Ellison famously thonght that Jones didn't know the first thing about jazz before bop, and despite Jones rebellious rhetoric Ellison correctly recognized at once that Jones took on board a familiar assumption of white jazz criticism, viz. that jazz is an "expression" of the social situation of the black population (in Jones' case a group limited to young black males) in American culture and civilization. Cf. Ellison's review of *Blues People* collected in his *Shadow and Act.*

jazz musicians were linked with some of the activities of Black cultural nationalism.[25]

The ambivalent relationship between the respective roles of improvisation and composition in jazz is one way of naming an issue that Jones addressed in social and racial terms. One of the most characteristic tendencies of post-war jazz, although temporary, was that white dance bands began to incorporate the harmonic language as well as the instrumentation of "art music" into jazz. "Boyd (Raeburn) meets Stravinsly" was a coyly trendy, yet symptomatic title of one such record from 1946. Stravinsly himself, of course, wrote "Ebony Concerto" (1945) for Woody Herman's band. Serial techniques of composition derived from Berg and Schoenberg were employed in compositions and arrangements by Gil Melle, Duane Tatro and others.[26]

It is interesting that the remarkable collaborations between Gil Evans, the former Claude Thornhill arranger, and Miles Davis, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but going back to the nonet recordings in 1949 under Davis' name, are virtually ignored by Jones. Racial and sexual stereotyping is brought in to save Miles Davis who is said to be committed to the blues and who only *uses* the "purple lushness of the Thornhill sound" of Evans' arrangements, while, presumably, in Thornhill the sound has no end beyond an effete, enervated estheticism.[27]

To be fair to Jones, one has to acknowledge that the standard history of jazz at the time (there weren't many), Marshall Stearns' *The Story of Jazz* (1956), speculated about how European ("classical") music and jazz would fertilize each other. And the general strategy of Stearns' book suggested that the development of jazz was parallel to European art music, indicated by "increasing complexity", the horizon of which is the "stone wall of atonality, as in the music of Viennese serial music". Although Stearns took a rather dim view of some of the more familiar

25 I have in mind jazz produced in the 1960s by the Impulse and ESP labels mainly; for example late Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra and others.

26 For example, *Gil's Guests* (Prestige, 1957); Duane Tatro, *Jazz for Moderns* (Contemporary, 1954, 1955)

27 *Blues People,* 209. The fact that Columbia may well have planned *Miles Ahead,* Porgy *and Bess,* and *Sketches of Spain* as "mood music" (a contemporary genre of restrained, pleasant or sentimental baclcgrounds for slow dancing or intimate conversation), as Davis maintains in his autobiography doesn't mean we have to listen to them in accordance with managerial sales strategies. It should be added that producer George Avakian remembers the plans for *Miles Ahead* (1957) somewhat differently in the notes to the reissue of *The Birth of the Third Stream* (Sony 1996).

"fusion" attempts, such as Gershwin's "Rhapsody," Stravinsky's "Ebony Concerto," Graettinger's "City of Glass" and Liebermann's "Concerto for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra," he did put Tristano, Brubeck and the Modern Jazz Quartet at the end of his book as examples of how jazz was "assimilating more and more elements of classical music."[28]

One has, however, to consider Jones' scepticism about the fusion of jazz and "symphonic" art music in the historical context suggested by Stearns' reflections at the end The *Story of Jazz* about the role of jazz in American civilization. Already in the race-conscious 1930s, jazz had been raised as an issue by composers looking for a music which transcended race; only such music could be truly American. The young Jewish-American composer and musician, Leonard Bernstein, had argued in 1939 that no one "race" and its music could represent the "heterogeneosusly American." Only when the music of a race has been spread and absorbed beyond its racial "habitat" can it become the foundation of an American music.[29] Negro music, i.e. jazz, is acknowledged as a source of origin, but must be transformed or worked into a music which uses it as one, to be sure very important, ingredient. Hence Bernstein's thesis was devoted to Aaron Copland and his – incidental – uses of the "rhumba rhythm" (i.e. the grouping of an 8-pulse bar into 3+3+2; familiar in many African-American genres of music, including jazz); rather than, for example, to Ellington.

Stearns' history was committed to a developmental strategy that unavoidably implied: value judgments – particularly when in 1956 he ended with John Lewis' fusion music of baroque and blues for the MJQ.[30]

Jones was deeply ambivalent about the dignified chamber music and concert-hall appearance of these four musicians. Only John Lewis' blues credentials save him in Jones' eyes.[31] Jones tended to focus on the aspect

28 Marshall Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, ed. 1970), p. 326.

29 See Bernstein's Harvard B.A. thesis in music, "The Absorption of Race Elements into American Music" (1939), in Leonard Bernstein, *Findings* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 33-99.

30 "The Modern Jazz Quartet *was* the fifties," Dan Wakefield bas a fellow-writer reminisce (in Wakefield, op. *cit.*, p. 302). As for the history of jazz histories, see the seminal essay by Scott DeVaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum,* pp. 25, 525-560.

31 "Lewis' atttempts to 'combine' classical music and jazz have more often than not been frightening examples of what the *final* dilution of Afro-American musical tradition might be," (Jones, op. *cit.*, p. *229).* Cf. also John Edgar Wideman's short story, "Concert": "Why are they constumed as pallbearers? Why the morticians' manners? Have they been pulling legs so long they don't have one left to stand on?" (collected in *The Stories of John Edgar Wideman,* (New York: Pantheon, 1992).

that Stearns only brought up in an aside, namely that jazz gained "social status" by this apparent turn towards "classical forms," and generalized it as a symptom of those standards of respectability that high modernism had succumbed to by being accepted by museums and colleges, and against which any avant-garde artist must struggle. Jones took it for granted that the Negro artists necessarily must be avant-garde or nothing.

> (Cecil) Taylor and (Ornette) Coleman know the music of Anton Webern and are responsive to it intellectually, as they would be to any stimulating art form. But they are not responsible to it emotionally, as an extra-musical catalytic form. The emotional significance of most Negro music has been its separation from the emotional and philosophical attitudes of classical music. In order for the jazz musician to utilize most expressively any formal classical techniques, it is certainly necessary that these techniques be subjected to the emotional and philosophical attitudes of Afro-American music – that these techniques be used not canonized. Most third stream jazz, it seems, has tended to canonize classical techniques rather than use them to shape the expressive fabric of a 'new' jazz music.[32]

It is therefore not surprising that Jones' *Blues People* resonates throughout with a division of jazz into authentic versus inauthentic jazz (by which he meant the then "new" jazz.) Jones wrote a sort of Hegelian history of jazz – one in which the real character of jazz finally comes to self-consciousness with the generation of Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor. To assimilate jazz to the criteria of compositional music associated with the concert hall repertory was for Jones tantamount to succumbing to the very values that his character Clay fell victim to. Jones chose Be-bop jazz to incarnate authentic black jazz. In his autobiography feeling an outsider to mainstream civilization is fed by an idea that being "outside" is being "weird", intelligent and belonging to a secret society. Jones has never concealed the deep and lasting impression of the world of his early listening and reading of the comic-book heroes with their dull routine daylight personalities and their secret identites and powers of those who "know."

32 *Blues People,* p. *230.* Jones' position in these years was that of the poets whose poetics were announced by, say, Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" (1950) and in general by those roundly referred to as the "new American poetry" by Donald Allen. Cf. also Werner Sollors, *Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a 'Populist Modernism'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978)

We did not want to be beat up by headwhippers or have our hats blocked by the Dukes or Geeks. We did not want to get some litle girl "jailbait" pregnant and end up tied to our mutual frustration; we did not want to fail school or get thrown out or have to go get a job and just work. We did not want to be from the South or be so poor people felt sorry for us or talked bad about us. Where I was comin from, the brown side, we just wanted to keep steppin. The black had shaped us, the yellow had taunted us, the white had terrified and alienated us. And cool meant, to us, to be silent in the face of all that, silent yet knowing. It meant knowledge. It meant being smart, intelligent too. So we hooked up the weirdness and the intelligence. Dizzy's hornrim Bebop glasses, the artist's tam, these spelled some inner deepness to us. It was a way into ourselves further, and sometimes because we went into ourselves, we seemed quiet on the street.[33]

"Weirdness" became a short-hand term for a shared, secret knowledge whose signs included the apparently perverse pleasure taken in the arrogant, "hostile" music of the boppers. The writer Gilbert Sorrentino reminisced about bebop to the same effect:

[Be-bop in 1945] was, probably more than at any other time in its history, including the present, absolutely non-popular: and it adherents and devotees formed a cult, which perhaps more than any other force in the intellectual life of our time, brought together young people who were tired of the spurious. It was even more potent because it was impossible for those who hated it to parody it. You had to **know;** if you didn't know, you were on the other side, a square or a fig.[34]

Writers such as Gilbert Sorrentino or LeRoi Jones remember their youthful idolization of bop as a strategy of defiance of the middle-class world's conception of art as symbol of status.[35] On the other hand, "progressive" and "cool" jazz styles contemporary with bop were terms that besides being synonymous with "modern" focused on different aspects of the jazz played by musicians in their 20s. But Sorrentino and Jones tended to emphasize the racial connotations suggested by the commercial promotion of certain white musicians, particularly Kenton and Brubeck, whom they dismissed as spurious dilutions of bop.[36]

33 Baraka/Jones, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka* (New York: Freundlich, 1984), pp. 61-62.

34 A "fig" was also known, derogatively, as a 'moldy fig,' i.e. an adherent of another genre of "authentic" jazz often called "dixieland." Gilbert Sorrentino, "Remembrances of Bop in New York, 1945-1950," *Kulchur,* vol. 3, no.10, summer 1963, p. 73.

35 Although T.W. Adorno's analysis of jazz has deservedly received a thorough trashing by most commentators, there is no denying that he was early on to the inverted image that culls and coteries provide to middle class aspirations and pretensions. See "Perennial Fashion – Jazz", in *Prisms,* (London: Neville Spearman, 1967).

36 In a review of a record released under Gil Evans' name, *Into the Hot,* Jones only praised Cecil Taylor's

The term "progressive" was appropriated for the music associated with Stan Kenton's arranger Pete Rugolo in the late 1940s by the music industry and press. The term was appropriated by Capitol Records to launch Kenton's label career. Kenton himself, who evidently said many pompous things about his music, on a number of occasions thought that "progressive" jazz was a reflection of the times; that it expressed the "nervous frustration and thwarted development" of modern man.[37] Jones, of course, argued that the usage of "progress" in jazz history and criticism measured distance from the briar patch of black music traditions. For him Kenton was straight out of the experiments with "symphonic" jazz by Paul Whiteman and others in the 1920s which launched among others Gershwin's career as composer of jazz concertos.[38] Jones thought the music of such bands as Raeburn's and Kenton's "kitsch:" "pseudo-serious" or "intellectualized" music for insecure upwardly-mobile college students – including black ones. It is not unthinkable that Jones was particularly hard on Kenton because at Jones' own college, Howard University, Kenton was a 'big favorite.' One of Jones' fellow-students told Jones "how terribly hostile ... Charlie Parker was."[39]

Jazz has to a large extent been received in terms of the myth (or cult) of the improvising soloist of genius: Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane. The industry looks annually for a new young saxophone star. Hence the "scholarly" definition of jazz insists on

contribution. Three compositions by John Carisi, the fine composer of "Israel," are dismissed in a final contemptuous parenthesis as "cool progressive," that is music by white film studio musicians, the sort employed by Stan Kenton. *Black Music*, (New York: Morrow, 1967), pp. 104-109.

37 Quoted in *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, eds. Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff (1955); (New York: Dover, 1966), pp. 384-85.

38 Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

39 *Ibid.* p. 207. The angry motivation for writing *Blues People* might well have been prompted by this experience. Jones presumably was himself once an immature young man eager to dress himself with the values of the trendy and smart educated young men. At the time he writes this book he must have felt shame at his former betrayal of what he later, that is in the book, came to praise as the freely emotional blues values of authentic jazz which are primarily represented by improvisatory musicians of the black bop and the "new thing" persuasions. Any suggestion of wanting to improve oneself through the established art curriculum, which often ruled out jazz in the music departments, smacked of the old stoical virtues of suffering and humility of American Christian Negro civilization Jones became determined to stamp out of his own writings as so much effete and neurotic 'whitening.'

"improvisation"as a generic characteristic. Hence the poetic mythologies around the 1940s and 50s musicians as rebellious culture heroes.[40]

Before World War II interest in extended composition (that is formats dispensing with the chorus structure of most jazz playing) primarily associated with Morton and Ellington, but had not been terribly well tolerated by audiences and critics.[41] The responsibility for the cult of improvisation lies (also) with the avant-garde esthetics of spontaneous performance that we have looked at above with Rosenberg and Jones as examples. Of course there were also the romantic theories of the character of American culture and civilization which received renewed impetus after American victory in World War II, and from which no artist, black or white, performing in the period under examination has been able to escape. There is, too, always the pressure of the record industry. For every record producer that has "allowed" the recording of a jazz composition involving some complexity and, in particular, extended rehearsal time for more than five men, there have been nine who said: "play the blues."[42]

It is dangerous to simplify the causes of the emergence of a particular tendency in jazz to the activities of one or two individuals. Nevertheless, the activities of Gunther Schuller and John Lewis had much to do with providing the institutional framework for extended jazz composition. To reduce the issue to a question of racial dilution is to slander the black musicians, who besides Lewis included J.J. Johnson, George Russell and in particular Charles Mingus who were already involved in such efforts.[43]

40 'When I think of the 'spirit' of jazz I mean improvisation and the willingness to improvise. In and out of control at once, a conduit of/for invention. Present tense. Awake and alert to the cues and clues the music allows. Receiving and transmitting. At once." (David Meltzer, in *Reading* Jazz, ed. D. Meltzer; S.F: Mercury House, 1993), p. 178.

See also Kenneth Rexroth, "Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation" (1957); collected in Rexroth, *World Outside the Window* (New York: New Directions, 1987); and Ralph Ellison, "On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz". (*Shadow and Act*).

41 The debate following Ellington's "Black, Brown and Beige" (1943) is an obvious example. The price paid for snch hostility has been considerable: music by, for example, James P. Johnson and Charles Mingus, has been permanently lost – scores have either been destroyed or not performed.

42 See Gil Evans' comment on recording for Bob Weinstock of Prestige Records, in H. Mandel, "Gil Evans: the Lone hanger", *downbeat,* vol. 51, April 1984, pp. 20-22. For another humiliating example of the "good-enough-for-jazz" amateur producers that first-class jazz musicians often had to humor in the studios in the 1950s, see David Amram, *Vibrations* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 265ff.

43 Mingus is perhaps *the* major jazz composer after World War II. His glaring omission in *Blues People* is evidence how committed to Olsonian avant-garde esthetics Jones was. The 1967-essay "The Changing Same (R&B and the new Black Music)", in *Black Music,* 1967, p. 195, in which Jones mentions Mingus' "Pithecantus Erectus" as example of "freed orchestral form," tries to make up for the earlier deficiency.

The fact, however, that white arrangers and musicians such as Pete Rugolo, Bill Russo, and Jimmy Giuffre were also ambitiously taking part in such "experiments", plus the fact that Gunther Schuller was the most articulate spokesperson for what became known as "third stream" music meant that 1) third stream was taken to be an extension of West Coast "cool" jazz; and 2) it was that because both Russo and Giuffre were known for their work for Stan Kenton, whose band was identified with southern California, ie. Hollywood.[44] So the discussion of the role of "extended" composition in jazz (Schuller's phrase) became a much debated issue in jazz circles in the 1950s. The issue at stake can be simplified (in Schuller's terms) to this: Is larger-form composition possible in jazz? That is, is a form that extends or renounces the chorus structure of theme-variations-theme format possible to integrate with improvisation in jazz?

In practice large-form composition entailed the ambition of bringing in the string section of the symphony orchestra. And the problem here often boiled down to a question of whether the strings be made to "swing" in four-four time (carried by bass and drums/cymbal) as was the conventional understanding of the jazz beat which was continued into the bop period. The results in such contemporary recordings as Charlie Parker with strings were not encouraging: strings, and the music as a whole, came close to the saccharine manner of "light" music.

Often composers, like Schuller himself in "Conversation" (between the MJQ and the Beaux Arts String Quartet), resorted to another possibility by writing a "classical" part for the strings and an "improvised" part for the jazzers. As already noted, the jazz press was not convinced of the validity of these attempts to "integrate" art music and jazz.[45]

44 The term "third stream" was invented by Schuller in 1957 "for a type of music which, through improvisation or written coinposition or both, synthesizes the essential characteristics and techniques of conteinporary Western art music and various ethnic or vernacular musics." In 1957 Schuller had mostly Western art music and jazz in mind, though. He distinguishes it from "symphonic jazz" (for example, Gershwin), in that the latter lacks improvisation (Gunter Schuller, "Third Stream", *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz,* ed. Barry Kernfeld; New Yorlc: Macmillan, 1988). See also Schuller's other reflections on the topic in *Musings,* (New Yorlc: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986). As for Kenton his popularity with fans was not matched by that of the jazz press. "Kenton: Is He Prophet or Fraud" ran a *downbeat* headline (March 7, 1952). The journalist (Leonard Feather) went on to sample a range of opinions among contemporary arrangers and bandleaders which ran from cool acknowledgeinentof the Kenton band's "professionalism" to outright dismissal.

45 Besides Jones, see also Martin Williams, "The Alliances of Jazz", *downbeat yearbook,* Chicago 1962, pp. 29-30. Also Max Harrison, A *Jazz Retrospect* (London: Quartet, 1991 (ed.), pp. 177ff.

The reception of more ambitious jazz works was then, to recapitulate, largely measured against what was considered authentic jazz, the small-band jazz represented by bebop with its heavy emphasis on improvisation on the standards and blues, and a swinging rhythm in four-four time in which the bass usually was made to state the beat explicitly. The longer, composed works that involved jazz band and strings with less room, perhaps even none, for improvisation, were basically seen as Euro-American importations by the jazz community as well as by the New York avant-garde artists. The implication of control and restraint of "spontaneous" emotion conveyed by scored composition and arrangement, were up against the esthetic slogans and manifestos which advocated breaking "frames", i.e. in contrast to what were perceived as institutionalized, genteel ideas and practices of form, including those of the first generation of high modernists and their Southern followers, Tate and Ransom.[46]

Among the early examples of "third stream" jazz Schuller had mentioned Kenton's recording of Robert Graettinger's "City of Glass" (Capitol, 1951) – a long composition in four movements lasting about 16 minutes.[47] Interestingly, Jones was aware of this work, but dismissed it with the unadventurous opinion that it sounded "vaguely similar to what contemporary classical composers were doing," and therefore could not be jazz. In this case Jones simply echoed the *downbeat* review of Graettinger's work, which stated that there was no jazz in it to speak of, but "it sure is as 'modern' as you can get. It's out of Schoenbergian and Bartokian blood-lines...," and accordingly reviewed it not in the jazz but in the "classics" section.[48]

Capitol Records is to a large extent associated with names like Frank Sinatra, Ray Anthony, Billy May and Nelson Riddle, that is highly professional, suave big band dance music. But from a jazz point of view,

46 See the introductory sections on literature and art above.

47 See note 45

48 Jones, *op. cit.,* p. 206; *downbeat,* January 28, 1953, p. 5.

49 In one of the few studies of the recording of jazz, *Jazz* on Record (London: Elm Tree Books, 1988), the author Brian Priestley is consistently condescending to Capitol's ventures into jazz, which he beats as "flirts", Kenton as worse than the pretentious Paul Whiteman; the Tristano sides as "fatally weakened" by the exclusion of the cross-rhythmsof black jazz; and Davis' 1949 sides with Evans, Mulligan, and Lewis as 'overpraised' and a 'blind alley' for the trumpeter (*op. cit,* pp. 103,104). That is, as they say, one way of putting it.

it is the employment of Pete Rugolo, Kenton's chief arranger in the late 1940s, that is more interesting. He produced some of the most adventurous jazz in the 1940s, including the Miles Davis nonet recordings, Lennie Tristano's "Crosscurrent" sessions with Koniz and Marsh, and was, I take it, also involved in the "City of Glass" recordings in 1951.[49]

"City of Glass" was written for the Kenton band. Kenton himself was generally regarded as a fraud by the "serious" jazz press as we have noted. As such he is also a classic example of the ambiguous line between kitsch and authentic art that became an existential issue for the American artist in these years. It must be recalled that Kenton's prestige during the first half of the 1950s seems incredible in this light – as well as in retrospect (there is still no serious writing of any length about Kenton). In *downbeat's* newly instituted "Music Hall of Fame" – readers voted for those who had "contributed most to modern American music in the 20th Century." Kenton was elected in the third year, following Armstrong and Glenn Miller in the previous two years!

Kenton himself came on in the media as a curious mixture of innocent artist and canny carnival patent-medicine man. His music, he said with disarming candor, was a direct expression of the times: "People hear music and they don't know what the hell they like about it, but it creates a certain turmoil, a certain insecurity, things that are with us today."[50] Kenton was one of many Americans who took to psychiatry as a new cult or religion. He began making statements to the effect that jazz was "neurotic." The music must be loud and discordant because "I *have within me tremendous aggression and drive which have to be expressed in my music.*"[51]

In 1953, on a tour of Europe, Kenton was telling journalists that "my strongest belief is that the future of our kind of music is in the fusion of European classical music with American jazz." A remark that also was a self-serving advertisement for Kenton's so-called "innovations" orchestra which toured with a string section at the time.[52] The same year Kenton was invited to contribute to the radio show "This I Believe." Kenton

50 Carol Easton, *Straight Ahead,* (New York: Morrow, 1973), p. 134.

51 *ibid.* p. 122 (my emphasis).

52 William F. Lee, *Stan Kenton: Artistry in Rhythm* (Los Angeles: Creative Press, 1980), p. 177

expressed a typical evolutionary view of modern music – one which was inherent in most theories of modernism in the arts; that art history had an evolutionary perspective which implied that it must change with the fashions, that art must constantly renew itself:[53]

> The most reassuring thought to me personally is that in creating and performing in my own field, I actually helping to condition people to accept growth in other phases of their development [...] In my field of endeavor I am attempting to replace the conventional type of hackneyed material with a more contemporary form of music that will more nearly satisfy the needs of today.[54]

More daringly, he thought that jazz, and here he had in mind the recent concert hall bookings for his band, might renounce the "steady unchanging beat." Jazz was more about "sound" than rhythm. Its sound should express the new things the human race was going through "today" – a transition that caused "nervous frustration and thwarted emotional development," and which "traditional music (was) entirely incapable of not only satisfying, but representing."[55]

Kenton began as leader of a predominantly white big band that along with the Raeburn and Barnet bands continued and developed the sound of such swing bands as Jimmie Lunceford's. In 1943 he signed with newly established Capitol Records. There is no doubt that Kenton's total output is too uneven to upset the prevailing verdict about the value of his music. André Hodeir's objection to the West Coast school's "experiments" in "fugal" small band jazz (Shelly Manne's "The Three and the Two," Contemporary, 1954 is an example) as dilettantish because its practitioners distinguish between "normal" and "experimental" jazz extends to Kenton's work as well; although it does not take into consideration the conditions most touring jazz bands had to exist under.[56] But given Kenton's naive – or calculating – snobbery for modern art music and his determination to express the modern in his band's music, he occasionally took chances that, for some listeners at least, cannot be dismissed as just a hoax.

53 See remarks above on both Stearns' and Jones, who both share the 'evolutionary' perspective in their jazz writings.

54 Easton, *op. cit.* p. 177.

55 *Hear Me Talking to Ya,* eds. Shapiro & He'ntoff, (1955),: 384-385.

56 *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* (1956; New York: Grove Press, 1961), 276.

In 1950 Kenton did a tour with the band he called his "Innovations" Orchestra. It numbered 40 pieces, 16 of which were strings. The idea was to bridge the gap between classical music and jazz, and this was the band that was brought in to record Graettinger's "City of Glass".[57]

Bob Graettinger was one of many West Coast musicians trained at Los Angeles' Westlake School of Music; an institution that turned out highly skilled, versatile musicians capable of scoring and playing for films, rather than giving them strict training in "classical" music only.[58] Graettinger was as far as one can know a real eccentric in his personal habits as well as his relationships; a West Coast version of the Greenwich Village hipster but apparently fanatically devoted to composing. According to Kenton's biographer Carol Easton, Graettinger maintained that his music was his emotional autobiography.[59]

Graettinger (maybe Kenton) explained the music in terms of painterly metaphors:

> The music of City of Glass is primarily abstract and non-objective, but it has vivid visual associations for me. The composition as a whole suggests, I feel, a city in which the structures are shapes of musical sound, transparent and in constant motion, so that through one can be seen the outlines of others – a city of moving glass-like edifices[60]

Graettinger gave a much less abstract explanation of the work to Art Pepper, saxophonist and Kenton bandsman:

> He drew a city, coming into the city, with colors, on the graph paper. As you would approach the city, there wouldn't be much, occasionally a little sigh or something, and the sign would be just so many squares of color, condensed, like a block of sound. Then as you approached the city, more and more things would happen – more notes, more colors. When it was daytime, it would be bright colors, depicting a whole city – buildings and trees and sidewalks and people. A tree would be Like a tree in the picture, and when you saw the score, there would be all kinds of notes that would look like a tree. If it was a bright tree, then it would be bright instruments, like trumpets, that had a high, bright tonality. If it was dull and dark and dreary, he would use lower sounds, dreary, subtle sounds – trombones, or bass. For the solos, he used each person's

57 Easton, *op. cit.* p. 130.

58 Easton, ibid. p. 135; Ted Gioia, *West Coast Jazz,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 153.

59 Easton, *op. cit.* p. 144. Art Pepper was greatly impressed by this "true existentialist" for his insigt into Pepper's sound: "very mournful, and very sad. Very introverted. Very unhappy. Very tragic, very lonely, very unhappy, very turbulent [...]And the way he described my sound is exactly the way my life went." (Easton: ibid. p. 140).

60 Original liner note to Capitol ST-1006.

> particular sound, depending on what he wanted – sad sound or a bright sound, or dull, or morbid. If you knew the format, you could actually see the pictures of what was happening[61]

"City of Glass" is a dark, turbulent, polytonal work in which dense, shrilly dissonant textures (particularly in the heavily massed brass sections) shift continually, creating an irregular, restless and violent agitation. Although there is motivic development in all four movements, the lack of stable key centers as well as frequent change of meter makes it hard for the listener to perceive the goal-directed, questing journey that is also hinted at in the above quotation.

Especially the third movement, "Dance Before the Mirror," refers fleetingly to jazz – to echoes of Benny Carter's lush saxophone scoring, as well as the Ellington of "Harlem Airshaft."[62] This reference to popular music does in no way re-produce the familiar sound and genres of black music of, for example, Ellington's contemporary "A Tone Parallel to Harlem" – originally planned for Ellington's band and symphony orchestra.[63] In fact the uniqueness of "City of Glass" has led Schuller to suggest a comparison with Charles Ives rather than Schoenberg or Bartok.

Longer works in jazz have often been involved with ambitions to write an historical or epic work, e.g. *Black, Brown and Beige* (1943), or Mingus' "Pithecanthropus Erectus" (1956), to mention two revolutionary jazz works on either side of "City of Glass." The city is the site of the modern in the 20th century arts, and as such it has generated new forms: cubism and collage in painting; various experimental montage techniques in film; and eclectic use of diverse musical styles in music. The episodic diversity of movie scoring in particular has been an important inspiration for longer compositions in popular music, including jazz. Ellington typically provided movie-like analogies for his "tone parallel" compositions.[64] Schuller has suggested that Ellington's

61 Easton, *op. cit.* p. 141.

62 Cf. Max Harrison's liner notes for CD-reissue (Capitol, 1995).

63 According to Stanley Dance (on *Ellington Uptown*, CBS 1951-1952).

64 "So much goes on in a Harlem air shaft, you get the full sense of Harlem in an air shaft. You hear fights, you smell dinner, you hear people making love. You hear intimate gossip floating down. You hear the radio. An air shaft is one big loudspeaker. You see the neighbor's laundry. You hear the janitor's dogs. The man

early experience with providing incidental music for Cotton Club variety acts provided him with a model for his later 'suites'.[65] Often with the added suggestion that the 'camera' stands in for a leisurely stroll through Harlem either vertically or horizontally, as in the later Harlem piece.

The 'City of Glass' music evokes in Graettinger's verbal comments a filmic analogue of a city walker in the metropolis, and as such the work asks to be considered among the major artistic 'portraits' of the 'tranquilized fifties' along with Lowell, Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Mailer. The glass and mirror metaphors in Graettinger's composition titles are not merely external to the emotional effects of the music but highly suggestive in their modernist connotations of boundaries that only throw back reflections of one's own 'drifting' image. It is tempting to see Art Pepper who took such an extraordinary interest in Bob Graettinger, and one of the few people among Kenton's regular musicians to do so, as the whirling protagonist of the threatening vortex of 'City of Glass.'[66] Pepper's oral autobiography conveys an extraordinary, even tragic, sense of random obsessions and self-destructive loneliness: at once a small-time hoodlum and a great jazz musician. Therefore his attachment to Graettinger is all the more remarkable. Art Pepper was greatly impressed by this 'true existentialist' for his insight into Pepper's sound: 'very mournful, and very sad. Very introverted. Very unhappy. Very tragic, very lonely, very unhappy, very turbulent [...] And the way he described my sound is exactly the way my life went.' Graettinger could easily have had his own compositions in mind.[67]

As in the literature contemporary with 'City of Glass', the city is a site of schizophrenia, between innocents and crusing predators; of timid intellectuals who dream of becoming the latter; of those who try to adjust

upstairs' aerial falls down and breaks your window. You smell coffee. A wonderful thing, that smell. An air shaft has got every contrast. One guy is cooking dried fish and rice and another guy's got a great big turkey. Guy-with-fish's wife is a terrific cooker but the guy's wife with the turkey is doing a sad job. You hear people praying, fighting, snoring. Jitterbugs are jumping up and down always over you, never below you...I tried to put all that in *Harlem Air Shaft.* (cit N. Hentoff, *Jazz Is,* 250) (The fact that Ellington's title for this particular piece seems to have been largely factitious and post-hoc has no bearing on my point.)

'65 Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 151

66 One of Kenton's arrangers, Bill Holman, is probably representative in thinking Graettinger's music cold, compared to his own "rhythm and warmness." 'It hurt your fillings to play those chords,' he joked. (Easton, *op. cit.* p 135)

67 Easton *ibid.,* p. 140. Art Pepper's autobiography is *Straight Life: the Story of Art Pepper* (1979).

either cynically or apathetically, and those who "break the frame" in madness.

In the arts of the fifties artists still retained the old romantic ambitions to express their times by trying to impose their own selves as representative, to offer the "raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road outside the frame. At the same time "City of Glass" was very much an expression of its cultural moment. It exemplified Auden's age of anxiety and sought to be the kind of private myth that Rosenberg called for in modernism. And by transgressing the line between classical music and jazz, it successfully offended most of its audience, thereby "proving" its authenticity.