Dominant Positions: John Coltrane, Michel Foucault, and the Politics of Representation

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In a 1979 essay on the principles of a contemporary movement in literature, *écriture*, Michel Foucault quotes approvingly a rhetorical question posed by minimalist author Samuel Beckett: "what does it matter who is speaking?" ("What Is an Author?" 205). While I value many of Foucault's contributions to scholarly discourses on power, I find myself at odds with this dismissal of speakers' identities as irrelevant. My purpose in this paper is to argue that endorsing critical-theoretical inattention to speakers' identities actually promotes some of the abuses of power that Foucault and the theorists he has inspired most object to; notably, inattention to identity forecloses analysis of the speaker's position within the discourse and, in so doing, permits the continued dominance of socially-legitimated points of view and continued marginalization of social commentaries and critiques that oppose themselves to these dominant threads of discourse. My critique of this curious blind-spot in Foucault's theorizing will be worked out through an analysis of critical attention to John Coltrane's 'free jazz' improvisations of the 1960s. One of the central points I am concerned to make in discussing Coltrane is that how artistic projects are represented depends at least in part upon the willingness of critics to take notice of issues of identity and social positioning (both their own, and that of the artists they evaluate). I choose to engage with evaluations of Coltrane, specifically, because there are certain features of his relation to his audience and his critics that demand of us an especially nuanced and complex analysis of the power jazz journalism can exert.

Taking note of the emergence of jazz from within African-American communities and cultural traditions, one might be tempted to read its critical reception very superficially through the lens of black-white relations in America. That is, one might paint oneself a picture in which the power of (usually) black jazz musicians to explain their artistic projects is consistently understated, while the power of (usually) white jazz journalists to impose their conceptions is overstated. This, I think, is both true and a bit too simplistic. It is a true picture of the jazz world in its attention to racial divisions: as Amiri Baraka (then-LeRoi Jones) observes in *Black Music*, "[m]ost jazz critics have been white Americans, but most important jazz musicians have not been" (11). But it is a bit too simplistic a picture in the sense that it doesn't convey adequately the strength and creativity with which jazz musicians have resisted and contested the critics' attempts to speak for them. While many critics do indeed seem to have borrowed wholesale the specious justification that Orientalist scholars have appropriated from Marx – "[t]hey cannot represent themselves, they must be represented" ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" 200) – it is also the case that any respectably comprehensive history of the jazz world will be replete with examples of musicians challenging the ways they are represented by others.

As I shall show a bit later in this paper, Coltrane himself contested this 'power' of the critics and, given the reputation he enjoys today, it would seem that he succeeded in deflecting at least some of the representational power they had tried to exercise over him. Throughout the period of his engagement with free jazz (from roughly 1961[1] until his death in 1967), Coltrane maintained a fan base that seemed largely impervious to the changing opinions expressed in the pages of the jazz magazine *Down Beat*, one of the self-styled arbiters of jazz artistry. The reputation he had established while playing with Miles Davis in the late 1950s made him less vulnerable than newer or less well-known players; whether he got club dates or not did not depend on jazz writers voting him 'greatest soprano sax'. Coltrane's study of, and experimentation with, musical traditions (the African diasporic roots of jazz, European classical, Indian classical, etc.) also gave him the advantage of a greater facility with which to speak of his project, the desire to explore the universal language of music which he believed lay beneath the surface of these many and varied musical traditions. Coltrane is interesting, then, precisely because he is not powerless and voiceless – occupying instead a prominent, if not dominant, position in the jazz world – but, as we shall see, this did not exempt him from dismissive judgements by those whose bias masqueraded as neutrality.

It is this point that I shall be stressing throughout my discussion of Coltrane and Foucault: that evaluation of works often takes place within a context in which power and/or social privilege (what I am referring to in my title as the 'dominant position') is on the side of the theorizer, not the artist. If we follow Beckett's lead in not taking note of the identities and social positions of speakers, then, necessarily, we are leaving this disparity of privilege unacknowledged and unexamined, which impairs our ability to discern whether the theorizer has done justice to the artist and his or her project. It also has the unfortunate side-effect of rendering mysterious any critical moves that attempt to correct inadequate representations through, say, a political characterization of musical commitments. Through the example of journalism that takes up Coltrane's work, I shall argue that political characterization can be a necessary corrective to the formalist theorizing that frequently has dominated non-academic discourse about jazz projects and practices. The problematic nature of formalist analysis in jazz journalism (attention to audible elements

of the artwork only, without consideration of its context) is mitigated somewhat in the more contextualist theorizing that Foucault endorses in his discussion of *écriture* but is still marred by erasure of the artist (in this particular case, the musician). In Foucault's analysis, the repressive role of theory functions more covertly but the result remains the same: in both discourses, works are amenable to being treated as if they existed on the same 'level playing field' by glossing over differences in cultural context and thereby making it more difficult to see where biases (racism, for instance, and/or Eurocentrism and Orientalism) might be affecting aesthetic evaluations.

Where both discourses involve restricting discussion of aesthetic merits of works (e.g., to elements that are 'in the scoreable work' or to an intertextualism that is silent as to authorship) – as opposed to engaging the full range of contextual elements which include performance practices, audience, and musical influences and goals – they each narrow our range of vision. And my questioning of adherence to a single theory is, I think, particularly necessary in the context of jazz journalism's long history of attending to works through Eurocentric formalist analysis. Its preoccupation with making music accessible to readers through theory with which they are presumed to be already familiar, although entirely understandable, makes it difficult to trace the politics of representation in jazz journalism because the demand of accessibility pushes writers to oversimplify their analyses, and often relegates connections between works and players to an unexamined background. Thus, assumptions and biases on which representational distortions are founded remain unarticulated, and this puts the reader at a disadvantage when it comes to figuring out how reliable the critic's interpretation might be.

Because of this often-obscured relationship between biases and silence, I think that one question we need to explore is what role the critic plays in shaping our understanding of artistic projects. The fruitfulness of attending to critical representation is a point that one can make broadly, across the arts, not a point germane only to musical projects; one instance of the nuanced analysis I am concerned to endorse is bell hooks' account of the traditions, influences, and intentions that shape the work of visual artist Alison Saar. hooks interrogates representations of Saar that emerge from critical commitments to standpoints as different as "narrow identity politics" and formalism, and uses the inadequacy of these representations as a foil against which to reveal the complexity of Saar's project (12-21). My attention, in this paper, to Coltrane and his critics is inspired by the way hooks takes up a critique of the critics as a frame through which to present her assessment of what is interesting and unique in Saar's work. What interests me, in particular, is concerted efforts by journalists and interviewers to cajole jazz musicians into explaining themselves and their messages in particular predetermined ways, and the misconstrual and misrepresentation of projects that can result from this oversimplification.

In my questioning of representations, I want to defend the position that contextual elements such as the artist's intentions are integral features of (at least some) artworks, and argue from this position that a primary responsibility of the theorist or critic who seeks to interpret an artistic project is to capture the artist's phenomenological experience of his or her activity. This capturing of phenomenological experience would include what the artist is willing to disclose about his or her intentions, but almost certainly always would be broader than an account of intentions. It could also include the struggle to realize those intentions in the creative process, the recognition of a process of creative evolution that has strayed from or altered the initial intentions, one's response to a reception of the artwork that fails to grasp what the artwork was intended to convey (or reception that sees in the work something the artist did not realize was there), and other such aspects of the relationship the artist feels to what he or she has created. While an account of the artist's phenomenological experience is not entirely reducible to intentions, I think we should care about what the artist says about his or her intentions precisely because, and to the extent that, such statements can be seen as consistent with the artist's practices. Where we see a coherence of statements and practices, I think we can legitimately understand the practices as instances of intentions. Further, I think we can accept these stated intentions as illuminative of both the artist's project and the critical standpoint(s) most likely to inform representations that do justice to the project.

Articulating this as a primary responsibility would ground the starting point of theorizing in the context of creation, thereby including the artist's experience, but it would not limit the theorizing to that perspective. And although we might, as we typically do on other topics, hold academic scholarship to more stringent standards than temporally immediate journalism, this responsibility for careful presentation of artists' projects must, in my view, extend to journalists precisely because of the historical power that journalistic outlets have held over jazz musicians. This power is politico-aesthetic in the sense that it is the critics who choose the theories by which they will evaluate the jazz musician's work, but it is also an economic power that is being exercised. As historian and journalist Frank Kofsky observes throughout his analyses of the 'free jazz' revolution,[2] practices like critics ranking musicians in annual polls have direct consequences for the musician's livelihood because the ability to book performing dates and negotiate recording contracts is tied to the musician's 'popularity' as it is constructed by the journalistic outlets (*Jazz Revolution* 27-28, 144-45, 411-13).

Kofsky claims that jazz, when closely examined, reveals elements of "protonationalist thinking" which can serve to explain why members of these communities – in particular, experimental improvisers like those who were articulating the free jazz movement – might be more sympathetic to, or more easily swayed towards, black nationalist political thought (*Jazz Revolution* 417-20). The Marxist analysis that both he and Amiri Baraka offer (particularly evident as Marxist in their sensitivity to class and socio-economic status) explains this tendency towards nationalism within the jazz world by pointing to the disparity between the level of African-American artistry and the level of appropriate recognition given to that artistry by the (again, mostly) white, record-buying, magazine-reading public. This lack of recognition (both socio-economic and aesthetic) is explicable through a peculiar moment in thinking about jazz – one which Kofsky and Baraka both document as a manifestation of racism in America and which centrally involves contestation of the national significance of jazz.

Kofsky identifies two views within what might be characterized as the "Establishment' of the jazz world: those who question whether free jazz even has any standing as music, and those who acknowledge its artistic merit but deny its roots in African-American culture (*Black Nationalism* 9-11). The first camp judges as deficient those musics which do not reflect Western 'classical' musical values – to the point that free jazz may even be denied the status of music – whereas the second camp concedes its claim to being music but seeks to identify it as a musical product of mainstream – that is, white – American culture. In both cases, however, analysis is conducted with an emphasis on the formal elements of the music and what they might demonstrate about the value we should place on the work and the artist.[3] Kofsky's analysis of jazz culture and the free jazz revolution needs to be understood as a reaction to these Establishment views: he re-presents free jazz as a music in which black nationalist demands for justice were fostered precisely in order to affirm the links (which both camps, in their own ways, were denying) between aesthetic value and socio-political viewpoint that emerge from attention to cultural context.

The critic who best exemplifies the first camp of 'Establishment' criticism is then-associate editor of *Down Beat*, John Tynan, who has been identified as "the first to take a strong – and public – stand" against Coltrane (DeMicheal 110). Tynan's tirade was a response to alto sax player Eric Dolphy's tour with Coltrane's quartet: his 1961 review of one of those performance dates describes "a horrifying demonstration of what appears to be a growing anti-jazz trend . . . a good rhythm section . . . go[ing] to waste behind the nihilistic exercises of the two horns" (qtd. in DeMicheal 110). This originary use of the term "anti-jazz" to denounce the quartet's collaboration with Dolphy prompted Coltrane to question what the critics meant by "anti-jazz" and to offer to explain his project to them (115). "The best thing a critic can do is to thoroughly understand what he is writing about and then jump in," Coltrane claimed at the time; "That's all he can do.... Understanding is what is needed" (qtd. in DeMicheal 116). This reference to 'jumping in' suggests to me that Coltrane acknowledges a role for the critic's representation within the community that musicians construct with their audiences, and that his objection is not to representation *per se*, but to false or inadequate representations. Years later in his interview with Kofsky, Coltrane expresses disappointment that none of the critics who damned him as "anti-jazz" ever did contact him to gain a deeper understanding of his musical projects (*Black Nationalism* 236).[4]

A good example of the second camp of the 'Establishment' criticism Kofsky is reacting to can be found in Ira Gitler's profile "'Trane on the Track" (originally published in *Down Beat*, 16 October 1958). Gitler focuses his attention exclusively on Coltrane's professional history and stylistic influences, employing a very narrowly-defined conception of context, and offers an account of Coltrane's then-current style in purely formal terms: the much-quoted description of Coltrane's multinote playing as "sheets of sound" (Gitler 6). In fact, he talks about Coltrane's work without ever asking what goals or social context might motivate that work. Even when Coltrane articulates his playing philosophy-- "Keep listening.... Live cleanly.... Do right.... You can improve as a player by improving as a person" (qtd. in Gitler 6)-- and characterizes this improvement as a duty that the player owes himself, Gitler leaves unexamined the obvious questions about what "doing right" and "improving as a person" might mean and what connection they might have to the kind of music Coltrane is trying to bring forth. The decision to leave this connection between Coltrane's philosophy and his music unexamined exemplifies the second camp of criticism in its assumption that the work can be understood without understanding the artist. In making this assumption, it treats jazz as indistinguishable from the European 'classical' music for which formalist analysis was devised.

Had Gitler seen fit to interrogate the connections Coltrane was making, I believe that Coltrane would have spoken, as he did with other interviewers, of his belief that personal honesty made him a better player (a statement made to Kitty Grime, for *Jazz News* – qtd. in Porter), that even in experimentation it was important to remain aware of what others are doing (Coltrane and DeMicheal), and that a commitment to sharing the knowledge and wonder one finds in life leads to a freer style of playing (DeMicheal). These interviews, among others, give us reason to believe that Coltrane's musical progress is closely connected to his own sense of his spiritual development and to his relationships with other musicians – not simply in the narrow sense of stylistic influences that Gitler does attend to, but also in the wider sense of a commitment to dialogicality within the improvising communities to which Coltrane belonged: the desire to progress without losing sight of "what others are doing" (Coltrane and DeMicheal 102). Further evidence of this connection that Coltrane sees between the player and the music can be found in his

interview with Kofsky in which he describes his understanding of music as an expression of spirituality, and spirituality as demanding of one a commitment to self-betterment (*Jazz Revolution* 432-56). Without this context, the *Down Beat* reader, who later goes off to listen to Coltrane, lacks a sense of the aesthetic challenges that Coltrane has set for himself.

This is a problem, in my view, because I think that one of the ways in which improvisation, specifically, can be liberatory is by suggesting to its listeners a multiplicity of interpretations, all of which can – I would say, *should* – be interrogated in the process of aesthetic evaluation.[5] I think interpretations are relevant to evaluations because we need a sense of what we think is 'going on in the music' in order to judge whether we think the performers have succeeded. Without a sense of what musical project is motivating the performance, we have no basis for deciding which aesthetic values are relevant to the performance. Knowing, or believing, that a musician is pursuing a particular project – in Coltrane's case, exploring the world's musical traditions in order to tease out this 'universal language' of music that speaks to people's spiritual needs and desires – helps us to recognize the distinct aesthetic values in specific performative practices like, say, multiple improvisations on a single tune.

While the failure of these Establishment critics to situate Coltrane's music adequately within a coherent aesthetic frame suppressed listeners' ability to make sense of what Coltrane thought he was doing, their failure to identify and situate themselves made it more difficult for a reader/listener to construct interpretations which diverged from the critics' offerings. Had Tynan and Gitler felt a responsibility to reveal themselves to their readers – to discuss what preferences, cultural backgrounds, and aesthetic preconceptions they brought to their analyses of Coltrane's improvisations – I think it might have been easier for many in the readership of the magazine to recognize the point that Kofsky and others were later concerned to make about how racism manifested itself in jazz criticism. But this is an unfortunate consequence of an uncontextualized formalism: critical analysis of a work without attention to its creator(s) also forecloses attention to the speaker who is constructing the representation of the work. This lends formalist analysis an air of objectivity, a sense that the features identified as aesthetically valuable – or not – really are 'there' in the music. And, in this apparent objectivity, formalist analysis also tends toward a homogenization of critical/evaluative opinion; if we are only talking about what's in the work, then all of us should be talking about 'the same thing'.

The dominance of this particular critical methodology is difficult to challenge because of its conformity to the journalistic norm of third-person narrative, and it complicates attempts to interrogate both the politics of representation and interpretations, like Kofsky's (and Baraka's), which contest its dominance. Kofsky managed, in 1966, to establish an interview context in which Coltrane made some of his most comprehensive public comments on the relation of his improvisations to political ideas current at the time, and he managed this, in part, through his willingness to put both himself and Coltrane into the picture (representation) of Coltrane's project. In prefatory comments to that interview (eventually published in 1970 as part of *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*), Kofsky speaks openly of his sustained admiration for Coltrane and of their past encounters, revealing that he had, for years, hypothesized a connection between Coltrane and Malcolm X (223). He attributes to both men a perception of "ultimate reality" drawn from life at the margins of society, and also a desire to share what they had learned about how to harness human potential and create ghetto-less societies. Recognizing these common ideals prompts him to question Coltrane about whether he believes there is in his musical expression and Malcolm X's political expression any kind of 'shared project', however loosely construed.

Coltrane's initial response to Kofsky's question about whether he sees a relationship between Malcolm X's ideas and what was then being referred to "the new music" is, I think, a model of ambiguity. He says:

> Well, I think that music, being an expression of the human heart, or of the human being itself, does express just what *is* happening. I feel it expresses the whole thing – the whole of human experience at the particular time that it is being expressed. (Coltrane, qtd. in *Black Nationalism* 225)

This response lends itself to at least two possible interpretations.[6] First, we might see Coltrane as trying, politely, to deflect or evade a characterization of his music which might range anywhere from a distortion of his project to a professionally dangerous political identification.[7] Alternatively, we might understand him as acknowledging the relationship as one grounded in cultural context and gently reinforcing the point that cultural context encompasses much more than political affiliations. The ambiguity of his response seems to neither rule out nor openly endorse the relationship Kofsky is questioning in this particular instance.

Coltrane is much more forthcoming about the importance he attaches to the social and political issues about which Malcolm X spoke. Coltrane also acknowledges his attempts to express his views on these issues in his music:

> I make a conscious attempt.... I've tried to say, 'Well, *this*, I feel, could be better, in my opinion, so I will try to do this to make it better.' This is what I feel that we feel in any situation that we find in our lives, when there's something we think could be better, we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it's the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives. (qtd. in *Black Nationalism* 227)

But he makes clear a distinction between expression and exhortation when Kofsky asks whether Coltrane feels any responsibility to educate his audiences in ways that are not strictly musical. When Coltrane acknowledges that "you can't ram philosophies down anybody's throat" (*Black Nationalism* 241), I see his spiritualism asserting itself: if what each of us is doing is seeking answers to questions on how to live, we are going to derive far more value from listening to what others think and then debating those views for, and within, ourselves than we will get from any lecture instructing us on what to believe. This easy-going willingness to offer up his thoughts and let others decide for themselves how much value to place on them is a position consistent with the person Coltrane's contemporaries describe and the determined commitment to pluralistic and experimental exploration of musical traditions that characterize Coltrane's career.

His preference for open-ended discussion among, or between, equals (rather than didactic and authoritative lecture) also appears in the later post-interview, informal discussion that Kofsky and Coltrane had on the responsibility of the writer or critic to represent the artist accurately. Kofsky expresses the view that, in any conflict of opinions, the writer must "give the benefit of the doubt to the musician, because he knows the music far better than you'll ever know it" (*Black Nationalism* 242). Coltrane responds in agreement, saying that the 'power' the writer has "is to be part of all, and the only way you can be part of all is to understand it. And when there's something you don't understand, you have to go humbly to it" (qtd. in *Black Nationalism* 242). Not only did the formalist-oriented Establishment critics who damned him and Dolphy with the "anti-jazz" label not come to the music humbly and in a spirit of understanding, they actively distorted what was happening, charges Coltrane. "It was absolutely ridiculous," he says, "because they made it appear that we didn't even know the first thing about music – the first thing. And there we were really trying to push things off" (qtd. in *Black Nationalism* 242).

I think it's worth noting here that there are a couple of closely-related points emerging from this interview which make Kofsky's representation less objectionable than the two I have already discussed. First, Kofsky is doing a much better job of letting Coltrane speak for himself about the goals and motivations of his improvisations. Second, in structuring the interview so that Coltrane felt comfortable contesting Kofsky's politicized representation, Kofsky is drawing out aspects of Coltrane's thinking about his musical project which allow an informed reader to make connections between Coltrane's artistry and other African-American contributions to the arts. I am thinking, in particular, of how Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s literary theory, signifyin(g), inclines us towards a reconceptualization of 'originality' as an aesthetic value. Gates emphasizes the practice of formal revision, an engagement with and reworking of other texts, and understands the artist's original contribution to reside in this reworking (45-55). One consequence of this conception of originality is that it calls into question our ability to privilege as definitive any of the texts or cultural products that are part of this signifying process – in an ongoing process of intertextuality, there simply is no 'last word on the matter'. There is, of course, a first word, but it is not necessarily definitive; if it were, revision of/upon it would seem to be a largely irrelevant and pointless practice. Gates' discussion of formal revision and intertextuality is an account of artistic practices that he freely admits are present in artworks of many cultures, but a widespread social commitment to formal revision as an expressive practice is, in his view, distinctly African-American and can be found extensively in black vernacular speech (xix-xxv). Listening to Coltrane – both his constantly changing improvisations on previously performed and recorded pieces and his comments about the importance of dialogicality within improvising communities – in the context of Gates' scholarship makes it absolutely clear (to me, at least) that these are aspects of his overall project that need to be understood in the context of his social location within African-American cultural/artistic traditions.

This notion of accuracy of representation as conditioned by the artist's context is one that I think has to be taken particularly seriously in the context of free jazz's emphasis on improvisation. Where improvised music is concerned, any fixed, stable object that might be designated 'the artwork' recedes and aesthetic appreciation shifts to the performance.[8] In improvisation, especially group improvisation, performative intentions remain fluid and subject to change so that the performer can respond to his or her partners and audiences. Because performance *is* the practice that we are seeking to represent and theorize and because, as I said earlier, I think we need to ground the starting point of our analyses in the artist's experience of the work (which includes performative intentions), it's worth giving some weight to Kofsky's observation that the performing subject is in the best position of all to say what it is that the critic should be trying to represent (*Black Nationalism* 242), especially if we can give it weight without reinscribing the privileged status of 'definitiveness'. The mistake the Establishment critics made in not bringing a spirit of understanding to the Coltrane-Dolphy collaborations was basically that they retreated into a familiar theory in order to

avoid the challenge of representational complexity. Instead of taking respectful account of improvising practices and those who produce them (or even justifying their refusals to analyze the point of "nihilistic exercises" or personal playing philosophies) they simply ignored the invitation to dialogue that is implicit in representational strategies.

Kofsky, on the other hand, tried very hard to establish a dialogue between Coltrane and the social movement which he (Kofsky) designates "political black nationalism" (*Jazz Revolution* 418) – perhaps too hard, given the subsequent misinterpretations of his view of Coltrane that he later felt the need to address. In the prefatory comments to his revised and expanded edition of *Black Nationalism*, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, Kofsky carefully distinguishes Coltrane from this social movement on the grounds of his spiritual commitments, labelling Coltrane's point of view "cosmic mysticism" (*Jazz Revolution* 418). But, he argues, this mysticism had social implications; the change in thinking which Coltrane hoped to help bring about with his music embraces brotherhood, an end to social ills such as war and poverty, and the idea of being "a force for real good" (*Jazz Revolution* 419). Social reform, then, may not have been the overall point or goal of Coltrane's musical project but it was a clear implication of it.[9] So, in this respect at least, "Kofsky's Coltrane" can be reconciled with the man himself and his stated goals. In addition to the argument that Coltrane's spiritualism implies the same demand for reform of a structurally racist society as that articulated by black nationalists, Kofsky's interview offers a second argument which points to ways in which Coltrane's experimentalism can be read as resistance to the white power structure of the jazz world. Although Coltrane was not given to issuing political manifestos, Kofsky believes we can read resistance into Coltrane's increasing avoidance of nightclub performing, his interest in, and verbal support of, jazz collectives and self-help groups like the Jazz Composers Guild, and his preference, if pushed, to label his work 'classical' rather than 'jazz'[10] (*Jazz Revolution* 418-20).

As Sam Manuel, a writer for the socialist newspaper *The Militant*, notes in his review of another Kofsky book, *Black Music, White Business*, (both of them no doubt paraphrasing Archie Shepp), black musicians may create the art, but wealthy white businessmen own the means of production, distribution, and criticism. This racial divide is significant in that both Manuel and Kofsky implicate racism in the motivation for a jazz journalism committed to formalist analysis. The group of critics exemplified by Gitler and Tynan offer a biased view of free jazz, severing formal criteria and stylistic trends from their cultural context, because of what Kofsky identifies, in *Black Nationalism*, as a "curious dichotomy" in the thinking of many white Americans in the 1960s (9). This dichotomy is the peculiar moment in public opinion that I introduced through specific discussion of Gitler and Tynan but what my close reading did not, perhaps, make clear was the extent to which these critics' seemingly idiosyncratic biases are reflective of broader public opinion of their day. Kofsky argues that many outside the jazz world had few qualms about acknowledging jazz as an African-American cultural tradition, although they resisted acknowledging it as an art worthy of their respect (*Black Nationalism* 10). Another example of this strand of thought can be seen in Theodor Adorno's contention that jazz has no aesthetic merit because all of its allegedly 'new and original' musical features, such as syncopation, are already to be found in Stravinsky's musical experimentations (4). On the other hand, those inside the jazz world (the critics, producers, and other hangers-on whom Kofsky labels the "semi-literati") were quite insistent about jazz's artistic merits but, for the most part, vehemently denied that there was anything essentially African-American about it (*Black Nationalism* 9-11). The formalism they employed aided attempts to erase the cultural traditions from which jazz is derived by giving the critics a language in which they could endorse its claims to being art without conceding its roots in African-American culture. Analysis emphasizing the formal elements of the music lent credence to their position that jazz was a musical product of mainstream – again, white – American culture.

Kofsky's verdict concerning this 'Establishment' criticism is that it represents the lowest point in what he describes as "a decades-long tale of white incomprehension or outright rejection of black musical art" (*Jazz Revolution* 421). Formalist analysis 'bleached' jazz by talking about it under theories developed to analyze Western art musics; this not only severed jazz from its situation in African-American culture, it also reinforced the notion that art is what Europeans do. Here we see the racism with which Manuel and Kofsky charge the Establishment critics: if jazz is art, then it must be amenable to theorizing under the values and methodologies that are the traditions of white America. But when these formalist/Western 'classical' theories are imposed on Coltrane's improvisations, he is being compared to Mozart and Beethoven under standards designed for their music-making practices, not his. So, once again, as Gates observes in his analysis, African-American contributions to the arts are being judged in terms of how successfully they mimic European traditions, with the result that the often considerably more complex originality of these contributions is dismissed as mere, sometimes even inept, copying (113, 118).

Given this climate of criticism, I think we can see "Kofsky's Coltrane" as a necessary correction, a kind of 'reactive affirmation' intended to be, in much the same way that Picasso once described art, a lie which tells us the truth[11] (Seldes 364). That is to say, I think that Kofsky's distortion is not of Coltrane himself, but of Establishment criticism of Coltrane and, in distorting their distortion, he is trying to reveal a truer Coltrane. On this view, "Kofsky's Coltrane," the perceived 'distortion' of Coltrane as having or endorsing a socio-political aim in his music, is an arguably necessary correction of mainstream attempts at erasure of context. "Kofsky's Coltrane" is not simply 'Malcolm X with a sax'. He

is a man who values and embodies his social context, drawing from it to express his views on the universality of music and the human impulse towards solidarity. It is these commitments, and the extent to which they play out in his practices, which show us the limitations, the narrowness of vision, in formalist-influenced journalism. As a theoretical lens through which to understand Coltrane, formalism in this domain fails precisely because it cannot, or chooses not to, account for those aspects of practices which lie outside the analysis of the formal elements of music.

Having, I think, thoroughly indicted the jazz journalism of Coltrane's day, let me now turn to Foucault. What interests me here is the extent to which a body of writings which have stimulated diversity within academic theorizing nonetheless retain traces of theoretical commitments which have been used to close down resistance and diversity. In an interview with Gérard Raulet, Foucault characterizes his overall project as concerned with tracing the relations between self and truth-telling ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 444-6). As part of this project, he analyzes the conditions of possibility of ideas present in cultures and time periods to show how objects of knowledge are produced, a process he terms 'archaeology of knowledge' ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 445). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explicitly rejects the possibility of disinterested, or neutral, knowledge: all knowledge is produced by power in such a way that power relations[12] and fields of knowledge (the space of 'discourse') are simultaneously-constituted correlates (*Discipline and Punish* 27). It is precisely because of his sensitivity concerning the co-constitution of knowledge and power that I find Foucault's position in "What Is an Author?" so mystifying. Foucault's curious blind spot is his belief that the organizing principles of a discourse render the author superfluous, and it is this belief which drives his endorsement in this essay of *écriture* (the central thesis of which is, of course, the 'death of the author'). In *Orientalism*, Edward Said takes up Foucault's notion of discourse in order to explain the comprehensive ways in which 'Western' scholars and authors have (mis)represented Asian and Arab peoples. Said observes that the role of discourse, as the notion appears in Foucault's writings, is to produce systematicity within a 'discipline' – understood here both in the academic sense of being an organized field of knowledge and in the 'social control' sense of being a 'formula of domination' (*Orientalism* 3). 'Discourse' accounts for the similarities in how the Oriental world is represented across different texts without holding individual authors to account for their roles in perpetuating stereotypes. Putting a Foucaultian gloss on the 'death of the author' thesis suggests that it is a discourse (the specific tradition within which objects of knowledge are structured and validated) which is responsible for both the texts produced out of it and the reality which these texts create, not the individual author of the text (*Orientalism* 94).

But Said diverges from Foucault on this last point, as do I, and as does Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Maori scholar and theorist of decolonizing possibilities for indigenous peoples. Postcolonialist or, to use the term I much prefer, anti-colonialist thinking must necessarily be vigilant if it is to expose all of the ways in which discourses have been used to colonize 'the Other'[13] (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 68), and one way in which to combat literary (or aesthetic) colonization is to insist that the imprint of the individual author upon the text *is* significant, that authors do not merely recede into what Said labels 'uninfluential anonymity' (*Orientalism* 23). I believe Foucault's endorsement of *écriture* entails commitments which, if applied to jazz, would function in the same way that formalist criticism and aesthetic theory has in the jazz journalism I have just been discussing. Championing the death of the jazz musician in the same way that some want to champion the death of the author would undermine the very thing Foucault wants to celebrate: in erasing the often oppositional consciousness of the musician, we would be repressing, not proliferating, meanings attributable to texts, or works.

Foucault's preoccupation with the ways in which discourse produces both texts and individuals leads him to see discourse as the explanatory crux of textual analysis. And, of course, this attention to the context within which art (or any cultural artifact, for that matter) is produced is important. But consigning the creators of works into the uninfluential anonymity that Said objects to, and pretending that we can conduct a thorough contextualist analysis without attending to the individuals who brought those works into being, reinscribes all of the anticolonialist worries that are raised by critics like Said and Tuhiwai Smith. Especially when we have disparities of social privilege, we can expect that erasure of the jazz musician's perspective from our theorizing of performances is going to leave us with an impoverished inventory of standpoints through which to negotiate the meanings and values of these performances. As Said's analysis in *Orientalism* makes clear, this inventory of theories has served for centuries to silence and obscure oppositional voices by presuming that all artifacts can be comprehended from a recognizably 'Western' perspective. Thus, without a general commitment to attending to the perspective of the artist, it is hard to see how we could open up the analytic space to raise questions about whether silencing might be going on in any particular case.

The problem with Foucault's *écriture* commitment, in my view, lies in its capacity to function, like formalism, as a repressive social control mechanism within the artworld, broadly construed.[14] While Foucault's theorizing is not, properly speaking, formalist, it shares with formalism a disregard for the creators of works which permits the continuing exertion of theoretical-critical control over marginalized artistic communities. As I have noted already, "What Is an Author?" opens with Foucault's quotation of the question, from Beckett, "what does it matter who is

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speaking?" This question serves as a starting point from which Foucault first acknowledges the "death of the author" in literary theory, and then draws our attention to literary theory's current acceptance of an "author-function" (205). The "author-function" puts the context and lived experience of the author/artist outside the bounds of our critical theorizing and substitutes instead an intertextuality that depends on a type-identification, using the author only as a "classificatory function" (210). But, Foucault argues, even this substitution of a posited function in place of an individual is insufficient; the power – whether of a culturally-sanctioned function or of an actual person – to control the meanings we may derive from texts continues to exert its force. The function still permits us to restrictively group together texts whose relationships we wish to interrogate, such that Shakespeare, qua "author-function", is the ideological figure through which we limit, exclude, and choose texts in order to close down the proliferation of meanings[15] (221). What Foucault understands as *true* freedom in literary analysis – that being the freedom to constitute meanings not sanctioned by any authority (and note here the crucial connection he is making between 'author' and 'authority') – would seem to be impossible until we move beyond the author-function and create a conceptual space in which we can interrogate textual meanings without reference to their moment of creation. Such a call for unlimited freedom to attribute meanings to artworks is what I understand Foucault to be endorsing in his comments about the author as an "ideological figure" who constrains "the proliferation of meaning" (222).

As I noted earlier, I believe that Foucault's endorsement of the demise of both authors and author-functions casts him in the same repressive role as that occupied by formalists in cross-cultural theorizing and criticism. The overview of current theorizing about writing which begins his essay describes an artistic practice that has, in his words, "freed itself from the theme of expression" ("What Is an Author?" 206). Writing is no longer the activity through which a single person's thoughts are made public, or accessible to others, but is instead "an interplay of signs" (206). Similarly, his account of the critic's task, as currently understood, is "to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships" (207). These ways of understanding the creation and criticism of artworks resemble formalism in that they present the work as something that can, and should, be analyzed in isolation from its creator. In its broadest construal, formalism tells us that each of us should be able to stand before a sculpture, poem, or musical performance and, knowing nothing of the person who brought forth the work, be able to imbue it with meanings and values derivable from the elements and relationships of elements which are 'there' in the work. While Foucault's view is more sensitive to context than the formalism I discussed earlier, his endorsement of the death of the author means that he too is committed to analyzing artworks without consideration of artists.

Foucault's prescription for literary criticism appears at the end of the essay, where he predicts the disappearance of the author-function and the possibility that works will instead be subjected to questions about their "modes of existence": how they can be used, circulated, and appropriated ("What Is an Author?" 222). Like formalism, this attention to use, circulation, and appropriation also treats works as discrete entities, theorizable only at the level of features contained within the work (in order to facilitate its use), and the extent to which those features either differ from or resemble features found in other works. The intertextuality made possible by use of other works is a weak contextualism compared to the position I staked out at the beginning of this paper, a contextualized analysis which works outward from the artist's experience of the work's creation towards such links that theorists might care to make between the work and other works, social issues or movements, etc. This 'weak contextualism' that Foucault prescribes erases the author and moves straight to a consideration of other (authorless) works, treating them as if they were either commodities (whose provenance is irrelevant) or natural objects (for which questions of creation are unanswerable).

I share Foucault's expressed desire to make possible and celebrate the proliferation of artistic meanings. However, I question whether identification of an author/artist always leads us to an authoritative restriction of the meanings and values we might attribute.[16] Foucault assumes that any identification of a creator of an artistic work acts to suppress the meanings attributable to the artwork. While I think he is right to take seriously the notion of 'ownership' as one of the ways in which European-influenced/colonizing cultural forces exert power over our ability to think new or subversive thoughts, it is not at all clear to me that 'ownership' functions in exactly the same way (that is, repressively) in all cultural contexts. If we take seriously the worry that imposed theories could obscure practices, then we need a way to begin theorizing that incorporates from the outset respect for artist's practices. Asking first about the artist's goals and motivations, and then presenting the artist's thoughts to critics and audiences for their scrutiny and commentary, gives us a base from which to start analyzing what meanings and values might possibly be attributed to their practices, and the artworks resulting from those practices. I, with Foucault, object to any attempt to restrict the range of possible meanings and values by privileging the artist as the only authority capable of licensing interpretations, but I am concerned to clarify the respective power of the artist and other interpretive 'experts'.

The artist has perhaps the closest, most intimate relationship to the work and, like all close relations, this one can both illuminate some features of the work for the artist and blind him or her to others. This is the insight that underlies the Kofsky-Coltrane discussion about what it means for a critic to represent an artistic project accurately. To

approach a new movement in art with a desire for understanding necessitates approaching it with humility, and that in turn necessitates engaging the artist in discussion of what he or she intends. It is, of course, possible for someone to say that he or she doesn't care about the artist's intentions – perhaps even while claiming to be interested in other aspects of the artist's experience with respect to the work. If this disregard for intentions is expressed by an audience member, someone who is making private judgements about the work, then it seems to me a trivial issue. What concerns me is the critical/theoretical judgements which purport to interpret for others. Even here, however, the critic or theorist might be able to make a convincing case for why we should disregard artist's intentions in a given instance. What I want to argue for is not that the artist's intentions should constrain our interpretations, only that they should be considered; and that where they are considered and dismissed, a case should be made for their lack of relevance to the interpretation being offered. In some instances, the case to be made might be rather obvious: for instance, one might critique Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain" without caring very much what Duchamp himself had to say about it. This could be justified by taking the position that one is concerned with "Fountain" as an artwork which inaugurated entirely new types of practices – found art, salvage art, conceptual art – and thus now, with the passage of time, has gathered to itself meanings and values which were not obviously present (therefore not intentional) at its moment of 'creation'.[17] For these reasons, I think taking the position that only the artist can speak definitively about the artwork impoverishes our analyses. But from the fact that the artist is not an omniscient interpreter of the work, it does not follow that his or her voice has no place in debates about their works. Particularly where the artwork emerges from cultural traditions which have been marginalized by a dominant class, it would be grossly inappropriate, in my view, to disregard the artist's voice. This would be just another instance of cultural suppression, hardly the proliferation of interpretations that Foucault champions.

Foucault's proposed approach, an attribution of meanings unconstrained by references to a work's creator, offers little opportunity for engagement with the artist who is trying to get people to see cultural traditions, and by extension themselves, differently. This opportunity is not even possible within *écriture*- or formalist-driven analyses so, if this desire to engage forms any part of the project's motivation, representation of it with non- or inadequately contextualist critical tools will necessarily be a mis-presentation. For instance, improvisation is often grasped, in such analytic frameworks, as 'real-time composition' and this tempts one to believe uncritically that the improvisatory practices of African-American jazz musicians can be subsumed within a compositional framework of carefully arranged formal elements. Indeed, as I noted earlier, this temptation drove much of the mainstream jazz journalism and criticism of the 1950s and 1960s. This is problematic because many performers of free jazz, like Coltrane, are very articulate about their artistic development, goals, and influences and take great pains to situate themselves and their social critiques within jazz traditions. Journalism's failure accurately to represent artists' voices is not, therefore, a result of these artists choosing to stay silent.

In the writings of more sympathetic and sensitive interviewers, the connection between the person and the music is made explicit. In the context of Coltrane's interview with Kofsky, for instance, it is quite clear that "doing better," a relentless drive to improve, is a principle which Coltrane applies to all aspects of life: it explains both his commitment to personal artistic development and his recognition of the role that social commentary and activism play within the jazz world. Evidence that Coltrane understands the goals of his artistic projects in the context of both his own body of work and the works produced by others is even clearer in his declaration that "I want to progress, but I don't want to go so far out that I can't see what others are doing" (Coltrane and DeMicheal 102). This attention to what others are doing is often explained by reference to the 'dialogicality' of jazz – the extent to which, as an artistic practice, jazz represents a conversation among jazz musicians. One of the goals of jazz improvisation, then, is to respond not just to the music created by others but to the others themselves, a practice difficult to make sense of through a theoretical lens like *écriture* or formalism. In fact, both would seem to be in the position of having to deny that art is expression. How then could they possibly be fruitful theoretical frames for analyzing the musical performance of ideas and the responses they generate? Denying that musicians go up on stage and engage in an offering and negotiation of sound-structures puts one in the position of disallowing the voices of improvising artists who claim this is what they're doing. Quite to the contrary of the view of a fixed, autonomous artwork that *écriture* and formalism license, the kind of improvisation that free jazz is concerned with is both much more ephemeral and much more indexed to a 'producer', suggesting that it might be best understood, like conversation, as a process of constructing shared meaning. Defending the dialogicality thesis opens up the most radical of all possibilities of proliferated meaning: that the artist, all too frequently silenced or misrepresented within criticism, could exercise his or her freedom to negotiate representations of the project under critical scrutiny.

So the point I made earlier in clarifying my disagreement with Foucault – that 'ownership' does not function in exactly the same way in all cultural contexts – should now be clearer. In the jazz world, we see the music industry using formalism to repress artistic meanings and aesthetic values, as opposed to Foucault's worry about authors using their authority to repress meanings. Recall that it was dogmatic allegiance to Eurocentric formalist views that made possible Tynan's use of "anti-jazz" denunciations to obscure the ways in which Coltrane and Dolphy were, in their own time, advancing jazz (DeMicheal 110). Here formalism enabled precisely the sort of social control that I think

Foucault would (or should) find most objectionable. Where the goal of a project is bound up in the context of the artist and his or her social relations, critical theorizing needs to be carefully examined to ensure that it does not close off the very proliferation that Foucault and I both desire.[18] This worry is particularly acute within theorizing about jazz because, as Ajay Heble observes in his discussion of the political significance of musical dissonance, jazz is not just outside of Eurocentric traditions; it is, in many instances and incarnations, *opposed to* that tradition (15). It is precisely that aspect of meaning, the critique and/or political contestation, which is erased by a reading that refrains from acknowledging the artist's standpoint.

Thus, in response to Foucault and Beckett, I wish to assert that, yes, it does too matter who is speaking. It matters because differences in standpoint subtly alter differences in meaning, a point that Linda Alcoff makes persuasively in her article "The Problem of Speaking for Others" – notably in a contrast she draws between the demands for democracy in Panama made back in 1989 by the internal political opposition to Manuel Noriega and the 'same' demands made by the first President Bush (5, 27). Demands for democracy were made from both perspectives but they carried very different connotations. That they carried connotations at all is enough to convince me that critics have a responsibility to identify and represent, as comprehensively as is possible, the artist's point of view when discussing his or her projects. Taking this responsibility seriously allows us to pose questions about, for instance, the political significance of Coltrane's successive improvisations on "My Favorite Things." His reworkings of this tune can, I think, be seen as an anti-racist/classist/sexist move; both the differences that each version bears from all others and the diverse musical traditions that were blended to produce these different versions work together to disrupt notions of a 'definitive version'. Implicitly, a rejection of 'definitiveness' can be understood as a rejection of social practices that privilege a single type of identity as 'the norm' and construct as 'other' all deviations from that norm. This position is consistent with Coltrane's commitment to there being a universal language of music underlying, and uniting, the many culturally-inflected traditions, and is also consistent with the opinions on socio-political relevance of music that he tried to articulate to both Kofsky (who listened) and Gitler (who did not). But this position – which I think matters very much – can only be grasped through taking note of Coltrane as the one who is speaking.

Notes:

[1] Strictly speaking, Coltrane's status as a leading figure within free jazz may be dated from the 1965 release of *Ascension* but it seems clear to me that he had already begun to engage with the ideas and concerns of free jazz – embodied in the question 'what comes after bebop?' – as early as his 1961 collaborations with Eric Dolphy.

[2] See both his 1970 original text, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, and the 1998 revised version, *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*.

[3] By 'formal elements' I mean the sound structure and qualities that can be said to supervene on it (originality, for instance, or perhaps 'swing'). One might well ask 'why did this tendency towards formalist analysis first arise in jazz?' As Ajay Heble makes clear in his analysis of stylistic developments in the history of jazz, the language of formalism is better positioned to explain the chromaticism of Charlie Parker's bebop style than is the earlier emotive/expressive language applied to Louis Armstrong's project of jazz as the representation of emotional meanings (34-40). However, Heble also notes that bebop's formal innovations still need to be grounded within jazz's cultural and social context, black life in America (39). And it is not the emergence of formalism as a fruitful theoretical tool that I object to so much as it is the continued dominance of formalism in jazz criticism.

[4] Interestingly, there is a way of interpreting this 'anti-jazz' label which reveals a project that Coltrane might have been sympathetic to, perhaps might even have recognized as consistent with his own. Philosopher Amos Friedland uses the term 'anti-literature' to describe the writings of Hungarian author and Auschwitz/Buchenwald survivor Imre Kertész. Noting a similarity between Kertész's determination to strip down, or exhaust, language and the self-consciously minimalist late writings of Samuel Beckett, Friedland employs this term to denote Kertész's commitment to paring down literary devices and conventions to the 'point zero' of literature, the point at which as much language as is possible has been renounced (liquidated) in order that silence (the unspoken) might perhaps be heard (Friedland). If we parse 'anti-jazz' in a similar fashion, we could understand Coltrane's deconstructions of jazz conventions as a paring down of, and playing with, musical structure in order to reveal this universal ground which he believed underpins all musics. While it is quite unlikely that Tynan intended this non-derogatory interpretation, I think

that Coltrane might have found such a characterization of his project to be extremely fruitful, if only as a foil against which he could then clarify what he was trying to do.

[5] Again, the point I am concerned to make here about the value of multiple interpretations is not confined (as my discussion must necessarily be) to music: bell hooks makes the same point in her analysis of the paintings of Jean-Michel Basquiat (35-48).

[6] It also lends itself, in its deliberately indeterminate meaning, to being seen as an act of signifying on the trickster figures that Gates discusses in his *Signifying Monkey* (in particular, Esu-Elegbara, the notoriously unreliable mediator betweens humans and the gods).

[7] I feel I should note here that the interpretation I had applied on my first reading of this interview was indeed of Coltrane resisting a distortion of his project, although I now believe the alternative interpretation I offer better captures the commitments Coltrane was concerned to defend.

[8] I put my point this way in order to emphasize the ephemerality of musical performance generally, and improvised performances in particular. One might perhaps point to recordings of performances and object that they fulfill the function of a stable and shareable object which can be designated 'the artwork'. However, there are those who counter that recordings are not adequate representations of improvised performances; they preserve only the music that issues forth from the performance, not the interaction of performers and audience that forges a sense of musical community during the life of the performance. Since this emergence of musical community is what I see as most important in improvisation, I am committed to the view that there is no tangible and enduring artwork independent of the performance.

[9] We can infer Coltrane's implicit commitment to social reform from his responses, discussed earlier in this section, to Kofsky's questions about whether there is any 'shared project' between him and Malcolm X ("we must make an effort to try and make [things] better … socially, musically, politically" *Black Nationalism*, 227), and from his comments that jazz expresses ideals such as peace and solidarity (227). It is also evident in his interview with Paul Zimmerman: "I think music can make the world better and, if I'm qualified, I want to do it" ("Death of a Jazzman, *Newsweek*, 31 July 1967 – qtd. in Porter). Specific support for the racial equality sought by black nationalists can be deduced from Kofsky's account of how they first came to meet: in 1961, Coltrane had agreed to do a benefit concert for the Students for Racial Equality at the University of California, with proceeds going to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Kofsky was the student liaison (*Black Nationalism*, 221-2). (Sadly, adds Kofsky, the concert never took place because, in the days before the Free Speech Movement radicalized UC campuses, Chancellor Clark Kerr would not permit on-campus fundraising for SNCC.)

[10] This preference in labeling was because, in Coltrane's view, the term 'classical music' picks out a country's art music and distinguishes it from that country's popular music. Thus, there are many 'classical musics' (including, but not limited to, European musics) and terming his experimental practices 'American classical music' struck him as more helpful and less vague than the term 'jazz' with all its baggage (*Jazz Revolution* 418-9).

[11] Originally quoted in *The Arts*, 1923, and reprinted in *New York Times*, obituary, 1973.

[12] The important thing to note about power relations, as Foucault makes clear in his interview with Raulet, is that Foucault is not referencing official (political) relations between the state and the individual. Rather he is talking about power in a wider, more general sense, those multiple relations which play out "in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration" ("Structuralism and Post-Structuralism" 451). Power relations are thus in evidence wherever there is an organized, or organizable, network of social interactions.

[13] This term has undergone some interesting transformations in 20th century philosophizing and theorizing. In Jean-Paul Sartre's work, 'the Other' is the consciousness that is not mine and the term is used to analyze aspects of consciousness and action that are oriented towards social interaction, i.e., being-for-others (*Being and Nothingness*, 301-556). Simone de Beauvoir takes up the term as a political-epistemic category and, claiming that "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (*The Second Sex* xvii), she conducts an analysis of Western society in which the Other is seen as gendered, the inconsequential and socially constructed female against whom the (male) Subject measures and deploys his subjectivity. In the postcolonialist/anticolonialist discourses to which Edward Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith are contributing, the Other continues to function as a political-epistemic category but it is now a cultural Other, not a gendered one. As is the case with Beauvoir's usage, the postcolonial Other (the one who

[14] My reference to "the artworld, broadly construed" is intended to encompass all those who have an interest in artistic production and reception: most obviously, the artists themselves, critics and theorists, and the audiences who experience the artist's work, but also those who nurture the cultural traditions from which specific artistic practices arise.

[15] Proliferation of meaning is closed down by virtue of the fact that Shakespeare the author-function draws a boundary around a certain set of texts in exactly the same way as Shakespeare the author. From the point of view of a hypothetical scholar hoping to generate a radical and diverse array of meanings through interrogating intertextual connections in, say, *The Tempest* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, it makes no difference whether we ground our notions of special connections between texts in authors or author-functions. Either way, *The Tempest* gets grouped with other Shakespeare texts and carefully locked away with the rest of the 'great books' (of English literature).

[16] Note that I am here conflating discussion of artistic meanings and aesthetic values. This is done purely for pragmatic reasons of maintaining clarity. Foucault's interest, here in this essay, is in artistic meanings whereas my interest is in aesthetic values. While the distinction between meanings and values is obviously going to be significant in some discussions of artistic practices, I do not believe that anything I say here depends on, or otherwise references, that distinction.

[17] A position like this applied to Coltrane is much less tenable; his experimental project needs to be understood within the context of his early orientation to bebop so the argument that it stands alone in inaugurating a tradition is less persuasive, and the thesis that his music has accrued meanings and values that were not present at creation is not obviously plausible. Nevertheless, it is possible that such an argument could be advanced, and I think it should be weighed against other interpretations of Coltrane's project so it can be evaluated based on how well it reveals interesting facets of his work.

[18] This is not to say that formalism should never be used as a tool in this context, only that it should be a self-conscious and fully contextualized formalism (of the kind that Ajay Heble employs in *Landing on the Wrong Note* to discuss Charlie Parker's contributions to bebop).

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