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## Philosophico-Musical Vision: Badiou, Žižek, and Music

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Žižek and Badiou deploy widely divergent examples for their philosophical and political projects. Žižek is famed for his idiosyncratic analyses of film and Badiou for his work on Beckett and Mallarmé. Yet whilst their engagement in these fields is well known the role of music in their work is often strangely overlooked. In Žižek's recent book, *Living in the End Times*, (2010b) he sketches a utopian community of art, music, and misfits that opens up new ways of approaching performance and composition. In Badiou's *Logics of Worlds*, (2009) the clearest articulations of Badiou's conception of the subject, world, event, and truth are found in his analysis of music. When they approach music, they employ analyses of both its linguistic dimension – lyrics or libretti – and its sound. Both Žižek and Badiou have approached the *notes-themselves*. In the same way that Žižek and Badiou are often in dialogue with each other about their philosophical and political positions, they are also in a dialogue about music, the role of the artist, and their readings of specific pieces of music.

Žižek's and Badiou's approach to music cannot be described as aesthetic. Žižek rejects both historicism and aestheticism as proper approaches to musical art:

historicist reductionism and abstract aestheticism are two sides of the same coin: a work is eternal not against its historical context, but through the way it answers the challenge of its historical moment. One needs to *abstract* from historical trivia, to *decontextualize* the work, to tear it out of the context in which it was originally embedded. (Žižek 2010a: 3)

The goal of Žižek's psychoanalytical reading is not to locate or define the beautiful in music or redeem certain musical figures in their historical context. Rather, the purpose of these readings is often to locate something terrible – the Hegelian “Night of the World”; or the Wagnerian “deadly immersion into the unremitting *jouissance* of the night” (Žižek 2002: 219) – that lies in a work. Badiou's approach to art locates the possibility and the site of the new in an artistic world, where the affect of art is the “*pleasure* of a new perceptual intensity”. (Badiou 2009: 76) Against a personal value placed on art they both seek to find universals, whilst at the same time not dismissing the particular or individual. In this essay, I will explore the Badiouian and Žižekian views on the musical artist as subject and their encounters with Wagner. I will also offer some challenges to their views and provide an application of their theories to jazz, an area left largely unexamined by both of them.

## **1. The Sound of Žižek's Communist Culture: Rammstein Today, Satie Tomorrow**

In *Living in the End Times*, Žižek describes numerous examples of a “properly communistic culture”. In a typically dialectical Žižekian move, the musical examples shift from the quiet proto-ambient music of Eric Satie, to the *Neue Deutsche Härte* of the German rock musicians Rammstein. These widely divergent genres of music represent Žižek's utopian communist culture. For Žižek, the proper role of the musical artist is to organize an egalitarian space. He explicates this position through a reading of Kafka's *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk*:

She does not bring to her public – the people – any deep spiritual content; what she produces is the difference between the people's “utter silence” and their silence “as such”, marked as silence by way of its opposition to her.  
(Žižek 2010b: 367)

The community brought together by her singing is one without a Master. It is a purely egalitarian space. Whilst here the musical artist provides a *point-de-capiton* for the community, the artist does not occupy a separate social status from anyone else in the community. The mouse folk assemble for her singing, but she is not the main attraction.

She provides only the context for their gathering together. The vision of the musical artist as a genius, a hero, or a celebrity is not compatible with this conception. In this sense, Žižek does away with the godlike world-artist as well as the Nietzschean notion of Dionysian art where one “feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him” (Nietzsche 2000: 37). There is no automaton like uniformity – no one is fastened to his or her neighbor, they exist fully with all their eccentricities. However, these eccentricities no longer divide them into separate groups. Žižek’s understanding of the role of musical performance in his utopian culture is not bacchanalian, nor is it ascetic. The Žižekian audience, formed through performance, operates in a Hegelian register of the Universal, Individual, and Particular: “ritualistic immersion into particular substance, individual idiosyncrasy” (Žižek 2010b: 374). The universal, which in this instance represents the equality of the group, is kept in check through the particular substance of the crowd and their individual idiosyncrasies.

This is not a call for the return of events like Woodstock – which are inscribed with the super-ego’s command to enjoy – or an attempt to rid society of musical performance and the collective space that it provides. Žižek describes three leftist positions towards musical culture operating today. First, more libertarian leftists “see enjoyment as an emancipatory power: every oppressive power has to rely on libidinal repression, and the first act of liberation is to set the libido free.” (Žižek 2010b: 373) Second, puritanical leftists see musical enjoyment as “a source of corruption and decadence, an instrument used by those in power to maintain their hold over us, so that the first act of liberation is to break its spell.” (Žižek 2010b: 373) The last position, one that Žižek credits Badiou with, claims that *jouissance* is a “nameless ‘infinite’, a neutral substance which can be instrumentalized in a number of ways”. (Žižek 2010b: 373)

After introducing Josephine, Žižek delves fully into pop culture through the German rock musicians Rammstein. Despite the very different styles, Žižek argues that, like Josephine, Rammstein illustrate a conception of the artist as an organizer of a shared egalitarian space. Žižek writes, “Rammstein undermine totalitarian ideology not with an ironic distance towards the rituals that they immitate, but by directly confronting us with its obscene materiality and thereby suspending its efficacy.” (Žižek 2010b: 387) Whilst Rammstein are normally associated with totalitarian imagery – elements of the American media even associating them with the Columbine school shootings<sup>i</sup> – Žižek claims that they effectively bypass ideology through an overidentification with the *sinthome*. In 2006, Rammstein released the song “Mann Gegen Mann”<sup>ii</sup> with an accompanying music video,

directed by Jonas Åkerlund, which featured explicitly homoerotic images. The song's thematic, lyrics<sup>iii</sup>, and its video's aesthetic, aimed to directly confront homophobic attitudes in an explicit, perhaps even overstated, way. In this way, Rammstein force their listeners to confront their own potential homophobic prejudices as well as undermine the ideology – one that they are often mistakenly associated with – that drives neo-Nazi groups throughout Europe.

We can contrast Rammstein to the true neo-Nazi music of the Rock Against Communism organization of the late 1970s.<sup>iv</sup> Embodying British Nationalism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia, Rock Against Communism stood for right-wing ideology in its purest form. In opposition Rammstein are effectively a 'neutral substance', who despite their sound and appearance have the potential to neutralize totalitarian signifiers.

Even though Éric Satie occupies an entirely different realm of sound to Rammstein (one can hardly imagine a more distinct musical contrast) Žižek argues that the former also serves to illustrate his notion of utopian communism. Éric Satie's music places the role of the artist as an equal with the audience to such an extent that during the performance of one his pieces he commanded the audience to "walk around, eat and drink, Talk, for heaven's sake! Move around! Don't listen!" (Davis, 2007: 128) Žižek notes that Satie's music is a kind of predecessor to the commercialized music that pervades waiting rooms and shopping malls. As Sartre describes it:

...they have a special music, heard also at marriages and First Communions, called: Music by Muzak. In apartments there is a faucet. It is turned on and Muzak musics: flirtation, tears, dancing. The faucet is turned off, and Muzak musics no more: the lovers and communicants are put to bed. (Sartre 1994: 65)

However, whereas the goal of that commoditized form of music is to cover up the background noises that arise in those spaces – thus easing the anxiety of shoppers or those who are waiting for service – Satie's music aims to foreground those very same noises so that they become audible and part of the music. Satie in a sense shifts the background to the centre, whilst the music is employed merely to fill in the spaces in between. Listening to Satie, a new sense of time confronts us. Instead of building to a climax, the music is subject to reconfiguration and differential ordering. The listener must choose how much or little time they are willing to dedicate to a piece of music rather than relying on a pre-configured length.

One of the first articles to appear in the press concerning Satie's "furniture music"

was in the first issue of the French *Vogue*. In an article about home décor, perhaps to clear up confusion on whether or not furniture music was some kind of decorating trend, the writer claimed that it was “up to you to find a way to hear this *musique d’ameublement* and to devise an opinion on the topic. But that has nothing to do with the furniture we’re so taken up with this season.” (Davis 2007: 128) Does Satie’s music signify only posh modern homes and individualism? Žižek claims that Satie’s works constitutes a collective intimacy:

egalitarian communism in music: a music which shifts the listener’s attention from the great Theme to its inaudible background, in the same way that communist theory and politics refocus our attention away from heroic individuals to the immense work and suffering of the invisible ordinary people (Žižek 2010b: 381)

If one listens intently to Satie in an attempt to make up their own mind about his music, they miss its true purpose.

For John Cage, the composer of the infamous composition without notes, *4’33”*, it was also the background noise of the audience – the creaking theater hall, the endless coughing, and the change rattling in patron’s pockets – which was the real music. No longer only filling up the dramatic silences between notes, the background noise becomes autonomous. There is also a connection between Satie and Cage’s compositions in terms of time. They both – albeit in differing ways – sidestep the world of classical harmony by foregrounding time’s primacy and importance. Cage viewed the forgetting of the question of time in musical composition as serving to “practically shipwreck the art on an island of decadence.” (Pritchett 1993: 39)

## **2. Badiou’s Artistic Subject of Music**

How then do we fit Jospheine, Satie, and Rammstein within Badiou’s conception of the artistic subject? Early in *Logics of Worlds* (2009), in the section, *Scholium: A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of Subject*, Badiou sketches in thirteen points a very clear picture of his conception of an artistic subject. The section is a broad reading of 20<sup>th</sup> century classical music. Badiou’s constant referent when discussing music or the artistic subject is Arnold Schoenberg and the Schoenberg-event. It is the event whereby the twelve tones of the chromatic scale no longer relate to each other through the laws of harmony, but are treated equally.

Whilst atonal music is often described as cold and intellectual, it in fact posits the

total equality of all the notes in the scale – it is egalitarian sound. Is the appearance of atonal music, in Adorno's words, "the product of historical development, until in Hegel's famous simile, it cast off the seed leaf beneath which it had ripened and stood revealed as something qualitatively new"? (Adorno 1999: 55) Badiou's description of the Schoenberg-event does not simply repeat a Hegelian take on the development of serial music. The Schoenberg event breaks the existing music world of tonality into two. The atonal subject is a creative relation between the Schoenberg-event and the world of tonality. Something new appears, but the previous world of classical harmony is not entirely cast off:

Classical music, however, does not stop. The event therefore, happens not in this world (symbolic order) as it currently exists, rather it happens for this world, as a process with and through it, enriching it by punching a hole in current knowledge, presenting us with a truth; while a subject, for Badiou, is precisely the relationship between such an event and the world that the event affirmatively negates as an entirely new commitment emerges. (Jagodzinski 2010: 28)

Badiou locates the possibility of a new world in music, but as he makes clear, the event is not a specific type of composition - the twelve tone-method is only a trace of the event, it is not the event in-itself. (Badiou 2009: 80) The body of Badiou's musical subject is the musical works themselves – such as Schoenberg's first twelve-tone compositions. There is perhaps some congruence here with Sartre's statements about genius:

"There is no genius other than that which is expressed in works of art; the genius of Proust resides in the totality of his works; the genius of Racine is found in the series of his tragedies, outside of which there is nothing." (Sartre 2007: 37)

The subject proper is the "history of a new form, as it is incorporated in works." (Badiou 2009 : 81) If the affect of art is pleasure, what of those who are unable to find any pleasure in atonal music, even if they appreciate its intellectual thrust? Badiou's response to this is simply that they "posses a knowledge of what they love but they remain ignorant of its truth. It's a matter of usage and continuation. It is necessary to add one's own listening, patiently, to the body of the new music. Pleasure will come, as an additional bonus" (Badiou 2009: 85)

It is Badiou's figures of the subject – faithful, reactive, and obscure – that are created by the Schoenberg-event and even perhaps hinted at by Schoenberg himself:

May I add that I believe, when the movement of the reactionaries has died away, that music will return to composing with 12 tones. There will probably be various attempts at promoting coherence through this method, but I hope successors will not forget that it is not only 12 tone, but that the accent is on 'composing' (Schoenberg 1987: 267)

The figures that Schoenberg elucidates are what Badiou describes as the reactive subject and the obscure subject. The reactive subject is the composer who simply wants to dismiss the twelve-tone method and return to the previous world of harmony as though the event has not occurred. The obscure subject is the reaction of the Nazi's who sought to destroy the world of atonal music, describing Schoenberg's work as 'degenerate art'. Schoenberg also brings to light a *disaster* in Badiou's terminology – the absolutization of one truth over all others. The composer must not assert that the truth of their world is the one artistic Truth that dominates. The atonal world of music is not the only world of music and slavish devotion to it, the kind of devotion that places one technique over composition itself, is a musical disaster.

Badiou does not think that one can rely on the subject of the Schoenberg-event today. The previous world of tonality and the world of atonality are "scattered into unorganized bodies and vain ceremonies" (Badiou 2009: 89). Similarly one cannot rely on the postmodern eclecticism of today's musical world. The vast divergence of styles that one would find on the average iPod – what Badiou calls the "plurality of 'musics' – folklore, classicism, pop, exoticism, jazz, and baroque reaction in the same festive bag." (Badiou 2009: 89) – are intimately tied to the logics of today's digital capitalism.

### **3. A Night at the Opera: Žižek, Badiou, and Wagner**

There can be no doubt that Wagner is irredeemable as person. His nefarious anti-Semitism – "the sinister realm of Wagner's reactionary outlook" (Adorno 2005: 17) – will remain an asterisk ever present on his art and writings. Yet despite this, Wagner's works persist. They are performed around the world – even on Israeli television and radio where there remains a ban on his works.<sup>v</sup> Why save Wagner? The basis of Žižek's reading of Wagner is the conviction that the latter's writing undermines its own explicit ideological project. Wagner has remains a constant figure of reference for Žižek's work. The myth of the wound only healed by the sword that smote it, and Amfortas' undead state serve as a metaphor for elements within Žižek's reading of both Lacanian psychoanalysis and the Hegelian dialectic.<sup>vi</sup>

Žižek's psychoanalytic readings of Wagner's operas seek to go beyond the typical historicist and aesthetic interpretation of his works. Even more than with his analyses of film, the reader approaching Žižek's writing on Wagner is confronted with intricate plot details, alternative scenarios, and references to specific productions or hypothetical future productions. If this is a transgression, Žižek's strategy is to sin boldly. The question of Wagner begins with a consideration of which dimension of his works should be considered. Music, libretti, and staging are all important components of opera. What will be analyzed? What will be the basis of critique? In his recent writings,<sup>vii</sup> Žižek claims that:

One should turn around the standard notion of the primacy of music in opera, the idea that words (libretto) and stage action are just a pretext for the true focus, the music itself, so that the truth is on the side of music, and it is the music which delivers the true emotional stance ... It is absolutely crucial to bear in mind what goes on on stage, to listen to words also. (Žižek 2010a: 11)

Here Badiou and Žižek are in disagreement. Badiou locates the true content behind Wagner's works in the music – “dramatic possibilities are created by the music” (Badiou 2010: 89) – whilst Žižek discovers meaning via, what Badiou calls, a Lacanian hermeneutical reading of libretti and stagings.

One cannot approach Wagner without also dealing with the question of leitmotif. In *In Search of Wagner*, (2005) Adorno claims that the use of leitmotif points to the future commodification of music. In opposition, Badiou finds that leitmotif and the “endless melody” of Wagner's compositions do not seek a Hegelian totality, but actually point towards transformation without finality. (Badiou 2010: 131) Žižek accepts Adorno's criticism of leitmotif, but posits that Adorno's own philosophy consists of leitmotif like phrases and thus that this criticism is fundamentally a self-criticism. In response to this, can we not claim that Žižek's style also relies on leitmotif? When Žižek evokes the Lacanian Real, is this not a leitmotiv announcing the entrance of certain figure? Adrian Johnston describes the Real as a motif in Žižek's philosophy:

the prominence, in Žižek's rhetoric, of a morbid fascination with the mortal Real-made-flesh is indicative of something more than just a personal, idiosyncratic fixation. Instead, this motif is directly revelatory at the impersonal, philosophical level. (Johnston 2008: 24)

Žižek's rumbling style, with its sudden breaks and diversions, is held together with leitmotif. Is this a negative feature of his philosophy? On the question of 'endless melody'



and leitmotif Badiou replies that:

Wagner still represents a music for the future ... I would say that Wagner's connecting of leitmotif and totality, of leitmotif and 'endless melody' (since – the description is not completely erroneous – this is how Wagner's lesson about first replacing the operatic set numbers with 'endless melody' and then weaving it all together with leitmotifs is often summed up), is nevertheless a step in the direction of totality-free greatness (Badiou 2010: 133)

Whether this move is successful or not is still uncertain, but the Žižekian Hegel who's Absolute Knowledge is totality-free, and who's leitmotifs include the infamous "Night of the World" and Žižek's own repeated use of the phrase from *Parsifal*, "*die Wunde schliesst der Speer nur, der sie schlug*", certainly point towards an attempt at "totality-free greatness" in Žižek's philosophy.

In *Opera's Second Death*, Žižek makes an exceedingly bold claim about Wagner's works: "what if *Tristan* and *Parsifal* simply and effectively are the (from a certain standpoint at least) the two single greatest works of art in the history of humankind?" In terms of Žižek's reading of *Parsifal* we should here note that it is heavily influenced by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's filmed version often remembered for its transformation of *Parsifal* into a young woman at the end of the second act. Žižek reads this transformation as opening a space for a post-patriarchal community or ceremony, effectively allowing the opera to be read as a feminist treatise calling for a new Joan of Arc. For Badiou also, this transformation is a radicalizing moment. Badiou asserts that, in terms of the sexes, this manoeuvre cancels the difference between them. (Badiou 2010: 113)<sup>viii</sup>

In opposition to Badiou and Žižek's reading, Richard Mohr argues that the original staging of *Parsifal*, with its homoerotic overtones, is the truly subversive version pointing to a future gay male religion without gods. (Mohr 1992: 213) For Mohr, it is Syberberg's version that plays the role of a heterosexual foil seeking to rid the play of its homosexual content. However, the power of Syberberg's film shows the potential that alternate stagings of Wagner's operas have. Both Žižek and Badiou assert that alternate styles of presentation are essential for his works today and the one should not be beholden to Wagner's own conceptions for the dramatic presentation of his work.

For Žižek, Badiou, and Mohr the questions raised by *Parsifal* are theologico-philosophical in nature. Nietzsche, in his ultimate rejection of Wagner believed that *Parsifal* was a recapitulation on Wagner's part towards Christianity. In Badiou's view the finale of *Parsifal*, with its declaration that the "Redeemer has been Redeemed" is perhaps the first

occurrence of the *deconstruction* of Christianity. For Mohr, against Nietzsche's perception of the opera as plainly Christian, the ceremony that concludes *Parsifal* places the human community as the saviour of God:

Difference, power, and killing within the old order become transformed into affinity between like and like in the new. Sacred beyond trading yet of human origin, the fundamental value ritualistically enacted and advanced in this "sacred dramatic festival" is equality between persons ... (Mohr 1992: 138)

The nature of the communal ritual during the finale points toward the difficult question of ceremony in modern society. For Badiou, the finale raises several questions. Is ceremony compatible with democracy? In the current state of the situation is ceremony possible? Badiou argues that today ceremony is both necessary and impossible. Thus in Badiouian terms, ceremony is a possibility for an *event*.

#### **4. Challenges and Missed Opportunities**

Badiou presents the critique of Wagner as a rite of passage for the great thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the same way, perhaps jazz has also served this function for contemporary European philosophers. If Wagner represents an attempt to deal with the consequences of culture before the Second World War, the encounter with jazz represents the aftermath and the encounter with African-American, Weimar, and post-war culture. In contrast to Adorno's early statements on Jazz, where he claims that it masquerades as revolutionary music while asserting bourgeois individualism. Badiou describes jazz as the "great creation of the American blacks" (Badiou 2005: 92), and counts it as one of the three major types of music that occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, Badiou only describes the major artists of jazz as stretching from Louis Armstrong to Thelonious Monk. This leaves out the incredible contributions made by artists such as Ornette Coleman and the other great free jazz artists. Badiou's contention that all popular music after Monk – including rock music and electronic music – should be counted as post-jazz 'youth music' is similarly suspect.

Of course, one should not be afraid to apply Badiou's conception of the artistic subject to works of jazz. Is free jazz an event?<sup>ix</sup> If it is an event, its trace is the succinct statement by Albert Ayer: "It's not about notes anymore". (Nisenson 1997: 181). The body is the works themselves: Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*,

*Ascension* by John Coltrane, Albert Ayler's "Ghosts", or Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures*. The subject of free jazz is the history of the new forms incorporated into new works. The real of this subject is the relation between the trace, in this case that "It's not about the notes anymore", and its musical works.

Just as with atonal classical music, by the end of the 1970s, the body of free jazz had begun to dissipate, and many of the early innovators had reached untimely deaths. The split body of free jazz was encapsulated in the difference between free jazz as performance and recorded free jazz, in so far as it was no longer simply possible, following Sartre, to assert that "Jazz is like bananas – it must be consumed on the spot" (Sartre 1994: 64).

Albert Ayer is an example of an artist who, after initial fidelity, betrayed the free-jazz event. Whilst his early performances both pioneered and exemplified free jazz, by the end of his career, his recordings had drifted into pop music. This can be seen in the shift from the brilliance of "The Truth is Marching In" – a performance that contains the entire history of jazz while transcending it – to the only slight variation on 1960's pop music that he offered later in his career.

Many claim that free jazz effectively killed jazz. The English critic Phillip Larking even went so far as to say that: "Coltrane sounds like nothing so much as a club bore who has been metamorphosized by a fellow-member of magical powers into a pair of bagpipes." (Nisenson 1997: 183) Yet what such criticisms miss is that, far from being completely spontaneous, with the music appearing *ex nihilo*, free jazz requires a certain amount of discipline. In his interview with Derrida, Ornette Coleman underscores this point:

When I was doing free jazz, most people thought that I just picked up my saxophone and played whatever was going through my head, without any rule, but that wasn't true ... People on the outside think that it's a form of extraordinary freedom, but I think that it's a limitation. (Coleman and Derrida 2004: 320-321)

The disposition that posits that free jazz is only noise must be contested. Following Badiou one could say: "It is necessary to add one's own listening, patiently, to the body of the new music. Pleasure will come, as an additional bonus." (Badiou 2009: 86)

## 5. Conclusion

The question underpinning Badiou's artistic subject and Žižek's communist culture is

ultimately: can ceremony possibly play a role in politics? Is it fundamentally totalitarian?

Here Badiou replies:

It is probably both necessary and impossible today, but that is not a serious problem; that is the way things often are. Genuine problems are like that, both necessary and impossible. And possibility arrives right when you no longer expect it. That is what an event is. (Badiou 2010: 159)

This is the same problematic raised by their politics. The ideology of late capitalism asserts that new forms of high-art and new forms of politics are impossible, and will be forever impossible. Žižek's communist culture is an attempt to show that ceremony is possible, that there are communal celebrations, gatherings, and performances that are not fundamentally totalitarian:

This is how we should answer the reproach that "communism" is being used here as a magic word, an empty sign lacking any precise or positive vision of a new society, merely a ritualized token of belonging to a new initiatic community: there is no opposition between liturgy (ceremony) and historical opening: far from an obstacle to change, liturgy keeps the space for radical change open (Žižek 2010b: 378)

- i See Ralph W. Larkin's *Comprehending Columbine*, page 124.
- ii In English "Man Against Man"
- iii For a translation of the lyrics see: [http://herzeleid.com/en/lyrics/rosenrot/mann\\_gegen\\_mann](http://herzeleid.com/en/lyrics/rosenrot/mann_gegen_mann)
- iv For a detailed history of Rock Against Communism see *Sounds of Hate* (2004) by John Cotter in *Fascism: Post-War Fascism*.
- v For a history of Wagner and his relationship with Israel see Na'ama Sheffi's *Between Collective Memory and Manipulation: The Holocaust, Wagner and the Israelis* and *The Ring of Myths*.
- vi See *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989: 83).
- vii Žižek's position on truth and music has evolved over time: "Instead of merely imitating the affective features of verbal speech, music should be given the right to "speak for itself" – in contrast to the deceiving verbal speech, in music, it is, to paraphrase Lacan, the truth itself which speaks. (Žižek 2004: 18)
- viii For Badiou this is similar to St. Paul's radicalization and could also "represent the redemption of deathly sensuality and obscene *jouissance* in which the Christianity of the past has exhausted itself." (Badiou 2010: 113)
- ix Žižek's notion that "a truly creative act not only restructures the field of future possibilities but also restructures the past, resignifying the previous contingent traces as pointing toward the present." (Žižek 2002: 103) Surely, this applies to the creative acts of the free jazz musicians. After free jazz, how would it be possible to approach bebop and the older forms without seeing them as pointing to free jazz? Where we find the event, the reactive subject is never far away.

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