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Race, Consecration and the ‘Music Outside’? The making of the British Jazz Avant-Garde: 1968-1973

Introduction: Making British Jazz ... and Race

In 1968 the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), the quasi-governmental agency responsible for providing public support for the arts, formed its first ‘Jazz Sub-Committee’. Its main business was to allocate bursaries usually consisting of no more than a few hundred pounds to jazz composers and musicians. The principal stipulation was that awards be used to develop creative activity that might not otherwise attract commercial support. Bassist, composer and bandleader Graham Collier was the first recipient – he received £500 to support his work on what became the *Workpoints* composition. In the early years of the scheme, further beneficiaries included Ian Carr, Mike Gibbs, Tony Oxley, Keith Tippett, Mike Taylor, Evan Parker and Mike Westbrook – all prominent members of what was seen as a new, emergent and distinctively British avant-garde jazz scene.

Our point of departure in this chapter is that what might otherwise be regarded as a bureaucratic footnote in the annals of the ACGB was actually a crucial moment in the history of British jazz. Firstly, the badge of legitimacy conferred by the Arts Council meant that it was now more difficult to dismiss jazz as a pejoratively ‘popular’ or ‘inferior’ form of music, as had so often been the case before. Secondly, not only had jazz attained value in the eyes of the establishment, but it was now regarded as an indigenous and locally-specific cultural form. In the eyes of the cultural elite (or at least one part of it), jazz could now be *British* art music¹. We raise these issues to underscore a central concern of the chapter; namely to explore the cultural values that underpinned the making of jazz as British art music at a particular historical conjuncture, and the implications of these values for the relationship of jazz and race. We deliberately use the term ‘making’ to indicate how British jazz (of either a popular or art variety) was not a pre-given or self-evident entity, but a *social construction*; a form that had to be, both consciously and unconsciously, assembled from the available

¹ This recognition is interesting in so far as – and writers such as Simon Frith (1988) and George McKay (2005) have noted this too – the Arts Council had long been seen as antipathetic towards non-traditional art forms and particularly anti-American in its attitudes. Its support for jazz, however tentative at this stage, signalled some significant thawing in these prejudices.

repertoire of musical styles and socio-cultural and economic discourses, practices and resources in circulation in the period. Our proposal is that the *consecration* of jazz, in its distinctively British ‘high’ art form, was only achieved once it became recognised as akin to European classical music, or, more markedly, as a vernacular expression of European experimental art music.²

It will be argued, however, that this shift carried something of a cost. The elevation of British jazz to the status of high art, while welcome in terms of exposing jazz to the possibility of public financial support, was also an act of *reduction* in so far as it served to disguise the emerging diversity of musical forms and peoples that actually underpinned the British jazz scene in the conjuncture of the late 60s and early 70s. Thus, consecration not only involved a rejection of the ‘trad’ or ‘mainstream’ popular idioms that had hitherto been seen to mark the customary style of British jazz, but also the raced and nationally-specific history of jazz, both as a black American music and as an emergent British post-colonial form. Over the longer term, the possibility of black musicians and black Britons finding a prominent role in British jazz conceived as ‘art’ was made more difficult even while, as we shall see, a select number of African diasporic musicians were able to move up into the newly constructed enclave of jazz-art.

This paradox shows in microcosm how jazz as an African diasporic music was configured in completely different ways in the US and the UK. In the US, jazz was historically identified with black people, the descendents of slaves. To the extent that it then assumed the status of art (first mooted in the 1930s and then more thoroughly elaborated from bebop onwards; see DeVaux, 1991) it did so as an African diasporic form. This, it should be acknowledged, is by no means an unproblematic claim.³ Nevertheless the overwhelming importance of black musicians in jazz innovation until at least the 1970s - combined with increasing recognition of the form by the US cultural apparatus - made it difficult to rebut ideas that jazz was not just black art music, but an indigenous, perhaps the only indigenous, art made by Americans. Conversely, in imperial and post-imperial Britain jazz was *prima facie* an interloper, and its dual character of being black and American confirmed that very point for cultural

² The notion of consecration in art is developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1993). He means by it a social process through which a symbolic genre or school is both legitimated and elevated so that it becomes endowed with cultural distinction, and is canonised as an art form.

³ Among other writings see Lees (2001), Sudhalter (2001), Teachout (1995) for attempts to deny that jazz was historically an African American form, and Monson (2007, 15-16) for a discussion of such writing as a ‘white resentment narrative’.

conservatives and racists, while also raising problems for left-leaning progressives who were the advocates of jazz as art.⁴ The latter group faced the following problem: if white British musicians were to establish credentials for their music as a viable alternative to the US model then to what extent must that project also involve repudiation of the raced nature of the American form?

There was a parallel difficulty in the emerging British blues scene. As Viv Stanshall from pop parodists the Bonzo Dog Band put it, ‘can blue men sing the whites?’ (Bonzo Dog Band, 1968). Most of the young British blues musicians, however, had resolved the problem within a few years by affiliating to the new genre of ‘rock’ in which the black origins of the music were more or less effaced. This strategy was not available in jazz just because there was no obvious new musical-discursive space ‘beyond’ the genre, on the model of rock. A few musicians did indeed repudiate the term jazz, identifying their music as ‘free improvisation’ instead.⁵ But most were not willing to take this step, often for the good pragmatic reason that their musical practice remained grounded in modern jazz conventions based on motivic statement, harmonic development and ‘swing’. The issue, then, was how to be British, to make art music and yet also be part of the style called jazz – whose formative history was American *and* black.

The cultural apparatus and the challenge for British jazz

In reflecting on the knotty problem of race and the consecration of jazz in the UK, perhaps the most appropriate place to start is with the challenge posed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the arts establishment, or what C. Wright Mills called the ‘cultural apparatus’ (Sawchuk 2001). Under what terms and conditions would jazz have to conform in order to pass into the field of consecrated art? At the beginning of the period the keynote was undoubtedly scepticism towards the very idea that one could support jazz. As John Cruft, then the Music Director of the Council, and (unusually) a supporter of jazz, rather drily averred in an internal communiqué in 1968: ‘we are venturing cautiously further into the jazz world’ (Cruft, 1968). What was clear initially, however, was that not all jazz would be

⁴ This conundrum first emerged in the 1950s. As George McKay has shown, for the post-War generation of British writers and intellectuals there were ‘mixed feelings towards jazz as an American export culture’ (2005, p. 50).

⁵ The free-improvising group AMM, for example, made it clear that (despite the backgrounds of most members in jazz) they wanted to break away from the genre (Lewis 1996, p. 105)

deemed worthy of support. The fact that only certain kinds of jazz would come under consideration was outlined most forcefully by a young ACGB Music Assistant named Keith Winter, who concluded in a draft paper for internal circulation that, 'It is the Art-motivated music, so called Modern Jazz, which requires Arts Council financial aid for it to advance' (Winter 1968). By implication Winter was alluding to other less deserving forms. In particular, there was big band dance music which although in continuing decline after its heyday in the 1940s, still had something of the jazz aura about it and could be sometimes be appreciated in its original context of the dancehall, as well as on radio and television. There was also 'trad', the peculiarly British 1920s New Orleans revival movement, associated with the political left, which had achieved a measure of popularity in the late 1950s and early 60s. This could be heard in pubs and small venues up and down the country (McKay 2003). Neither of these commercial forms, Winter was in effect saying, should be considered for financial support.

Yet it was not self-evident that British jazz even in its 'Modern' guise had sufficient aesthetic credentials to satisfy all interests or observers. While the approval of the ACGB was an important landmark in recognition of British jazz art, we should note that consecration remained a controversial and contested process. By way of illustration; in 1968 the ACGB wrote to leading music colleges requesting information on how jazz was catered for in their syllabi. The responses were revealing. W S Lloyd Webber⁶, the Principal of the London College of Music, replied to explain that its facilities were given over only to the study of 'serious' music and that 'no requests had been received' for jazz tuition (ACGB, 1968, no pagination). Only slightly less dismissively, Allen Percival, Principal of Guildhall School of Music and Drama offered that as an 'old jazz player, I know that you cannot teach it and in any case I do not think you should' (ibid). The Royal College of Music claimed to have 'things of more importance' (ibid.) to consider in its training offer, while the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester more helpfully responded that - although no jazz was taught - students were free to 'forgather and play' in their own time as they saw fit (ibid.). What would become the Leeds College of Music had actually been running a 'Jazz and Light Music' diploma course supported by Leeds City Council since 1965 (Hall n/d). But this was exceptional. We might conclude then that the ACGB were somewhat ahead of the music education establishment in taking jazz seriously.

⁶ Father of Andrew and Julian Lloyd Webber

Furthermore, it is clear that the establishment of jazz as a ‘serious’ and national art music had only been partially enabled by the national public service broadcaster. While the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) traditionally played an important role in nurturing popular musicians, particularly through its long history of radio broadcasting and attendant employment of musicians (especially in the swing and big band era, see Scannell and Cardiff 1991), it would be reasonable to say the jazz world and the BBC had always approached one another in somewhat ambivalent terms. Jazz musicians tended to regard the BBC as a wealthy, occasionally generous, but mostly rather diffident patron, not least because of the ways in which the Corporation had historically divided its music into ‘serious’ and ‘light entertainment’, with jazz occupying the less auspicious (and significantly less resourced) category⁷. In August 1969 for instance there were only five weekly programmes with ‘jazz’ in their titles across all four BBC radio channels, and this in a period when it was still a relatively popular and encompassing genre in Britain (*Melody Maker*, 1969, 15).

Antagonism by jazz musicians towards the BBC was certainly in evidence at the moment under discussion. In the early 1970s, the determination of practitioners to establish jazz as an art music led to a series of efforts to encourage the BBC to recognise the serious credentials of the genre. In a co-signed letter to the August 1971 edition of the journal *Musical Opinion*, notables including John Dankworth, John Surman (jazz musicians), Don Banks (composer), Michael Tyzack (painter), Eric Hobsbawm (historian) and Jack Brymer (classical musician) railed against a BBC decision to delete video tapes of jazz musicians recorded for BBC2 television – as well as taking the opportunity to register their displeasure at how jazz broadcasting mainly consisted of ‘off-peak tokenism on (Radio) Network Three’.⁸ They concluded: ‘When, one is entitled to wonder, will the most important single benefactor of living music in this country begin to undertake its responsibilities to this form of art and entertainment with any continuing degree of serious commitment?’ (*Music Opinion*, 1971, p.556).

In 1974, the Jazz Centre Society⁹ – awarded ACGB funds in 1969 to serve as an advocacy and promotional body for British jazz – sent a ‘call to arms’, mailing its members, urging

⁷ See Hebdige (1988), *Hiding in the Light* on the BBC attitudes to jazz and anti-Americanism...

⁸ This was the BBC radio arts channel, which was increasingly devoted to classical music during this period.

⁹ See below for a discussion of its formation.

them to write to the then BBC Director General, Sir Michael Swann, in opposition to cuts in jazz broadcasts. Utilising the kind of wounded rhetoric that would soon become a characteristic trope of the British jazz lobby, the JCS implored ‘Why do they always pick on jazz?’, and in providing its own answer surmised: ‘Partly because there is nobody at the BBC in a senior position who knows or understands or cares about jazz music and partly because other minority lobbies, e.g. opera, are more organised and therefore make more impact’ (JCS, 1974). .

Clearly, if British jazz was now a serious art, then the BBC did not appear to be taking it seriously enough. In October 1974, the trumpeter and leading jazz advocate Ian Carr wrote to John Cruft outlining some of his recent (but frustrated) efforts to lobby the BBC for more jazz broadcasts. In his letter, Carr not only underlined his passionate beliefs in the wider significance of jazz (‘I’m convinced it is central to the cultural problems of the time’) but was also highly critical of what he perceived to be endemic BBC neglect, going on to denounce particular BBC producers and executives as ‘conservative’ and railing against their ‘obvious prejudice against jazz’ (Carr, 1974). .

The point to note, then, is that while, British jazz had achieved some grudging recognition as an art music by the early 1970s, in so far as it attracted (limited) state patronage, was (slowly) being assimilated into higher education, and featured (sporadically and erratically) on the ‘serious’ radio networks, there remained within the cultural apparatus a deeply embedded scepticism about its aesthetic credentials. If jazz was serious, and if British jazz was distinctively serious, then it would need strong proponents armed with a compelling repertoire of arguments in order to convince some of the more sceptical audiences. It is to these proponents and their arguments that we now turn, for it is through such arguments that we begin to get a flavour of the discursive claims involved in the making of British jazz at this particular historical conjuncture. In particular it is the appeal made by artists – in terms of its *ethnically distinctive and culturally specific character* – that is of particular interest, for revealing the opportunities and constraints for different kinds of jazz musicians and practitioners.

The Claim of Art

The earliest modern British jazz of the late 1940s and early 50s was strongly influenced by American bebop. A number of key players (John Dankworth, Don Rendell, Tony Kinsey, Tubby Hayes, Ronnie Scott to name only a few) had worked to establish an active British scene that served as both a homage and counterpoint to the parent US form. Ronnie Scott's club, opened in London's Soho district in 1959, became the focus for the indigenous scene and the most important crucible both for exposing British audiences to US styles and players,¹⁰ and for the subsequent nascent development of a local jazz style (see Wickes 1999). Yet since, by and large, this mimetic idiom still perceived itself as inauthentic and inferior, and American jazz remained revered, the question remained just what was *British* about British modern jazz? Slowly, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s a number of musicians, groups, institutions and alliances began to more intensively explore this question, variously applying themselves to uncovering or creating something new, modern and distinctively separate from the jazz inheritance bequeathed by America.

Ian Carr's 1973 book *Music Outside* is important in this respect. Not only a landmark account of the emergent British jazz art, it is also a passionate manifesto for an authentic and avant-garde national scene-in-the-making. Carr was already a leading figure in British modern jazz. Having co-led with Don Rendell a quintet which had dominated the UK scene in the mid- to late 1960s, by the early 1970s he was leading the innovative jazz-rock group Nucleus. Carr was keen to signal a critical break with American jazz and with imitative post-bop British styles (indexed by the likes of Ronnie Scott and Tubby Hayes) by staking out a new and specifically British aesthetic territory not only in his own music, but through writing and advocacy too. *Music Outside* profiled many key personnel of the moment – Mike Westbrook, Evan Parker, John Stevens and Trevor Watts, John Hiseman, Chris McGregor, Mike Gibbs and Carr himself (other luminaries such as Derek Bailey and Michael Garrick are also noted). The aim here was not just to show their hitherto under-recognised achievements as original artists, but also assess their contributions as *British* jazz musicians.

Initially, while Carr wished to identify jazz as something distinctive from either popular or classical music, his attempts to consecrate jazz depended heavily on positive associations with the wider discourse of the 'high' arts. Thus, in *Music Outside*, it is often the seriousness

¹⁰ Though the Musicians Union restrictions on US players performing in the UK initially limited this exposure.

of British jazz that is signalled, as jazz as a practice is laden with aesthetic weight. For example guitarist Derek Bailey's work is described like this:

He was rapidly arriving at the stage where he saw the nearest parallels to his own role in those of a writer or a painter [...]. He sees a kind of musical approach in some of the writings of Samuel Beckett – the juxtaposition and repetition of words in a musical way (Carr, 1973/2008, p.78).

Elsewhere, Stan Tracey is described as a 'Jackson Pollock of the piano', using his keyboard as 'an abstract expressionist uses his canvas.' (ibid., p.2). Like the jazz advocates in the ACGB, then, Carr is at pains to stress how British jazz exists in a new cultural field marked by originality, distinction and seriousness. If jazz was traditionally a popular form, and thus resolutely *not* to be considered at the same aesthetic level as classical music, it is nonetheless now part of the same family: a serious art music distinct from more ephemeral styles, but also finding parallels and resonances in modern art forms other than music.

A second theme in *Music Outside* is the liberating necessity of a break with America and its jazz tradition. Thus pianist and composer Mike Westbrook is identified as the musician who 'was responsible for the emancipation of British jazz from American slavery' (ibid., p. 25) and free saxophonist Evan Parker is described as a 'radical experimentalist' whose work 'seems to bear very little relationship to the jazz tradition' (ibid., p.75). It is claimed that the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) led by John Stevens, disregarded virtually all recognisable elements of American jazz, and so created British jazz's first 'solid avant-garde movement' (ibid., 46). In terms of content of recordings and performances, the music of the new British fraternity signals a concern to explore themes beyond those of conventional African-American jazz. In terms of inspiration the new wave of British jazz musicians variously drew from pastoral, romantic Englishness (Michael Garrick, Mike Westbrook), or produced work that revealed elements grounded in British folk traditions (John Surman).¹¹

Yet if these musicians were concerned with a new, uniquely English or British sound, inherent also was a turn towards the radical, experimentalism of the European avant-garde – already established in Dutch, German, Italian and other 'continental' jazz scenes, often

¹¹ For an examination of these themes in British jazz recording of the period see Young (2009)

drawing on experimental classical, chamber or electronic music, but also and critically the African American ‘new thing’ - free improvised jazz - pioneered by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Ornette Coleman, Marion Brown and Archie Shepp. There is a further twist here in terms of relations between notionally black and white traditions within jazz. For as Christopher Bakriges (2003) has shown, in a very short space of time the ‘new thing’ was ‘transcultured’ in continental Europe where it was rendered as an ethnically unmarked (i.e. implicitly white), local form with a buoyant niche market and increasingly supported by the state too. By the late 1960s British musicians were touring, and taking plaudits from, these emergent scenes on the European continent in which jazz was rapidly being hybridised with existing European avant-garde traditions. Indeed Carr suggests that progressive British musicians like Evan Parker were more likely to draw inspiration from Karl-Heinz Stockhausen than Charlie Parker. In contrast to the previous generation, it seemed that the British jazz musicians of the late-1960s had begun to ‘set their gaze firmly on Europe’ as Roger Cotterell notes in his postscript to the 2008 reissue of Carr’s book (p.167).

It was not only Carr who invested in this new European discourse of emerging jazz-art. During the late 1960s and early 70s the British weekly newspaper, the *Melody Maker*, played a key role in mapping shifting boundaries in popular music. This was perhaps most obvious in the change of focus from ‘blues’ and ‘pop’ to the new genre of ‘rock’, but it was also strongly manifested in relation to the transformation of jazz. From 1968 through 1970 in the pages of *Melody Maker* there is a sense of gathering confidence and critical mass about the avant-garde scene.¹² Older jazz critics like Bob Dawbarn, long a staff member, contribute to this, but so do young journalists like Richard Williams (who would shortly become the doyenne of British rock writing), as well luminaries of the scene itself. Musicians Don Rendell, Graham Collier and John Surman, not to mention the ubiquitous Ian Carr, are all writing for the paper in this period.

We get a hint of the new approach in a feature from January 1968 entitled ‘Avant garde get-together’ where John Kilby discusses a performance, recorded for Radio Baden Baden in West Germany, by fifteen free jazz musicians including Don Cherry, Marion Brown, Barre Phillips, and Britons John Stevens and Evan Parker. ‘What a pity we are not adventurous

¹² *Melody Maker* was originally a jazz musicians’ and trade journal. By the later 60s it had become a general popular music paper with coverage of a range of genres: folk, pop, blues and jazz. We examined all jazz features and reviews in the *Melody Maker* from January 1968 through to December 1970.

enough to undertake such a forward-looking venture' Kilby comments (p.4). By August 1969 Richard Williams is suggesting in a review of the second album from John Stevens' Spontaneous Music Ensemble that this group 'are among the many European outfits currently contributing more than their fair share to the avant-garde scene, and it must be said that frequently they show more initiative and ideas than their American counterparts'. Williams identifies a 'longer tradition of "straight" music' which European musicians are able to draw on, and contrasts by way of example the Ayler brothers (black American free musicians): 'the difference is that where the Aylers go back to the roots, the SME are able to add bits of their own ethnic heritage' (15). This is an unusually programmatic account of what being European might mean in jazz. While it is not a racial supremacist position by any means, nevertheless the case made by Williams is for a certain cultural dividend deriving from ethnicity. So, while the black American jazz tradition has been absorbed by the new wave of British avant-garde musicians, crucially this cohort brings an added European dimension which enables a step forward in musical innovation. This is, as it were, jazz-plus.

Diaspora and post-War jazz

What seems strange in retrospect about this European aesthetic discourse, and indeed the 'claim to art' more broadly considered, is that it leaves out of the picture musicians of the African diaspora. Black British jazz instrumentalists had not only played a crucial role in the development of the British scene since earliest days, they had also been key innovators (for the period to 1935 see Parsonage 2005). With the great post-War migration from the Caribbean came a new wave of players and band leaders such as Rupert Nurse, Russell Henderson, Ozzie da Costa and Pete Pitterson. These musicians often played in West Indian or African bands - often billed as such - to night club audiences and dancers. But they also contributed to the emerging be-bop scene in London. For example, John Dankworth and Cleo Laine (of English/Jamaican parentage) often employed mixed race bands.

Writing in her obituary of the British-based Nigerian bandleader Ambrose Campbell, Val Wilmer, chronicler of the history of black British jazz musicians, reveals something of the extensive influence of black players:

By the 1950s the WARB [West African Rhythm Brothers] were ubiquitous figures in jazz circles and Campbell a much-loved figure. Traditionalists delighted in their

African authenticity while progressives, saxophonists Ronnie Scott and Kenny Graham among them, recognised their affinity with the race-conscious Afro-Cuban movement. Drummer Phil Seamen was one of the band's greatest fans. He studied their rhythms, later to pass on what he learnt to John Stevens, Ginger Baker and another percussion generation (Wilmer 2006, no pagination)

A key factor in the opening up of opportunities for West Indian players was the Musicians Union ban on US musicians, only lifted in 1954 (Kean 2005:504). Given the preponderance of African-Americans in jazz, the ban had distinctly racial overtones. However, as the subjects of Empire, black Caribbean musicians were still free to work in the UK, and they began to settle and exert influence on the indigenous music scene as Wilmer suggests. Partly, no doubt there was an element of exoticism here; black musicians performed in popular ensembles which were specifically marketed to white audiences. But it was also evident that purely as jazz musicians young West Indians such as Harold McNair, Dizzy Reece, Shake Keane and Coleridge Goode made a significant mark. For instance Wilton 'Bogey' Gaynair, the Jamaican tenor sax player, recorded two hard bop albums as leader under his own name at the turn of the 1950s.¹³ There was, in other words, a genuine sense of free-flow and interchange of musicians and styles in the making of British jazz at this point. London, we might say, was the hub of a Black Atlantic musical network in which jazz featured prominently.

It is worth briefly discussing the case of the preeminent musician here. Much effort has been made in recent years to recover from obscurity the work and influence of the Jamaican saxophonist Joe Harriott, who came to Britain in 1951 and remained there until his premature death in 1973 (Goode and Cotterell, 2002; Robertson, 2003; McKay 2005). Harriott's importance lay in his pioneering development of what he termed 'free-form' jazz. Over a number of recordings in the early 1960s, the Harriott Quintet, abandoned much of the harmonic framework which marked conventional be-bop, and enlarged the sphere of improvisation, beyond the individual solo-over-changes, to include key dimensions of musical structure and voicing. These developments have been acknowledged (and indeed now consecrated) not only as a landmark innovation in the context of British jazz, but a global innovation on a par with the contemporaneous, but unrelated, 'free jazz' explorations

¹³ *Blue Bogey* in 1960, and *Africa Calling* in 1961. The latter was not released at the time as the Tempo label which commissioned the recording folded.

of Ornette Coleman in the USA. In fact, iconic US jazz journal *Downbeat* gave the Quintet's 1962 recording *Abstract* a 'five star' rating, making it the first British jazz album to receive this accolade. At home, though, Harriott's efforts were largely ignored (or sometimes derided) by the British jazz community and his experimental advances failed to garner significant commercial or critical attention. It has taken more than thirty years for this state of affairs to be rectified.

Crucially, Harriott's ambition, to create a jazz that was distinctively non-traditional, fused with Caribbean traditions, and embedded in a British society and musical context, emerged from that Black Atlantic milieu in London described above. Like all great innovators he did not create *ex nihilo*, but rather built using the materials and resources from the musical world in which he was immersed. Ironically, in the mid 1960s Harriott (with Keane and Goode) recorded a number of albums with the British pianist Michael Garrick, including Garrick's *October Woman*, identified by Rod Young as the first place 'British jazz begins to sound distinctively un-American' (Young 2009: 42). Finally, Harriott also went on to record the equally pioneering and experimental *Indo-Jazz Suite* (1966) and *Indo-Jazz Fusions 1 and 2* (1967 and 1969) with Anglo-Indian violinist John Mayer, a groundbreaking exploration of traditional Indian and jazz music, as well the album *Hum-Dono* (1969) with the Goanese guitarist Amancio D'Silva.

The extent to which Harriott produced or influenced a distinctively British jazz art can be judged partly in terms of the testimonies of those who pay tribute to his work and acknowledge its influence (see Robertson, 2003; Moore, 2005). Many others have cited him as a musical and political influence whose determination to carve a singular stylistic path, and his 'otherness' as an educated and intellectual black artist, have proved inspiring (such as Gary Crosby, Courtney Pine and other black British musicians). As McKay observes, the exceptional advances made by Harriott pre-date the efforts of more critically lauded white musicians of the British avant-garde:

Within a few years the collective improvisatory practice of a group such as John Steven's Spontaneous Music Ensemble would be identified as a pivotal social and musical development, yet in some ways it was already here in Harriott's quintet (McKay, 2005, p.155).

How might we account for the neglect of a man latterly described by Courtney Pine as ‘the godfather of the European avant-garde’? (in LeGendre, 2008, p.26). Clearly, Harriott was considered marginal – even by those few who promoted his work. In *Music Outside*, Ian Carr (who played with Harriott) acknowledges his work – but does not elaborate any particular influence on the emergent British avant-garde which his book enthusiastically seeks to promote. Harriott, and not only by virtue of his recent death, is placed at once remove from the scene. In a postscript to the 2008 edition of Carr’s book Roger Cotterell reflected on Harriott’s work as a ‘false start in historical terms’ (p.168), a sanguine appraisal, but one further locating Harriott outside of the core narrative of the British avant-garde, cementing his ‘anomalous’ status.

This exceptionality is viewed somewhat differently by those who worked with Harriott, namely bass player Coleridge Goode, himself a Jamaican and prominent member of the post-war jazz scene. ‘We felt it was a terrible shame that the people who had the power to present, broadcast, explain and publicize his music often ignored or neglected it. In the end, unfortunately, one puts it down to the fact that Joe wasn’t a white Englishman’ (Goode and Cotterell, 2002, p.183, cited in McKay, 2005, p.161). McKay (2005) similarly proposes that the British jazz world would not easily accept, ‘[a]n uncomfortable, uncompromising, technically superior, creatively experimental black man from Jamaica, who talked about modern painting and ancient philosophy, and had neither wish nor need to follow the latest music trends from America’ (ibid., p.161).

In terms of being accepted as an artist, or a ‘serious’ musician in the British jazz milieu, Harriott was unlikely to succeed. His outsider status – his ethnic and racial difference from the conventional British jazz avant-gardist (i.e. white, British-born, largely middle-class) – made it easy (even for his supporters) to pigeon-hole him as a ‘one-off’; a curiosity or singularity. Critics have tended to gild this analysis with references to how Harriott’s personal diffidence and professional coldness further separated him from his peers (as if all other avant-gardists were gregarious extroverts), so cementing the idea of a man apart as well as a man out of his time (see discussions in McKay, 2005; Moore, 2005). Yet in understanding British jazz we perhaps need to recognise Joe Harriott *not* as a renegade, one-off or lone genius ahead of (or out of) his time, but as part of a *continuity* and a tradition of black experimental artistry in the world of British jazz. In Harriott’s delayed consecration are echoes of other black artists in British jazz whose credentials remained unrecognised. Indeed,

this may be a structural rather than contingent problem. For part of the making of the high art of jazz seems to have involved disclaiming the roles played by those whose contributions in the evolving post-War jazz scene did not fit the emerging discourses of authentic Britishness, or European experimentalism.

Nevertheless, and this represents a real contradiction given such discourses, we also have to account for the fact that at the very conjuncture in which the claim of art was being advanced there was also significant involvement of black British players. Musicians from the African, and to a lesser extent Asian, diasporas were key in helping to shape the new and emerging form of British jazz. It seems, then, that while in the preceding moment the giant musical steps of Harriott were largely ignored by the late 1960s black musicians were entering the scene even as it was being consecrated by means of a monocultural, Anglo-European discourse. It is to this phenomenon that we turn in the next section.

Black musicians at the moment of consecration: inside or out?

By the late 1960s many of the West Indian musicians who arrived in the major wave of migration during the ten years after the Second World War had left the country. For instance, the Jamaican trumpeter and early Harriott collaborator, Dizzy Reece, went to the United States at the end of the 50s, and Bertie King, who recorded with Humphrey Lyttleton, returned to Jamaica before finally settling in the US. During the 60s both Shake Keane from St Vincent, Harriott's partner in the groundbreaking 'free form' quintet, and the Jamaican tenor saxophonist Wilton Gaynair moved to Germany (see biographical entries for the above artists by Val Wilmer, John Cowley and Howard Rye in *Grove Music Online*, 2010). Undoubtedly, there were more opportunities for such talented jazz players in the countries of their destination. Arguably, these places were also more congenial for black musicians.

But what is then significant is that among those who remained were several players whose contribution was key not only in the emerging new avant garde jazz, but also in other important hybrid jazz styles. In addition to these players we also need to acknowledge new jazz migrants, particularly *émigrés* from apartheid South Africa. Considered as a group, then, postcolonial musicians in London represented a major creative force in jazz during the conjuncture of the late 1960s and early 70s. By way, then, of constructing a counter-history

to that of the ‘official’ avant garde provided by Ian Carr and others, it would seem worthwhile to focus in more detail on some of these players. Rather than just tracing their trajectories chronologically, we will examine some landmark recordings and collaborations which show something of the cultural breadth and depth of the London scene at this moment.

In 1968 John Surman, one of the group of jazz innovators who had come up from Cornwall a few years before, made his first recording as leader with Decca’s Deram label (Surman 1969/2005). The resulting album, released the following year, featured both a sextet and a larger band. It is remarkable not only for the presence of musicians of Trinidadian origin – Russell Henderson, piano; Stirling Betancourt, drums; Errol Phillips, congas – but also for the fact that calypso tunes, and a Russ Henderson original, make up the whole of the first, sextet side, while on the second, with the larger ensemble, there is a long, African-esque piece called ‘Dance’. If there are echoes on this latter piece of John Coltrane’s *Africa Brass* the presence of Henderson’s box bass, a Trinidadian variant of the thumb piano whose sonority is echoed in Surman’s low register playing on the baritone saxophone, gives the piece a distinct resonance. Taken together, the tracks constitute a remarkably prescient hybrid form. Built up as it is from uniquely *British* black Atlantic resources, the album has something in common with the later work of the black British band the Jazz Warriors (1987)

Still, for all their impact in shaping the overall sound, the Trinidadian musicians on John Surman’s first album remain ‘sidemen’.¹⁴ Surman, on the other hand, is not just a leader, but an *auteur*, responsible for the conception of the work and indeed for deciding to leave it behind: his subsequent projects were based on British and European sources, including folk music. However, occasionally, a Caribbean musician could take an *auteur* role too. One example is Harold McNair, on his album *The Fence* released in 1970 (1970/2007). McNair had arrived relatively late to the UK from Jamaica in 1960, at the age of twenty nine. But as Val Wilmer (2007) points out he made an immediate impact on the London be bop scene. By

¹⁴ Interestingly, a Jazz Centre Project (JCP) flyer from 1968 - ‘Monday Nights are “Old Place” Nights’ - shows a billing for 30th September of the ‘John Surman-Russ Henderson Calypso-Jazz Unit’. It is interesting how in this live context Henderson is presented as co-leader and the band given the name ‘Calypso-Jazz Unit’. The Old Place was Ronnie Scott’s former club, which for a short time after the club relocated to a new venue, Scott gave over to the JCP. The same flyer shows that two weeks before this date, a quarter led by the South African saxophonist, Dudu Pukwana, was playing while the following week the Chris McGregor Group was due to perform – McGregor being another South African; more about the South Africans below. The flyer was accessed from Russell Henderson’s personal collection. Thanks to Russell for allowing a copy to be made.

the mid-1960s he was increasingly at work as a studio session musician in an amorphous range of pop styles – critically, British pop which had yet to crystallise as ‘rock’.

One of McNair’s collaborations was with the folk-pop singer and songwriter, Donovan Leitch. McNair helped to arrange several of Donovan’s complex, syncretic singles, playing flute or sax on them, as well as touring with Donovan’s live group. Donovan’s hit from 1967, ‘There is a Mountain’, features, and is arguably defined by, McNair’s sinuous flute riff. The song itself is a kind of parody of a calypso in which Donovan - with trademark sub-Caribbean vocal style – intones on the subject of the existence, and non-existence, of mountains. After this work with Donovan (not jazz as such in that there are no extended improvised solos) came McNair’s recording from 1970, *The Fence*, a jazz-rock fusion album. This features new jazz pioneers, notably Keith Tippett on piano and organ, as well Rick Gretsch on bass who in the next period would become a stalwart rock musician. The more straightforward rock fusion tracks on the album now sound a little dated perhaps. In an important sense they have been eclipsed by the influential work yet to come of Herbie Hancock and Weather Report. Yet the album is an interesting piece of work for all that, taking a typically British hybrid approach in terms of influence and repertoire. For instance, on the title track the guitarist, Colin Green, plays the riff from ‘China Clipper’ by the Jamaican group, the Skatalites. It is likely that McNair taught this to Green or played him a recording of it. And on a version of ‘Scarborough Fair’ the whimsical, yet unworldly, approach to British folk music which McNair had developed in his work with Donovan is built into an extended jazz arrangement.

McNair, though by no means all his collaborators, remained outside the charmed circle of the ‘Music Outside’ group. The case of the Barbadian trumpeter, Harry Beckett, was rather different (Beckett 2009). Beckett had come to Britain in 1954 at the age of nineteen to play and learn. He spent the first ten years of his career working as a jobbing musician out of Archer Street - the musicians ‘labour exchange’ in London’s West End. It was only in the mid-1960s that Beckett began to play with the new jazz, avant-gardists when he began working with bassist and composer Graham Collier. Between 1967 and 1971 he was featured on Collier’s first four albums, and carried on working with him off and on for many years afterwards. Beckett recorded his own album as leader, *Flare Up*, in 1970, and then in 1971 came *Warm Smiles* whose five tracks were all composed by Beckett. Crucially, from the perspective of this chapter, the writing and arranging of the suite *Themes for Fega* which was

recorded and released as a live album in 1972, was supported by an Arts Council grant. This is British jazz modernism in full voice, with Beckett's extraordinary and idiomatic playing in the foreground. Here, then, we find a black British player at right at the centre of 'Music Outside' (if this phase is not a contradiction in terms). Indeed, throughout the rest of his fruitful career Beckett remained among the core of progressive jazz musicians in Britain.

However, the most important group of musicians among postcolonial migrants in London was a band of South Africans. Performing first as the Blue Notes, and then from 1970 augmented by British musicians in a big band called the Brotherhood of Breath, the impact of these players on the British scene was profound.¹⁵ Interestingly, it was a white South African, the pianist Chris McGregor, who led both groups. Several significant components marked their new sound. The first was township jazz with its insistent swing and interlocking riffs (itself influenced by the urban Zulu popular music called kwela). Second, a passionate lyricism inspired by hymns and black South African church music permeated the music. Third, there was free jazz with its use of dissonance. And fourth, the music was characterised by McGregor's complex arrangements for big band which recall the work of Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus but now translated to an utterly different location: South Africa-in-London. With the Brotherhood of Breath the hybridity which was still incipient in the work of Harriott and his associates came tumbling to the fore.

Certainly the band's music referred to American jazz. But this was now just one component among many, and there was no sense of dependency on that tradition. In terms of race and ethnicity several interesting questions are raised by this. For one thing there was a way in which, by calling on African sources directly, the Brotherhood of Breath bypassed African-America as the font of jazz. For another, it was a white South African, Chris McGregor, who actually took the leading role in arranging, and directing the Afro-centric performances of the band. What's more, on stage or in studio white musicians always outnumbered the handful of Blue Notes of African origin, namely Dudu Pukwana, Mongezi Feza, Louis Moholo and, early on, Johnny Dyani.

¹⁵ In fact there were other important South African jazz musicians in London in this period, including the bass player Harry Miller who had arrived in 1963, and played with Mike Westbrook and then later with the Brotherhood of Breath itself.

To sum up, then, black musicians and musical resources from the African diaspora beyond the US and its jazz tradition were thriving in London during the conjuncture of the late 1960s-early 1970s. It seems that emergent British jazz-art included radical experiments in musical multiculturalism. Yet this goes mostly unremarked in the commentary of the time. So, while Carr's *Music Outside* book is lucid on the emergence of national (British and European) jazz idioms, and has some sharp observations about class and material inequality in British jazz, it has virtually nothing to say about the cultural politics of race. There *is* some discussion of Chris McGregor, but this is first used to signal the difference between European and African jazz: 'Chris McGregor was subjected to the influence of both cultures – the literate, verbal, intellectual and puritanical culture of the West, and the physical, instinctual, oral, more directly sensuous culture of the non-West (in this case, Africa)' (ibid., p.100). The primitivism at stake here (and exclusion of Africa from the realm of *logos*) extends to Carr's description of the 'wilder' (ibid., p.105) and 'uncontrollable, unpredictable non-Western aspects' (ibid., p.108) of McGregor's bands, signalling their assemblage of Western music (McGregor was classically trained pianist) and African music. Yet this is not couched in terms of a radical challenge to Britishness or aspirant art music. The binary of the primitive African body and the advanced European mind remains unchallenged.¹⁶

Conclusion

How are we to understand the strange case of the consecration of British jazz as art? On one level perhaps the discursive exclusion of black British musicians and the emerging multiculturalism of London is unsurprising. It seems to parallel the 'white resentment narrative' identified by Ingrid Monson (2007) in the context of jazz in the United States. Yet, as we noted at the start of the chapter there are important differences in the way that race plays out in the form and sound of jazz between Britain and the US. And so also, there are key differences between the two countries in the way that race is constructed discursively and institutionally.

¹⁶ This binary is still in circulation. As the bassist Gary Crosby put it in a recent interview with Hilary Moore: 'You hear all kinds of excuses, you know 'they can't read' and so on...They'll be quick to point out all the faults of black musicians due to lack of education, but all the positives will be related to energy, drive, all these raw animalistic types of things...you'll hear none of them talking about harmony, structure, intellect' (Crosby, cited in Moore, 2005, 113)

Most importantly, we should note that Carr and the other musician-activists we have discussed, were far from being racists. Indeed many were socialists and egalitarians. The drummer John Stevens, for example, played a key in the development of musical outreach work in working class school and communities - what later became the Community Music movement (McKay 2005, p. 236). Courtney Pine has acknowledged how formative years spent with John Stevens significantly shaped his own outlook on jazz (see Le Gendre, 2008). And Carr himself led a music workshop at a community arts organisation, Weekend Arts College, in North London during the early 1980s. It was here that several key members of the Jazz Warriors big band including Courtney Pine, and a new wave of black British players, learned their craft (Greenwood 2009). We should note, then, that the British avant-garde, inadvertently, tangentially, but also by virtue of its egalitarian instincts, played some significant role in enabling the black British jazz of the post-1970s period. But this only makes the approach of *Music Outside* and the aesthetic discourses of the conjuncture in which it was produced look all the more odd. Perhaps the way in to understanding it is to recognise, as George McKay suggests, that jazz and race in Britain have always existed together in a profoundly ambivalent relation whereby dominant colonial discourses persist alongside anti-racism and resistance (2005, p. 126). This is no doubt part of that larger, structural contradiction which underpins the social relations of race everywhere. On the hand race is a lie, a false proposition that certain human beings are less than human. On the other hand it is a social fact, in that the same lie when endorsed – either explicitly or implicitly - by the dominant social class produces a relation of power whereby black people are not only named but subordinated.

If we are to think about this on the level of British jazz in the late 60s and early 70s then what seems most salient is the parochialism of the proselytisers of *Music Outside*. Often – and this is reproduced in much of the press, journalism, personal correspondences and minutes that sit in the ACGB files and elsewhere – there is a sense that consecration of British jazz at the moment in question involves actors occupying a new but already quite circumscribed terrain; where a small group of familiar artists are identified and duly rewarded as national jazz ‘artists’, where the same names are consulted as experts/advisors, and where the jazz community is tacitly contained and controlled by a distinctive axis in which the possibility of cultural diversity in terms of artistic subjects, practices or motives is not considered especially desirable or important to explore. Meanwhile the politics of race is placed beyond the perimeter, an unmentioned and unmentionable non-issue.

In a sense, then, the structural problem of race in Britain could not be dealt with inside the new British jazz because there were no immediate discursive means available to the white, male, largely middle-class cohort of this emergent world. To be sure, the racist and Conservative politician Enoch Powell was given short shrift in the pages of the *Melody Maker* (1968, p. 5) in a feature about ‘racialism’ and music from 1968. But what then seems to be an impossible leap is to acknowledge the already diverse sources of contemporary jazz, and the rich multiculturalism which was already emerging in Britain. Indeed as we saw in the last section, new multicultural combinations lay at the heart of British jazz itself. At this juncture, it appears as though the aesthetics of this actually existing hybridity were contrary to the impulse towards offering a clear definition of ‘British jazz’, and the necessary purification which seemed to be at stake in the discursive process of consecration, ensuring that while there was a *presence* of black musicians in the emergent scene there was an *absence* of recognition for their influence, capacities and artistic talents for making the British jazz art.

Interviewed by Martin Smith for *Socialist Review* in 2006, the black British saxophonist Courtney Pine offered:

When you start playing and researching jazz, you realise that there is a connection between Africa - its musicians, its rhythms - and the way slaves in the US, the Caribbean and South America used their music to express their social condition in a coded manner. It is not enough for me to see myself as a north Londoner, or someone from the Blue Mountain in Jamaica. My heritage goes much further back. I haven't had a minute to go back and research where my DNA comes from, but it is definitely of African descent. I am all these things and many more - that's why I describe myself as an Afropean. (Pine, 2006, no pagination)

Pine is not speaking like this merely because of his ‘subject position’ – the fact that he is black and British. He is telling what surely should be a self-evident truth about the music for anyone with a passing knowledge of its history and development. And yet this is not, and nor was it in the early 1970s, a self-evident truth. Unfortunately, both then and now one’s subject position has a bearing on what one finds out and understands about social and cultural reality – and for those at the vanguard of the making of the new British jazz such limitations were certainly in evidence. Thus, to tell the story of how British jazz was *made*, it is incumbent on

the academic or critic to take account of how, who by, and under what limits and conditions, the story was first written and framed.

Finally, we would note that to insist that race matters in jazz is not an attempt to essentialize 'white' or 'black' jazz (or any other variant), but to explore how the varied, complex and often competing discourses and practices of race, place and nation are invested in jazz work, and how jazz itself – in terms of its texts, practices and performances – can be expressive of race and those racialised identities that circulate in post-colonial societies where diasporic, as well as more historically indigenous, communities and subjects live side by side. Our aim, then, has not been to reduce jazz to any essential ethnic qualities or to reinforce spurious racial divisions, but to explore how such qualities and divisions – and the perceptible variations they occlude – come to occupy such central, (and difficult and controversial), roles in the formation of (in this case, national) jazz cultures. To try to understand the formation of British jazz, either as art or something other, *without* reference to such qualities is to *misunderstand* – and to inflict symbolic violence on what is most markedly a deep and complex tradition marked by race and its constitutive history of migrations, flows and exchanges of peoples, objects, styles and ideas, between Britain and its remnant vestiges of Commonwealth and Empire.

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