Beyond the 'Futureless Future': Edward O. Bland, Afro-Modernism and *The Cry of Jazz*

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At a key moment in Edward O. Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*, the film's central character and voiceover narrator – an African American music arranger named Alex – is asked by fellow members of their interracial jazz club to offer his authoritative opinion on the future of the music. "Yes," he replies dramatically, as the camera suddenly zooms in on his face: "Jazz is dead." Rapid reaction-shots show the startled faces of the group. The club's white members erupt in outrage and dismay.

What soon follows is a climactic sequence that actively stages the musical death of jazz. Narrated by Alex and performed by the silhouetted figures of pianist Sun Ra and members of his Arkestra, this dramatization re-presents jazz – hitherto portrayed as an extraordinarily rich and powerful medium central to African American cultural survival – as a fatally constricted musical style, a sonic cul-de-sac whose rigid formal constraints signal the social imprisonment of Black America. As Sun Ra's hands are seen playing the same discordant piano run over and over again, and other instruments join in to repeat the passage, the result is a closed and unyielding musical loop – a "circular see-saw," in Alex's somber voiceover, one which leads African Americans and America itself to "nowhere." Shots of the shadowed musical performers intersperse with images of abandoned buildings being demolished as the musical passage recurs, dissonant yet wholly caged within its repetitions. Montaging a staged musical impasse with a dispassionate destruction of ghetto structures, this sequence culminates in a black screen and an extended moment of silence – then returns viewers to the fictional social-club gathering, whose troubled members besiege Alex for further insights. But what is the future of music, of America, after the death of jazz? Alex, speaking for the

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film director, delivers an emphatic if enigmatic answer: only a clean break from the "sound of jazz" can liberate music and, by extension, bring about "the salvation of the Negro" and the rest of America through the birth of a new way of life.[1]

The Cry of Jazz, initially released in 1959, has come to be recognized as a major landmark in independent Black cinema. An early influence on 1960s-era intellectuals Amiri Baraka and Harold Cruse, this "lost film" still confounds conventional histories of African American moviemaking even after its inclusion on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.[2] It also remains an unsettling and surprisingly understudied cultural artifact. Shot and produced in late-1950s Chicago, the 16-millimeter film failed to gain widespread distribution at the time of release but elicited strong reactions from the audiences who managed to see it. Many white viewers were stunned by the confrontational attitudes of the movie's Black characters; even a sympathetic review called the picture "the first anti-white film made by American Negroes." A post-screening debate in New York became racially incendiary enough for the police to take down the names of the participants. Criticism at the time fastened on a range of perceived flaws, from wooden acting and amateurish direction to unfair portrayals of the club's white members. Film commentators today are more likely to appreciate Bland's gleeful puncturing of liberal pieties about racial "sameness under the skin" – while also noting that the movie's own race politics often center on a contest between Black men and white men for the possession of white women.[3]

What remains especially striking, however, is that the musical and social claims advanced by Bland's short "thesis film" have eluded serious engagement.[4] Barely thirty minutes long, *The Cry of Jazz* takes the viewer through more than a few disconcerting shifts in genre and tone. Initially conveying the earnest pedagogical style of a 1950s-era instructional short interspersed with illustrative dramatic sequences, the film actively unsettles viewers, not only with its contentious racial politics but with a tone that switches between sly and awkward, celebratory and somber, sharply polemical and coolly observational. Stagy social-club interactions alternate with documentary-style and often lyrical footage of Chicago street life – all stitched together by Alex's theoretical elaborations on the nature of jazz. Despite these jarring shifts, though, the film's intellectual arguments about Black America and its music are quite coherent and well sustained.

Bland was a composer and music arranger, not a professional filmmaker, and his movie's strongest claims emerge from a particular theoretical approach to the formal structures of jazz music and their historical evolution. In fact, even as its cinematic style oscillates between the didactic and the poetic, the film patiently elaborates a utopian-modernist conception of twentieth-century music – one with surprising parallels to that of Frankfurt School theorist Theodor Adorno – in order to set up its own combative challenge to post-World War II conceptions of American racial identity and social progress. The unconventionality of this hybrid intellectual stance, along with the idiosyncratic manner in which it is set out within the film, raises interesting questions about Bland's broader aesthetic project and complicates recent perspectives on the contributions of Black musical expression

to twentieth-century Afro-modernist culture. That the composer and bandleader Sun Ra also plays a prominent (if persistently veiled) role in the film provokes further questions, not least regarding the relationship of Bland's claims about the "death of jazz" to Ra's own emerging musical project – one that saw jazz as the basis for a quite different futurist vision in which outer space becomes an imagined realm for Black emancipation.

This article examines the interwoven conceptions of musical and racial identity articulated in *The Cry of Jazz*. I explore how the central themes of the film are marked by Bland's own early experiences in Chicago, including his family's involvement in Bronzeville literary circles, his connection to the University of Chicago and its Hyde Park neighborhood, and his professional encounters with the South Side commercial music world. These themes gain intellectual shape, however, through the development of an ambitious argument about the musical elements of jazz and their relation to Black urban experience – an argument that ultimately hinges any further advance of African American musical culture on a sharp break with jazz traditions and the destruction of the ghetto that produced them.

The result is not only a more uncompromising contribution to 1960s-era Black cultural radicalism than is often recognized but also a distinctive reformulation of the Afro-modernist aesthetic – and one that is strongly inflected by the film's utopian staging of slum-clearance urban renewal. Linking liberation from the postwar American ghetto to a new aesthetic fusion of avant-garde classical and African American vernacular styles, *The Cry of Jazz* puts forward a high-modernist, composer-centered conception of Black art music as racial emancipation. This aesthetic project is in many ways far removed from Baraka's call several years later for a music with "no reliance on European tradition or theory." To advance this conception, Bland tailors the film's visual and auditory portrayal of the Sun Ra Arkestra in ways that advance his tightly scripted thesis – a mode of presentation that, when seen in retrospect, offers a striking contrast to Sun Ra's own utopian Afro-modernism during this period.[5]

Reconstructing the musical arguments advanced in *The Cry of Jazz* provides new insights into post-World War II African American creative culture. Recent musicological scholarship by Porter, Ramsey, Monson and others has begun to differentiate in helpful ways between the multiple Afro-modernist strategies at play in postwar jazz and other musics of the period. Scholars in literary and cultural studies, for their part, have begun to recognize not only the aesthetic influence of jazz music on mid-twentieth-century modernist writers and artists but also, increasingly, the centrality of urban experience to historically evolving conceptions of African American modernism.[6] *The Cry of Jazz*, with its alternately provocative and meditative ruminations on musical form and ghetto existence, develops a challenging and underappreciated position on the historical relationship between modernist innovation and Black urban life. Claiming that jazz music's ties to ghetto conditions block it from further development, Bland offers up the death of jazz – and the creative destruction of the ghetto – as a surprising path forward for Black-led musical innovation as well as the emancipation of African America itself. Beyond

presenting a powerful commentary on the postwar racial politics of jazz, the film opens up a still-disquieting consideration of cultural modernism, urban destruction, and the utopian possibilities inherent in African American creative expression.

The Race of Jazz

The intellectual and social themes explored in *The Cry of Jazz* emerged, in multiple ways, from Chicago's South Side. Bland himself dated the film's genesis to conversations in the early 1950s with various African American friends at Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap, a tavern located near the University of Chicago in interracial Hyde Park, where he lived at the time. Recently struck by the global reach and "propagandistic power" of the cinema, Bland and his friends became convinced that a powerful documentary about music and race could be made cheaply, though none of them had actually produced or directed a film before. Along with three of these friends – novelist Mark Kennedy, urban planner Nelam Hill and mathematician Eugene Titus – Bland formed a production company called KHTB, and the four of them soon started contributing their own incomes to get the project off the ground. They wrote the script collaboratively in 1957 and, relying largely on piecemeal donations and volunteer labor, shot the Parkwood Jazz Club scenes as well as most of the documentary segments the following year. The KHTB team enlisted local theater and music producers for technical and post-production assistance, including soon-to-be Second City co-founder Howard Alk, who edited the film. Yet *The Cry of Jazz* remained a KHTB-led project throughout, and the film's script and direction, along with the publicity materials, advanced what Bland and his co-producers saw as an uncompromisingly African American point of view.[7]

Bland himself came from an intellectually distinguished family. He was born in Chicago in 1926, the son of a postal worker who was also a literary critic affiliated with the city's Black Renaissance cultural scene. His uncle, Alden Bland, was a well-regarded fiction writer. His father, also named Edward, took him as a boy to gatherings frequented by Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Arna Bontemps and other intellectuals and artists associated with the South Side Writers Group and the South Side Community Arts Center. According to recollections by the younger Bland, his father's thinking was strongly influenced by Marxism, and his mother, Althea Bland, was deeply interested in "voodoo" – whereas he himself rejected both approaches to the world. After graduating from high school at sixteen, he attended Wilson Junior College, majoring in music, and then, in 1945, he enlisted in military service, spending a year in San Francisco playing in the U.S. Navy band and reading music criticism and philosophy. He returned to his hometown to attend the University of Chicago on the GI Bill, but after two years of studying in the music department (and apparently fighting with his professors over what was relevant to study) Bland finished his undergraduate education at the American Conservatory of Music and then studied composition privately with composer John J. Becker. As there were few opportunities for African American composers in Chicago or elsewhere, his future remained uncertain.[8]

During the early 1950s, while working on soundtracks for educational film projects, Bland also "started hanging around" Chess, Vee-Jay and other local record companies that specialized in popular music, hoping to make money selling them songs. This effort seems to have run aground when he refused to surrender copyright to the labels – a common practice by which African American songwriters in jazz, blues and other popular genres lost control of their music to white producers and music companies. Bland's critical perspective on the racial dynamics of cultural appropriation was further sharpened, in his own estimation, by ongoing arguments he was having with young white jazz fans in Hyde Park. The 1950s was a decade in which jazz, no longer seen as a vaguely disreputable music performed by African Americans and distributed separately through "race" records, was finding a significant niche as an art music with a middle-class fan base, particularly among white college students. Young listeners in university settings often expressed their passion for the music by forming jazz clubs, and in areas such as racially mixed Hyde Park these clubs were often roiled by conflictual understandings of the music – its history, different styles, and complex relationship to racial identity and social progress. For Bland, whose *Cry of Jazz* would center on a fictionalized gathering of one such club, the powerful cultural investment in the music by young white fans seemed to be accompanied by a disturbing sense of racial entitlement and intellectual authority. As he later put it, "[T]he thing that was getting to me was that they [whites] were trying to take all the credit for its invention and everything else" – even though "they don't know anything" about "the technical side of music or the historical side." The polemical edge that viewers would perceive in *The Cry of Jazz*, therefore, was born in part of Bland's determination to assert his own musical expertise as well as the rootedness of jazz in African American community life.[9]

It is not surprising, as media scholar Anna McCarthy has pointed out, that Bland's sharp edge was forged in the particular racial circumstances of 1950s Hyde Park. Home to precisely the sort of white middle-class liberals who would comprise the film's intended and often infuriated audience, the neighborhood also was undergoing the intense racial conflict often associated with postwar urban renewal. The University of Chicago, armed with special legal powers, had spent much of the decade directing one of the most ambitious "slum clearance" and redevelopment efforts in the country – largely to limit the influx of Black residents into its Hyde Park neighborhood. Black leaders, though, found themselves divided over the issue; the community's more middle-class residents rarely faced displacement, and many African American leaders continued to voice support for "breaking up the ghetto." During the years when Bland was producing his film, the university's redevelopment authorities began demolishing the increasingly African American working-class blocks surrounding Jimmy's tavern – an area that was home to several jazz clubs. Not only jazz musical styles, then, but also the neighborhood places where the music was still performed were being taken over by whites.[10]

Bland's determination to make a film about jazz encouraged him to seek out a local pianist and bandleader whose music he liked – and might use.

> When it became time to make *Cry of Jazz*, I could've written the music for it, but that would cost money, so the thing was how to get the jazz soundtrack without spending any money. So, I got in touch with Sun Ra and … Alton Abraham, who was his manager at the time, about using the music for the soundtrack of the film. And that's how it happened. And his music was certainly good enough and interesting enough to be used to illustrate some of the points I wanted to make in terms of music.[11]

Abraham essentially agreed to provide Arkestra recordings free of charge – a major windfall for KHTB's shoestring project.[12] Ra and Abraham also allowed Bland to film the ensemble performing in local clubs; the filmmaker, in turn, shot the group almost entirely in silhouette, partly to evade censure by Local 208, the African American musicians' union. By this time, Sun Ra himself was starting to develop a reputation in local circles as a kind of Afrocentric futurist, but Ra's own ideas, or what Bland later referred to dismissively as his "Sun God of Jazz propaganda," apparently held little interest for the filmmaker. Bland also acquired several music tracks from a local arranger and bandleader named Paul Severson; little is known about their relationship, though this music also figures in the film.[13]

The Cry of Jazz opens, as title credits appear, amid casual post-meeting conversations among the Black and white members of the fictional Parkwood Jazz Club. After a young white woman named Natalie thanks Bruce, a white man, for teaching her that "rock and roll music is jazz," Alex, a club officer and music arranger who also serves as the film's narrator, intervenes. Sharply redrawing the musical boundaries of jazz (and implicitly the racial ones as well), Alex exclaims: "Bruce, how square can you get? Rock and roll is not jazz. Rock and roll is merely an offspring of rhythm and blues." Then what *is* jazz? ask the white members of the club – to which an African American member named Louis responds, "Jazz is merely the Negro's cry of joy and suffering." John, the white president of the jazz club, takes issue: "Oh, now wait a minute, Louis. You talk as if Negroes were the only ones who could have created jazz!" Alex responds categorically: "Not only *did* they create jazz – they were the only ones" with the "necessary musical and human history" to do so.

The battle lines thus drawn, the remainder of the film pursues the question of *whose* music jazz really is and what the implications might be for American society and for the music's future. The overall structure of the 34-minute film intersperses dramatic segments in the unfolding jazz-club discussion with three instructional, documentary-style sequences. Published commentaries on *The Cry of Jazz* have tended to center, perhaps understandably, on the jarring racial conflict in the Parkwood scenes. Yet it is in the documentary-style sections that the intellectual arguments of the film are most effectively presented, and by fo-

Figure 1: Sun Ra and His Arkestra in *The Cry of Jazz* (Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library/ Adam Abraham).

cusing carefully on their development the larger stakes of Bland's aesthetic – and racial – project become clear.

The first and longest of these documentary-style sections intersperses film footage of various South Side neighborhood scenes with shots of Arkestra musicians in silhouetted performance (see Figure 1). While a re-edited recording of Sun Ra's "Blues at Midnight" plays in the background, Alex-as-voiceover-narrator softly instructs viewers on how the musical language of jazz remains anchored in African American city life. Jazz music, we are told, exists in close connection with the social dynamics of Black urban existence, revealing in both realms the fundamental tensions between freedom and constraint, "joy" and "suffering." The rhythms of the music – along with its sound textures, improvisatory flights and expressive powers – are connected visually to shots of everyday human movement in the streets, playgrounds, churches, bars and tenements of Black Chicago. Voiceover narration breaks down the mechanics of swing rhythm ("born of the conflict of two types of rhythm… a rhythm of stress and one of length") with a balletic montage of sinuous dancers, strutting pedestrians and crisscrossing feet, all accompanied by the stuttering attack of John Gilmore's saxophone and Sun Ra's comping piano. After "Blues at Midnight" (lengthened from six to nine minutes by edited-in repetitions) finally fades out, a shot of a drummer's snare cues up the intro to Ra's "Demon's Lullaby." The song's pulsing beat and rollicking ensemble head-statement play over a crisply edited sequence of African American men shooting pool, balls caroming around the table amid the chiaroscuro lighting of a billiard hall.[14]

These urban segments, interlacing a certain Arkestra sound of the period with the street life of Bronzeville, give expressive weight to Alex's coolly articulated music lesson. In doing so, Bland was suturing the story of jazz back into the texture of Black urban existence at a moment when strong economic and cultural forces were pulling the music elsewhere. From one side, there were non-conformist "hipsters" (as they were called in Norman Mailer's then-influential essay, "The White Negro") embracing jazz because of its association with Black subcultural style; from the other, market-seeking musicians and producers were working to elevate jazz into a more remunerative art-world commodity. *The Cry of Jazz* offers up resistance to both tendencies, as Bland himself echoed in a letter to *Film Culture* editor Jonas Mekas.

> [I]n the past 10 years or so [jazz] has become a cult of romantic and futuristic pretensions. No one could be further from the spirit of jazz than the typical member of this romantic futuristic cult: the Hipster who seems to be invading and disturbing the present but shaky sanctum of American conformity.[15]

His criticism was directed at Black hipsters as well as white ones. According to an account by British critic Kenneth Tynan, Bland was asked at a public forum shortly after his film's release "if whites should follow the recommendation of Norman Mailer" and become white Negroes or hipsters.

> Mr. Bland sighed and said that Negro hipsters were more often conservatives than radicals. They wore special clothes and spoke a special argot – why, he inquired, would a progressive Negro want to wear a "double uniform"?[16]

The Cry of Jazz offers more, however, than a rhetorical critique of hipsters. By insisting on an enduring connection between the "spirit of jazz" and the community life of African Americans, the film resists the notion of the music as a free-floating artistic commodity. Jazz, Bland argues, remains the community's own defense against cultural annihilation – "the Negro's answer," as Alex's voiceover claims, "to America's ceaseless efforts to obliterate him."

Several scenes within the film's initial documentary sequence spell out the racial implications of this musicological position in no uncertain terms. The musical concept of "sonority," in particular, is illustrated through a pointed contrast between "the sound of Negro music" and "the sound of jazz as performed by whites." Accordingly, the extended pool-players sequence begins with Bland's narrator enjoining the listener: "Think of the sound of much Negro music compared to Negro life." As the Arkestra recording of Sun Ra's "Demon's Lullaby" begins to play, with its driving, swinging rhythm and brassy large-ensemble timbres, the camera shows an urban world that is unmistakably Black, working-class, masculine and public. The narrator then cuts in: "Now contrast this to the sound of jazz as performed

by whites compared to white life." A sudden musical shift ushers in the thin, light sound of an orderly, precise, small-group jazz composition – characteristics that later on in the film are labeled as inescapably "cool jazz" in style. Meanwhile, the camera focuses on a quite different metropolitan scene: cars, commuter trains and white pedestrians move impersonally through a snowy streetscape, followed by an indoor shot of a white woman carefully grooming her poodle – an urban or suburban world coded as private, cold, female, privileged, and indisputably white. The metonymic implications are overt and stark: hard-driving bop is the strong, virile music of the Black urban working class; cool jazz is the thin, effete soundtrack of a feminized, middle-class white world.

Bland was hardly the only postwar commentator to parse differences in jazz styles in ways that were sharply coded by race, class and gender. Contributors to 1950s-era debates often drew essentialized connections between styles of jazz and the racial identity of its practitioners, or between a style and the racial milieu allegedly evoked by the music. Other writers and musicians pushed back, arguing for a "color blind" approach to jazz styles and performers in the name of a musical universalism. These debates often focused on perceived aesthetic differences between individual instrumentalists or musical styles, ignoring, as Ingrid Monson has pointed out, the structural realities of racial discrimination that unequally affected all American musicians of the era.[17] *The Cry of Jazz*, to its director's credit, draws attention to the deep inequalities in postwar America that continued to make social opportunities and everyday life vastly different for whites and African Americans – musicians and non-musicians alike. Like many commentators at the time, though, Bland's starkly racialized presentation of bop and cool ignores how the styles that musicians play may result from aesthetic choices and prior experiences that are not reducible to race or other social identities. Sun Ra's own music from this period, it is worth noting, ran the stylistic gamut, from hard-driving swing and bluesy saxophone workouts to lyrical duets and romantic, densely orchestrated tone poems; the Arkestra heard in Bland's film, in other words, conveys little of this ensemble's stylistic reach and mercurial inventiveness. Consequently, the film's essentialization of various types of jazz – the presumed correspondence between a particular community and a distinctive musical style – diminishes recognition of the full range of musical resources available both within and across communities. As becomes clear later in Bland's film, this musical essentialism also contributes to the filmmaker's sense that African American jazz has arrived, both aesthetically and socially, at a dead end.

The film's second documentary-style section presents a history of the stylistic development of the music. Dixieland, swing, bebop, cool jazz – the voiceover narrator provides a fast-moving narrative of how this succession of jazz styles emerged from the evolving racial strictures of American urban life. Alex's thumbnail account of swing, for example, archly underlines broader historical continuities in African American oppression while also situating the formal and performance conventions of this new musical style within the particular urban conditions of the industrial North.

> Years later, after many Negroes had left the inhuman South and migrated to the more cleverly inhuman North, their problem, among others, was how to retain their identity among the restraints of city living, mechanized and brutalizing jobs, and fragmented families. The musical answer came in the form of swing, in which you have a highly arranged, precise music with only a few key men using their individuality to improvise.

Bland's historical account of post-World War II jazz is similarly anchored in the racial dynamics of its era. Bebop, Alex observes, was "a revolt against the subservient Uncle Tom role given Negroes in the war effort and the entertainment world of that era." Cool jazz, in turn, is a white rejoinder to the Black assertiveness of bop; it "has been called by some an attempt to remove the Negro influence from jazz, because jazz is the one element in American life where whites must be humble to Negroes." Much of the visual attention in this instructional section, as in the previous one, is focused on Arkestra members performing in silhouette, as the audio track samples a series of the group's musical recordings intended to illustrate Alex's music-history lesson.

Then Sun Ra is finally introduced in his own right. Alex's voiceover gently observes: "The newest sounds to come along in contemporary jazz are written by the composer-arranger The Sun Ra, out of Chicago" – at which point the audio track launches the rhythmically jarring piano, wood block and bass opening of his composition, "A Call for All Demons." It is a dramatic intro, and the voiceover continues:

> The Sun Ra, among other things, fuses the snakelike bebop melodies with the colors of Duke Ellington and the experimental changes of Thelonious Monk. The Sun Ra says of his music that it is a portrayal of everything the Negro really was, is, and is going to be – with emphasis focused on the Negro's triumph over the demonic currents of his experience.

This paraphrase represents the only moment in *The Cry of Jazz* when a musician speaks (even if only second-hand through Alex) about what the music means to him. From the vantage point of today, this "portrayal" does seem to encapsulate at least a portion of the ambitious meanings that Ra himself was ascribing to his own music at the time. The words "triumph over" seem to have been added late in the production process; an earlier version of the script says simply "with emphasis focused on the demonic currents of his experience." The added words skew the commentary away from Sun Ra's customary use of "demonic" in relation to Blackness as a positive attribute – something to embrace rather than triumph over.[18] In effect, even this brief presentation of Sun Ra's perspective is tweaked to serve Bland's own jazz account -- a historical narrative of struggle and, ultimately, overcoming.

By this time in the film, viewers would have grown accustomed to the silhouetted presentation of Arkestra members as generic jazz musicians. Except for brief moments, the faces of individual musicians remain difficult to distinguish throughout. But their race is not; these clearly are Black musicians, a visual observation that remains salient as the voiceover commentary often marks the identity of jazz music in racial terms. Also discernible is the gender identity of these musicians: they are all men. This distinction is made pertinent by many other aspects of the film, from voiceover invocations of the "jazz man" to the romantic attention from Faye, a white Parkwood member, that Alex is able to attract with his jazz knowledge. Bland's narrative account, moreover, excludes any mention of vocal jazz, thereby erasing the contributions of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday and countless other innovators. This absence is only the most sweeping way that *The Cry of Jazz* effaces female musicians from the music's history.

Black women, in fact, have no significant presence in the film at all – an omission that early audiences seem to have criticized in no uncertain terms.[19] Beyond any pragmatic reasons for obscuring its performers, then, the film's visual style collectivizes the Arkestra musicians as Black jazz men, a status which confers upon them a generic musical authority to enact the meaning of jazz as the film defines it. At the end of this sequence, viewers are returned to the Parkwood Jazz Club, where it quickly becomes apparent –as Alex and the other members clash over the future of jazz – that a similar dynamic of authorization is at work.

Constraint and Freedom

The film's return to the Parkwood club sets the stage for the contentious claim that jazz is dead. After the white club members respond to Alex's disturbing pronouncement with alarm, two African American members push back, yet more calmly and analytically, with genuine curiosity. One of them, Bob, asks, "But in what *way* is jazz dead, though, Alex?" Alex responds, somewhat formulaically, that "the jazz body" is dead because "inherently the material of jazz does not allow for further growth." Louis, also a Black member, reiterates the question. Following a close-up of Louis's face assuming a listening posture, Alex proceeds, in his role as voiceover narrator, to explain – again using footage of the silhouetted Arkestra members to illustrate his points – how the repetitive nature of jazz music mirrors a larger trap that ensnares African Americans.

How has a music so rich and historically vital to Black survival become a fetter on the community's further development? The explanation, in Alex's telling, lies in what might be called the film's structural-formalist conception of jazz music. *The Cry of Jazz* argues specifically, as the filmmaker himself later noted, for a "structural identity" between "the Black experience" and "the nature of the music."[20] As we have seen, this stance entails strong claims that jazz is categorically an African American form of cultural expression – a music born of Black historical circumstances, pioneered and innovated by Black musicians, and still deeply and uniquely embedded in the everyday cultural life of African American urban communities. Such claims enable non-expert members such as Louis and Bob to speak authoritatively about what jazz is and what it expresses in ways that the

white members simply cannot. Concrete experience with Black suffering – the "hazards of being Negro," as Alex terms it – endows African Americans with unique aesthetic authority.

Bland's structural approach, though, also underscores how the formal constraints within jazz music have social implications. As Alex explains, the repetitive nature of the music's compositional structure, exemplified by the recurring chorus as well as conventionalized harmonic progressions ("the changes"), severely constricts the formal possibilities of the music. By contrast, says Alex, rhythm and melody constitute the freeing aspects of jazz, linked socially to the joyful components of African American experience. Yet even these freeing elements in jazz are inherently encased within the music's unyielding formal constraints; musicians improvise or create rhythmic variation, that is, only within the confines of a delimited set of harmonic and compositional patterns, leading in the long run to repetition and stasis. This lack of genuine musical development, in turn, is symptomatic of the social condition of Black Americans: "endless repetition" in jazz expresses "what the Negro experiences as the endless daily humiliation of American life, which bequeaths him a futureless future."[21]

The film's harsh verdict on what it portrays as the constraining elements of jazz overlaps in striking ways with Adorno's famously scathing critique of the music—against which Bland's own position in *The Cry of Jazz* emerges more clearly. Although defenders of jazz often dismiss Adorno's stance as the product of elitism or simple ignorance, this harsh appraisal was consistent with his aesthetic theory. This theory was grounded in a critical Marxist elaboration of the early twentieth-century modernist approach to European art music associated with figures such as composer Arnold Schoenberg – an approach that more recent music scholars have characterized as "structural listening." In Adorno's own conception, set out in a series of publications beginning in the 1930s, the broader development of modern music, along with the particular musical materials to be found within any composition, tend to be historically marked by capitalism's oppressive and ideologically distorted set of social relations – including, as Fumi Okiji has put it, the "machinery of capitalistic cultural production" itself. Just as the modern organization of social life has robbed human subjects of their individuality, twentieth-century musical compositions and other individual works of art have increasingly struggled to express their particularity in the face of a dehumanization of art. "Society's discontinuities, its untruths and ideologies," Adorno observed, "emerge in the work as structural discontinuities, as deficiencies." Only when a work's elements – its harmonic principles, rhythmic properties, compositional forms and so forth – combine spontaneously, that is, dialectically, to create genuinely new musical development can the work's ability to convey "truth content" about its society, and thereby contribute to social emancipation, be fulfilled.[22]

For this reason, Adorno remained unrelentingly critical of all types of twentieth-century music that failed to engage in deep and thoroughgoing formal innovation. He was particularly derisive toward musical genres such as jazz that celebrated what he saw as a kind of pseudo-individuality – a merely superficial spontaneity

and creativity overlaying an unchanging or "dead" musical structure. Lacking any true dialectal development in its internal relations, jazz music could only mask an exhausted musical grammar with surface ornamentation, its vaunted improvisations creating the illusion of authentic innovation and foreclosing music's potential for spurring critical social reflection. And this underlying rigidity, for Adorno, was not simply a cultural formula; it was an unmediated expression of the oppressive structure of the larger society.[23]

The Cry of Jazz takes seriously the central thrust of Adorno's critique of modern music. Despite the fact that, as Okiji has observed, Adorno considered the Black experience "wholly inconsequential" to his own narrative of the modern, Bland effectively transposes Adorno's social claims to American conditions of racial domination.[24] Using a similarly structural approach, Bland argues that jazz – its historical development as a musical art as well as the formal elements at work within individual pieces of music – is deeply connected to the racist social conditions oppressing African Americans. As with Adorno's critique of capitalist culture, Bland sees the musical constraints within jazz initially as formal but ultimately as social and political; the compositional and harmonic structures that have given the music its evolving sound and expressive effect have been tightly tethered to the harsh confinements of twentieth-century Black existence. An inability to remove the music's "constraining elements" – to alter or recombine them, in Adorno's terms, to produce dialectical or transformative development – results in part from inherent formal limitations, especially the difficulty of developing new compositional structures without sacrificing the music's "swing." Yet these constraints also stem from inherited social conditions, such as the ongoing restrictions posed by racial segregation – restraints that are central to the portrayal of the city in *The Cry of Jazz*.

This kind of structural-formalist approach rarely surfaced in African American cultural pronouncements of the postwar period. There were prominent Black musical artists – William Grant Still and Duke Ellington among them – who drew freely and easily on jazz elements, seeing little contradiction between these traditions and their own concert-hall ambitions or interest in modernist innovation. Pianist John Lewis, artistic director of the Modern Jazz Quartet, aligned his music with aesthetic values associated with European modernism, yet he also embraced a "respectability politics" that, unlike Bland's film, signaled cultural accommodation to the standards of white society.[25] Plenty of American modernist composers, meanwhile, rejected jazz as a source of musical inspiration for the concert stage; typically, though, these composers were white, and their attitudes toward jazz were filtered by racial condescension or simply by a limited understanding of the music. Bland, by contrast – a composer and arranger who understood and deeply appreciated the historical significance of jazz – was arguing quite forwardly that its traditions were no longer relevant to the social and musical moment.

One stimulant to Bland's aggressively modernist conception of music may have been John J. Becker, his composition teacher. By the time Bland studied with him in the late 1940s, Becker was teaching in relative obscurity, but during the

interwar period he had gained significant attention as an enthusiastic crusader for an "ultra-modernist" American classical music. Part of a group including Charles Ives, Henry Cowell and others, Becker was a respected composer in his own right, known in particular for a style of dissonant counterpoint that Bland would later incorporate into his own compositions. Bland's studies at the American Conservatory of Music, in turn, no doubt exposed him to the ideas of Schoenberg and other European modernists, and perhaps Adorno as well – ideas he took seriously enough that his early compositions were written in the twelve-tone system. If Bland learned a certain ultra-modernist approach to music from his studies with Becker, though, his reworking of an Adorno-like structural critique of African American jazz was probably developed on his own.[26]

There is much in Adorno's critique of jazz that Bland's film did not embrace. The German philosopher's tendency to conflate jazz and all forms of popular music as mere entertainment; his assertion that jazz has little to do with "genuine black music"; the insistence that the relationship between commodity capitalism and aesthetic creation had become entirely parasitic – these sweeping claims did not find their way into *The Cry of Jazz*, though they may have indirectly informed its approach to cultural appropriation. Nor does Bland's socio-political critique of America's history of racial domination seem guided by any clearly formulated version of Black Marxism.[27] However, the film's thesis that jazz is dead does emerge from an insistently structural critique of American musical and social development – one that, while appreciative of the music's expressive power and social contributions in ways that Adorno certainly was not, draws a similar connection between musical stasis and social dehumanization. Jazz music, condemned to repetition, remains fatally tied to a racist way of life.

This critique of musical and social stasis is dramatized quite emphatically, in visual as well as auditory terms, in the third and final instructional sequence of *The Cry of Jazz*. As Alex reminds viewers that the restraining elements of jazz relate to the music's compositional and harmonic structures ("the form and the changes"), the filmmaker presents images of Sun Ra at an upright piano – its upper panel removed so that the hammers are exposed – playing the same brief passage over and over again. Alex's voice continues:

> If any attempts are made to develop the form and/or the changes, the swing or the spirit of jazz is lost. Since the jazz body cannot grow, it can only repeat itself – and in so doing, is stagnant – and in so doing, is dead.

As Sun Ra's hands repeat the same passage, Alex elaborates on this point, reestablishing the link between the music and its people.

> Jazz cannot grow because it was not meant to grow. Its dead body stands as a monument to the Negro, who was supposed to die in the American scheme of things.

Figure 2: Creative Urban Destruction in *The Cry of Jazz* (Library of Congress).

In the structure of American society, then, both jazz music and African Americans were expected to disappear – to be superseded by the march of historical progress.

What follows is a cinematic enactment of the fatal cul-de-sac in which jazz, and thus African Americans, remain trapped. As Sun Ra is heard playing this same run over and over, the visual focus now rests fully upon the piano hammers, no longer visibly guided by any pianist, moving in inhuman fashion through the same repetitive pattern. Drawing out this visual and aural portrayal of dehumanization and stasis, Alex's voice comments:

> Jazz is dead because, in a way, the strangling image of a futureless future has made the Negro a dead thing, too. The Negro can only become alive by the destruction of America's future.

Abruptly, with the uttering of this last sentence, there is a dramatic visual and musical shift: now viewers are presented grainy images of urban destruction – ghetto houses being demolished and set afire – alternating with shots of Arkestra musicians playing their instruments (see Figure 2).

These images accompany the sound of the familiar piano passage heard in discordant combination with other instruments (trumpet, trombone, drums), which seem to be playing unrelated lines. At the end of each passage, there is silence; then the same musical sequence is repeated, each time separated by a reflective (funereal?) moment of silence. Brief shots of the individual musicians show calm faces, reinforcing the reigning sense of composure and control. The start-stop nature of the sequence creates an effect not of utter chaos but of planned and controlled destruction – the end of jazz not as a tragic loss or even a gradual pro-

cess of exhaustion but a disciplined historical exercise in creative destruction, an engineered demonstration of how profound musical contradictions lead inexorably to a moment of crisis and, then, to the possibility of change.

It is a striking cinematic sequence. The didactic quality of the segment is almost Brechtian in its "working out" of the film's thesis: how the formal contradictions within the structures of jazz, reaching a historical impasse, pile up and must be discarded. Musically, Bland appears to have used "sound superimposition" – as his audio script calls it – to layer together brief audio segments from different pieces of music. Although it is not clear which sound segments were ultimately employed, this particular script designates four Severson-related audio tracks from the film to be superimposed in this way: a lightly Latin-inflected composition ("My Rhapsody") used in the film's opening-credit sequence; two cool-jazz pieces ("Too Much" and "Who, Me?"); and "Lela," a recorded piece from which the repetitive piano run – actually played not by Sun Ra but by a white jazz musician named Eddie Higgins – is taken. A fifth Severson-associated piece also may have been sampled for this climactic sequence, judging from what sounds like a Dixieland-style cadence played by the brass instruments at the very end of the repeated sequence. In any event, Bland seems to have assembled these various audio clips into a harsh, repetitive sound collage – the sort of sonic demonstration capable of dramatizing the jazz tradition's historical dead-end. Using clips of white-related styles to stage the death of jazz may have been, for Bland, something of a musical in-joke.[28]

Meanwhile, the visual frames of this sequence intersperse, as already noted, the darkened images of Arkestra musicians with sudden shots of urban decay and devastation. This latter footage appears to be from different source material, perhaps provided by Hill, the urban planner among the KHTB production team. From the vantage point of today, these images – abandoned apartments, boarded-up tenement windows, half-demolished and burning buildings – may seem to anticipate the urban riots of the 1960s. However, at the time of the film's release these shots were more likely to be associated with the ghetto decline and slum-clearance demolition of urban renewal, precisely the sort of destruction taking place in certain sections of Chicago's Hyde Park. Throughout the sequence, Alex's voiceover coolly instructs viewers that Black Americans "can only come alive by the destruction of America's future." Taken together, the various elements of this sequence – the rapid cross-cutting between buildings and instruments, the softly intoned commentary, the relentless reprise of the same sonic mashup – fully merge the death of jazz with the creative destruction of the ghetto.[29]

While somber, the sequence does not convey a sense of history as tragedy. For Bland, the death of the "jazz body" represents a musical and historical necessity – a requisite break with a dead past, opening up a much-anticipated moment of cultural and social transformation. Of course, the inherited forms of African American musical and urban life, symbolized by the formal structures of jazz and (their social corollary) the built environment of the northern ghetto, once served important purposes, including the triumphant survival of the "spirit" of

Black America. Yet, for Bland, these structures not only sustained communal life but also, over time, came to restrict it. By leaving behind these forms of “genteel slavery,” as Alex calls them, Black cultural producers henceforth can look forward to creating entirely new kinds of music, perhaps bringing, as Faye suggests in the final Parkwood Jazz Club sequence, the “spirit of jazz” to “serious music.” African Americans, in turn, can refashion their cultural identity under new conditions of freedom and even, as Bland implies, take on new positions of leadership. The final shot of the film – an upward-angled close-up of Alex’s face with an African statuette looming behind him – suggests that creative, intellectual Black men are well placed to stand tall and powerful at the center of this new world.

This concluding section of the film sharpens the role of gender and sexuality in mediating the racial power struggle at the Parkwood club, along with the aesthetic stakes at play. The complete absence of Black women, as Martin and Wall have observed, helps to position Faye, a white woman, as the central object of value and desire.[30] As Alex’s musical authority inexorably draws her to him (much to the consternation of John, the club’s white president), Faye’s evident refinement makes her an obvious symbol of the prestige of “serious music” itself – an object bearing precisely the sort of elevated aesthetic capital that postwar modernist composers often possessed but that African American musicians and composers were typically denied. Alex, by winning Faye, becomes confirmed not only in his masculine status but in his intellectual autonomy and cultural leadership. As if the presence of Black women at the club might risk re-anchoring new Black music in some type of traditional African American community, their absence enables Alex to shine all the more powerfully as an autonomous artist and a Black man unencumbered by ghetto attachments. Given this framing, it may be fitting that Bland’s next project, a dramatic film co-written with Nelam Hill that focuses on a Black composer and arranger who battles heroically with a racist film producer, was titled *The American Hero*.[31]

What is the “serious music” to come that is alluded to near the end of *The Cry of Jazz*? The precise nature of this music remains unelaborated in the film, along with the social or urban circumstances that might bring about African American freedom. Bland’s own commentary, as expressed in a letter to Mekas one year after *Cry*’s release, emphasized the need for Black “creators and musicians” to work through the African American experience “to enlarge on the legacy which jazz has left,” but he did not spell out what this might entail musically. In the same letter, Bland harshly dismissed the creative efforts of a deracinated Black middle class, which he saw – echoing a critique that had been recently launched by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier – as crippled by cultural insecurity or slavishly devoted to finding “some way of identifying with white America.” Bland’s own subsequent career as a composer would draw on a range of musical styles and approaches. Often combining atonal or dissonant counterpoint with many elements of jazz, funk and blues, these diverse compositions yielded a body of work that he himself ended up characterizing as “urban classical” music.[32]

The Future of Spirit and Structure

The musical aesthetic advanced by *The Cry of Jazz* emerges from a utopian cultural vision of music and society of a very particular kind. Utopian modernism as a revolutionary agent – destruction of the old to make way for the new – had become by the late 1950s a well-established project of twentieth-century avant-gardes, though most often a project embraced by white musicians and artists. Black modernist sensibilities, especially in relation to music, did not typically reject past forms, seeking instead to develop aesthetic visions that might bring together, or rework, tradition and the new. Philosopher Alain Locke's mid-1930s call for a new African American music with the elevated status of classical European music, for instance, envisioned a "symphonic jazz" that did not reject traditional forms but, rather, might "carry native jazz through to this higher level." What remains most striking about Bland's film, then, is the sharpness of the break it advocates with the past, consigning a people's "survival music" to the dustbin of history, along with the Jim Crow urban structures in which, he claimed, jazz was inescapably imprisoned. What Bland is also doing, though, is implicitly asserting a claim that would be taken up by growing numbers of African American composers and performers over the decades that followed: the right to access and freely make use of any and all musical resources traditionally denied them.[33]

Recent studies of twentieth-century Afro-modernism have come to recognize certain aesthetic commonalities spanning the singular contributions of different musical innovators. Focusing on Duke Ellington's compositions of the 1920s, for instance, Jeffrey Magee emphasizes the bandleader's aspiration to defy racial and musical categories by crafting a complex sound capable of blending blues-based traditions with more sophisticated, cosmopolitan forms. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. has located within the Black vernacular styles of the post-World War II era a rich "North-South cultural dialogue," similarly manifested in juxtapositions of the earthy and the urbane in jazz, gospel, rhythm and blues and more; it is in these interactions, he suggests, that we find a certain aesthetic or spiritual center for Afro-Modernist musicality. Ingrid Monson, in turn, has explored how American jazz musicians of the 1950s and '60s selectively combined musical elements from a very broad array of aesthetic streams, from African American vernacular styles and Tin Pan Alley songs to the modern classical repertoire and the music of the African diaspora. For Monson, what is distinctive about Afro-modernism in this period seems to be not so much any particular mix of musical styles, or even the commingling of elements from folk music and art music, but rather the sheer range of different ways to apply the combinatorial principle itself to advance a creative "blackening" of modernist aesthetics.[34] In this sense, Bland's own musical aesthetic – assuming it involves bringing the spirit of African American jazz to post-tonal classical music – needs to be understood as residing very much within this broader field of twentieth-century Afro-modernist strategies of renewal. However, his insistence on a Black-led ultra-modernist music strongly implicated in the racial transformation of American society sets out a postwar aesthetic project that is both intellectually distinctive and culturally contentious.

It was a position that provoked strong reactions among early viewers, Black and white, of *The Cry of Jazz*. Ralph Ellison, at a post-screening discussion in New York attended by the producers, was deeply critical of the film, declaring that he himself looked upon African American life not as a humiliation but as a discipline "out of which strong people can come." At the same forum, jazz historian Marshall Stearns vigorously disputed the death-of-jazz thesis, and argued that the music had long ceased to be representative of purely African American aspirations – only to find himself (at least in Bland's account of the interchange) peppered by a flurry of rebuttals from Bland and his co-producer Mark Kennedy, who were also in attendance.[35] Nevertheless there were clearly signs of musical renewal everywhere in the larger jazz world. The year 1959 alone witnessed a flood of album releases, opening up new channels for the music's future: Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, Charles Mingus's *Mingus Ah Um*, and others besides. Jazz artists themselves seemed to be contesting Bland's death-of-jazz claim at every turn – and in the process demonstrating the ever-expanding diversity of Afro-modernist musical expression. What Raymond Williams has called that "restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovations and experiments" characteristic of modernism was now streaming in multiple directions out of urban cultural spaces too often defined simply as ghettos.[36]

Sun Ra, meanwhile, was responding to *The Cry of Jazz* in his own singular fashion. In *Jazz in Silhouette*, an album also released in 1959, Sun Ra and His Arkestra presented a mix of older- and newer-sounding jazz material bearing futuristic titles, along with one musically forward-looking composition – "Ancient Aiethopia" – with a title and a sound that gestured in spirit back to the earliest moment of African civilization. Rejecting the narrow linearity of Bland's conception of jazz history, *Jazz in Silhouette* instead crafted together past-, present-, and future-laden sonic statements that encouraged listeners, as Paul Youngquist has noted, to reimagine – rather than merely triumph over – what was, is, and will be. Sun Ra's writings for the album also offered a coded response to *The Cry of Jazz*. Printed as part of the album booklet, Ra's poem entitled "Jazz in Silhouette" played with the visual image of the silhouette (the figure given shape by what it is not) as both a relational symbol of racial definition and an unsettled question of musical identity. When understood within his playful and nonlinear approach to history, Ra's poetic lines seemed to define the musical sounds of past and present, whether Black or white, as the sonic equivalent of silhouette images projected backward in time from a future world. In this sense, jazz – not merely its path ahead but even its past forms — remained alive, strange, and still not fully revealed.[37]

Both Bland and Ra, as it happened, would strongly influence the shape of Afro-modernism to come. Baraka later recalled *The Cry of Jazz* as a major inspiration for the Black Arts movement – in the process, overlooking the film's intellectual debt to a European formalist aesthetics that he strongly rejected. He also came to champion the influence of "Ra the pioneer," a jazz musician possessing a much more diasporic conception of Black music.[38] Over the course of the 1960s, new

directions in African American creative expression – in urbanism no less than in music and the arts – sought to merge in various ways a contentious demand for cultural self-determination with various aesthetic paths of Black modernist reinvention. In Chicago, New York, and other cities, urban planners and community organizers alike found in notions of Black autonomy and cultural leadership the inspiration for what Brian Goldstein (following Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton) has called "a search for new forms" – innovative philosophical or spatial projects directed toward collective emancipation. For certain intellectuals, such as the poet June Jordan in her Harlem "Skyrise" collaboration with Buckminster Fuller, modernist reinvention took the form of completely replacing New York's ghetto structures with urban renewal-style tower developments. For others, such as Baraka himself, Newark offered the opportunity to refashion urban renewal itself into a development tool for the preservation and cultural advancement of the city's existing Black community.[39]

Musicians affiliated with the jazz world looked in this period for similarly ambitious ways to rework their relationships, organizationally as well as musically, to audiences, communities, traditions and one another. Like Bland, these musicians often spoke the language of Black leadership, aesthetic autonomy, and cultural self-determination. However, their notions of independence often expanded beyond individualistic conceptions of creative authorship, embracing more collective or communal approaches to artistic practice and performance. This difference emerged, in part, because of changing material conditions: African American experimental musicians of the 1960s and '70s were working in the destructive wake of urban renewal, and their efforts to rebuild their devastated communities often infused the Afro-modernist aesthetic with a newly collectivist ethos.[40]

All the same, many of the forward-looking musical ideals championed by Bland became fundamental principles for the next generation of Black experimental musicians. Composer-centered ideologies, extended compositional forms, new tonal systems, concert-music performance settings – many post-jazz attributes of the new "serious music" implied in *The Cry of Jazz* soon developed into taken-for-granted expectations within the African American avant-garde. And for many of its practitioners, these musical commitments continued to be closely linked to social and cultural projects of racial emancipation. *The Cry of Jazz*, though rarely viewed over the final decades of the twentieth century, nevertheless projected certain ideals forward – beyond a futureless future – to an expanding world of Afro-modernist strategies with transformative aspirations.

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Notes

1. *The Cry of Jazz*, a film directed by Edward O. Bland (KHTB Productions, 1959, B&W, 16mm). In 2010 the Library of Congress named the film to its National Film Registry as a "historic and fascinating" commentary on "racism and the appropriation of jazz"; see Library of Congress, press release January 4, 2011; https://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2010/10-273.html. To view the film, see https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01195283/.

2. For recent judgments by film scholars, see Armond White, public remarks, Maysles Documentary Center, June 27, 2016 ["lost film"]; https://www.maysles.org/videoeducationalblog/2016/6/27/armond-white-introduces-the-cry-of-jazz; Jacqueline Stewart, public remarks, 7th Orphan Film Symposium, April 9, 2010; https://www.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/orphans7/audio/Orphans7_Day3.20_JacquelineStewartPresentation.mp3; and Chuck Kleinhans, "*The Cry of Jazz* and the Expressive Politics of Music and Race: Interview with Ed Bland," *Jump Cut* 54 (2012). For an early appreciation of the film, see the manifesto of the New American Cinema Group, September 30, 1962; https://www.undergroundfilmjournal.com/the-first-statement-of-the-new-american-cinema-group-september-30- 1962/.

3. Ernest Callenbach and Dominic Salvatore, "The Cry of Jazz," *Film Quarterly*, Winter 1959 ["anti-white"]; this review also called the film "brave" and "immensely significant." See also Will Leonard, "Mickey Rooney But When He Isn't Mickey Rooney," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 29, 1959, p. F10, which refers to the film as "jazz music with a chip on its shoulder." For police activity, see Kenneth Tynan, "A Contrast in Black and White," *The Observer*, March 20, 1960, in Nelam L. Hill Papers [hereafter NLH Papers], Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 4, Folder 12. See also Anna McCarthy, "Screen Culture and Group Discussion in Postwar Race Relations," in *Learning with the Lights Off: An Educational Film Reader*, ed. Deron Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 412 ["sameness under the skin"]. McCarthy effectively situates the cinematic style of *The Cry of Jazz* within the context of the post-World War II educational "race relations" film, showing how the interracial discussion format – typically operating as a vehicle for Negro exemplarity, white self-enlightenment and cross-racial brotherhood – is both reproduced and subverted by Bland. For a close examination of the racial and gender politics of the film, see Michael T. Martin and David Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 31 (2014): 136-147.

4. Although the film is often described as a semi-documentary, Bland himself characterized *The Cry of Jazz* as a "thesis film"; see Edward Bland, Letter to Jonas Mekas, April 12, 1960, p. 3, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26.

5. Amiri Baraka, "Jazz and the White Critic," *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*, ed. William J. Harris (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1991), p. 186; for Baraka's embrace of Sun Ra, see Lorenzo Thomas, "Classical Jazz and the Black Arts Movement," *African American Review* 29, 2 (1995): 237-240. For Sun Ra's own aesthetic project at the time of the making of *The Cry of Jazz*, see William Sites, *Sun Ra's Chicago: Afrofuturism and the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 173-179.

6. Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., "Afro-Modernism and Music: On Science, Community, and Magic in the Black Avant-Garde," in Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., with Melanie L. Zeck, and Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *The Transformation of Black Music: The Rhythms, the Songs, and the Ships of the African Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 155-172. For literary and cultural studies centering Black urban experience, see Charles Scruggs, *Sweet Home: Invisible Cities in the African American Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the*

Great Migration, and Black Urban Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007); James Smethurst, *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Erica R. Edwards, *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). For a recent study of the influence of jazz on Afro-modernist literature, see John Lowney, *Jazz Internationalism: Literary Afro-Modernism and the Cultural Politics of Black Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

7. Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*." Bland's address was 5473 S. Kimbark Ave.; see NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 22.

8. On the older Edward Bland, see Lawrence Jackson, "Edward Bland," *Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance*, ed. Steven C. Tracy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), pp. 76-82. He was killed in action in World War II; the poet Gwendolyn Brooks subsequently dedicated the collection *Annie Allen* to him. His brother, Alden Bland, was the author of the novel, *Behold a Cry* (New York: Scribner's, 1947); see Robert Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932-1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp. 201-202. For the early life of the younger Edward Bland, see Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

9. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*" ["started hanging around"; "the thing was"]. Despite Bland's recollection that racial frustration was a motivating factor in the making of the film, it is worth noting that several early versions of the screenplay focus more narrowly on the musical aspects of jazz, with little mention of race; see, e.g., "The Destiny of Jazz," NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 12.

10. McCarthy, "Screen Culture and Group Discussion," p. 418. For Hyde Park urban renewal, see Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 135-170, and Preston H. Smith II, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 141-154. The most significant of the displaced music venues was a jazz club called the Beehive; see "Beehive Jazz Combo Blows Renewal Blues," *Hyde Park Herald*, 1 June 1955, p. 4.

11. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

12. Agreement between Enterplan Publishing and KHTB Productions, February 24, 1959, Alton Abraham Collection of Sun Ra, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Box 16, Folder 9, Financial Records, 1956-1971.

13. Ed Bland, "Personal Recollections of Sun Ra, 1956-1967," Ed Bland: Urban Classical Funk… Essays, http://www.edblandmusic.com/SunRa.htm. Bland and Ra continued to work together musically after they moved separately to New York in the 1960s. Severson, in addition to his jazz-related activities in 1950s Chicago, composed for television shows and commercials, and is credited with the Doublemint gum jingle ("Double your pleasure, double your fun with Doublemint gum"); see Sharon Sullivan, "Quite a Jazz Man," *Grand Junction Free Press*, May 29, 2007; http://www.gjfreepress.com/article/20070529/COMMUNITY_NEWS/70529004.

14. Le Sun-Ra and His Arkestra, "Blues at Midnight," *Super-Sonic Jazz* (Saturn SR 0216, 1957, LP), and Le Sun-Ra and His Arkistra, "Demon's Lullaby," *Angels and Demons at Play* (Saturn 9956-2, 1965 [orig. rec. May 16, 1956], LP); see Robert L. Campbell, Christopher Trent and Robert Pruter, "From Sonny Blount to Sun Ra: The Chicago Years," revised 9 September 2016, http://campber.people.clemson.edu/sunra.html.

15. Bland, Letter to Jonas Mekas, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26.

16. Norman Mailer, "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent*, Fall 1957; Tynan, "A Contrast," NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 12.

17. Monson, *Freedom Sounds*, p. 73.

18. Untitled shooting script, p. 20, NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 17.

19. Bland responded to these criticisms by claiming he had been unable to induce any

Black female performers to work for free – which may have been the terms accepted by the other actors. Co-producer Mark Kennedy conceded privately in a letter to Bland, however, that he was unsure if this was actually the reason – and reported that, "with Negroes, especially, the omission is so glaring that it rouses their defensiveness against us." Mark Kennedy, Letter to Bland, April 23, 1959, NLH Papers, Box 3, Part 2. See also Martin and Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*."

20. Ed Bland, quoted in Kleinhans, "*Cry of Jazz*."

21. The phrase "the futureless future" may have been adapted from a similar phrase in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* ("The Dry Salvages"): "The future futureless, before the morning watch/When time stops and time is never ending…." For a quite different perspective on the aesthetics of repetition, see James A. Snead, "On Repetition in Black Culture," *Black American Literature Forum* 15, 4 (1981): 146-154; see also Fumi Okiji, *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. 68-73.

22. For structural listening, see Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 148-176. For an insightful engagement with Adorno and Black modernity, see Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, p. 6 ("machinery of capitalistic cultural production") and passim. For "society's discontinuities," see T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Christian Lenhardt (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 396; see also Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 261. For a discussion of "truth content," see Max Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis," in *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 209-233.

23. For Adorno on jazz, see "On Jazz" (1936), in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert and trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 470-495 and, for useful commentary, 349-358; see also, in the same volume, "On the Social Situation of Music" (1932), pp. 391-436, and "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (1938), pp. 288-317. Adorno claims that while modern music in general is commodified, certain music will attempt to struggle against the alienation that commodification engenders by conveying its social content "through the coded language of suffering" (Adorno, *Essays on Music*, p. 393; p. 332 as well). See also Robert W. Witkin, "Why Did Adorno 'Hate' Jazz?" *Sociological Theory* 18, 1 (2000): 145-170.

24. Okiji, *Jazz as Critique*, p. 24.

25. See, e.g., Catherine Parsons Smith, *William Grant Still* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), and John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009). For Lewis, see Kelsey A. K. Klotz, "On Musical Value: John Lewis, Structural Listening, and the Politics of Respectability," *Jazz Perspectives* 11, 1 (2018): 25-51.

26. For Becker, see Don C. Gillespie, "John Becker: Midwestern Musical Crusader," PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977; Don C. Gillespie, "John Becker, Musical Crusader of Saint Paul," *The Musical Quarterly* 62, 2 (1976): 195-217 ["dissonant counterpoint": p. 198]; Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 110, 127; and William Powell, "Ed Bland: Composer, Filmmaker, Clarinetist, Philosopher," *The Clarinet* 44, 4 (2017); https://clarinet.org/2017/09/05/ed-bland-composer-filmmaker-clarinetist-philosopher/. For dissonant counterpoint, see Charles Seeger, "On Dissonant Counterpoint," *Modern Music* 7, 4 (1930): 25-31; and John D. Spilker, "The Origins of 'Dissonant Counterpoint': Henry Cowells's Unpublished Notebook," *Journal of the Society of American Music* 5, 4 (2011): 481-533.

27. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, p. 477 ["genuine black music"]. In my view, the sociopolitical critique presented in *The Cry of Jazz* articulates no consistent political ideology. For example, while adaptation of the critique of modern capitalism to the struggle against racial oppression is characteristic of a certain kind of Black Marxism, the call for affirmative action toward full racial equality within an existing America is entirely compatible with African

American liberalism, whereas the demand for Black autonomy as well as the male, patriarchal appeal to an undifferentiated African American unity are hallmarks of Black nationalist ideology. For a helpful conceptual mapping of these political traditions, see Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); see also Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

28. "The Spirit of Jazz (Audio)," NLH Papers, Box 3, Folder 2, p. 11 [sound super-imposition]. Noting that Higgins played for a time with a New Orleans-style group, Campbell and his colleagues have speculated that the pianist may have been involved with the Dixieland illustration piece that Bland uses earlier in the film – the sole remaining unidentified piece of music in *The Cry of Jazz*; see Campbell, Trent and Pruter, *From Sonny Blount to Sun Ra*, which also discusses other Severson-related source material.

29. Bland's implicit embrace of urban renewal was hardly unusual among African American intellectuals of the period; but for more critical reactions, see Chicago Urban League, *Urban Renewal and the Negro in Chicago* (Chicago, 1958); Arnold Hirsch, "'Containment' on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 2 (2000): 158–89; and Myka Tucker-Abramson, *Novel Shocks: Urban Renewal and the Origins of Neoliberalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

30. Martin and Wall, "Race, Space, and Gender in Ed Bland's *The Cry of Jazz*," 144.

31. "The American Hero," NLH Papers, Box 5, Folder 1. Bland's portrayal of the composer as masculine hero drew on longstanding tradition; see, e.g., Scott G. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). In the early twentieth century, as the world of concert music in America was seen increasingly as a feminized sphere, modernist composers often made extreme efforts to wrap their musical projects in masculinist ideals; see Oja, *Making Music Modern*, p. 223-227, and Catherine Parsons Smith, "'A Distinguishing Virility': Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music," in *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 90-106. A similar gendering of aesthetic status can be heard in the public pronouncements of many post-World War II modernist composers; see Susan McClary, "Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Musical Composition," in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture*, ed. David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), pp. 54-74.

32. Letter to Jonas Mekas, April 12, 1960, p. 3, NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 26. See also E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957). For recordings of Bland's music, see *Urban Classical: The Music of Ed Bland* (Cambria 1026, CD, 1994), and *Urban Counterpoint: The Piano Music of Ed Bland*, Judith Olsen, piano (Cambria 1256, CD, 2019).

33. Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (New York: Verso, 1989); Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), p. 99. Debate among African American intellectuals about jazz and its potential elevation extends back to the earliest years of the music; see Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?* pp. 1-53. For important historical context behind the efforts by postwar Black musicians to claim "classical" music status and resources, see George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 370-388.

34. Jeffrey Magee, "Ellington's Afro-Modernist Vision in the 1920s," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington*, ed. Edward Green (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 85-105; Ramsey, "Afro-Modernism and Music"; Monson, *Freedom Sounds,* p. 71.

35. Tynan, "A Contrast," NLH Papers, Box 4, Folder 12.

36. Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, p. 43.

37. Sun Ra and His Arkestra, "Ancient Aiethopia," issued on *Jazz in Silhouette* (Saturn K7OP3590/1, 1959, LP), and reissued as Sun Ra, *Jazz in Silhouette* (Evidence 22012, 1991, CD); Paul Youngquist, *A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), p. 127; Sites, *Sun Ra's Chicago*, pp. 176-179, 186-187.

38. Amiri Baraka, "Sun Ra," *African American Review* 29, 2 (1995): 253. For the influence of *Cry of Jazz* on Baraka, see his comments in Lorenzo Thomas, *Don't Deny My Name: Words and Music and the Black Intellectual Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2008), p. 106: "I think what *The Cry of Jazz* did was plant the seeds in some of our minds of what the aesthetic of our music was."

39. Brian D. Goldstein, "'The Search for New Forms': Black Power and the Making of the Postmodern City," *Journal of American History* 103, 2 (2016): 375-399; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967); Cheryl J. Fish, "Place, Emotion, and Environmental Justice in Harlem: June Jordan and Buckminster Fuller's 'Architextual' Collaboration," *Discourse* 2/3 (2007): 330-345; Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 123-194; Daniel Matlin, "'A New Reality of Harlem': Imagining the African American Urban Future During the 1960s," *Journal of American Studies* 52, 4 (2018): 991-1024; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 224-229.

40. See, e.g., Benjamin Looker, *'Point from Which Creation Begins': The Black Artists' Group of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004); Steven L. Isoardi, *The Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Naomi Beckwith and Dieter Roelstraete, *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art/University of Chicago Press, 2015); and Lewis, *Power Stronger Than Itself*. For a helpful discussion of collectivist and communalist conceptions of musicmaking, see Michael C. Heller, *Loft Jazz: Improvising New York in the 1970s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 65-93.