

# Far Out: Intentionality and Image Schema in the Reception of Early Works by Ornette Coleman

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In this essay I would like to examine two factors contributing to the categorization of music—authorial intentions and image schemas—and their perceptual consequences, in light of recent developments in cognitive science. Psychologist Raymond Gibbs (1999) has argued that many aspects of our understanding of language and artworks rest on a fundamental, often unconscious, tendency to seek the identity and communicative purpose of the creator. The writings of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and others<sup>1</sup> have suggested that human understanding works in a fundamentally metaphorical manner,<sup>2</sup> applying modes of understanding body movement to more abstract domains of thought. Combining these two approaches, this paper proposes that our understanding of musical creations as belonging inside or outside of an established cognitive category, in combination with our attribution of the composer's intent, colors our perception of the music to such a great extent that two people listening to the same composition might hear entirely different musical objects.

This idea poses a serious challenge to music analysts. We like to think that most musicians will agree on the basic "facts" of a musical work. This belief may seem to be confirmed when we focus principally on the classical canon, analyzed by a culturally-validated system. But I think this seeming consensus hides differences in perception that emerge more clearly with less mainstream repertoires or alternative analytic techniques. For this paper I have chosen a repertoire disseminated primarily in aural form, which makes the issue of what is perceived to be the musical object even more acute: the early free jazz of alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman. A wide variety of reactions to this music were collected from reviews, articles, and record liner notes from 1958 to 1964. My research indicates that those who felt that this music exceeded cherished boundaries and who imputed destructive intentions to its creator had more difficulty perceiving its features (or perhaps had less motivation to note its characteristics) than those who felt it remained within the bounds of recognizable musical categories or broke through constricting limits.

Let me begin with some basic assumptions about intention. Raymond Gibbs views intentionality as a significant factor in understanding the meaning of an utterance or artwork. According to Gibbs, social psychologists

confirm that attribution of another person's intentions is necessary for forming an overall impression of that person and for sustaining social interactions. . . . Studies also suggest that attribution of dispositional qualities to another person on the basis of behavior may be made spontaneously, without awareness. (1999:78)

In fact, ascribing intentions to others is vital for making sense of human interactions.

In the social world . . . a large number of complex variables are grasped easily and immediately, largely because people are perceived as the originators of their behavior in the sense that there is some intention motivating their actions. The attribution of intent to others is an important source for making the world seem relatively stable and predictable. (89–90)

People are so used to making predictions about the behavior of others that they routinely overattribute intention when the circumstance does not warrant it. For example, we tend to see intent in random events. According to Gibbs, the attribution of intention may occur very quickly, without conscious effort, or over a longer period of time. He asserts that

[a]ll understanding, be it linguistic or nonlinguistic, takes place in real time ranging from the first milliseconds of processing to long-term reflective analysis. This temporal continuum may roughly be divided into moments corresponding to our comprehension, recognition, interpretation, and appreciation of linguistic utterances or artworks. (99)

For our purpose here, it is enough to realize that deciphering authorial intentions can take place in the comprehension stage, which comprises processes that take from a few hundred milliseconds up to a few seconds at most (100). This suggests that within seconds of hearing a musical phrase we may well have already attributed an intention to its creator, perhaps unconsciously. Just as it is advantageous in understanding conversation—for example, to attribute to a speaker the intention of asking directions—it may be advantageous in understanding music to attribute to the performers the intention of playing jazz, the intention of playing "Take the A Train," or the intention of soloing over the changes.

Now let me turn to image schemas.<sup>3</sup> Image schemas are cross-modal cognitive structures that shape percepts and concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:30–44). They are formed from patterns of sensory and motor activity.

Lakoff and Johnson name these schemas from their simple, basic elements. A list of them includes "container," "source-path-goal," "part-whole," "center-periphery," "link," "cycle," "iteration," "contact," "adjacency," "forced motion" (e.g., pushing, pulling, propelling), "support," "balance," "straight-curved," "near-far," and vertical or horizontal orientation (ibid.:35). Some of these image schemas derive from the nature of the human body itself (e.g., "front-back"); others result from recurring body movements or interaction of the body and external entities (e.g., "source-path-goal," "forced motion"). Image-schematic concepts are reflected in many kinds of linguistic expressions. For example, when we say, "the butterfly is *in* the garden," we are imposing a container around a particular segment of land, air, and other features of the world, and we perceive the butterfly to be *inside* that space. When we say, "this piece is *in* D minor," we are mapping our understanding of containers onto the realm of music. In this case the "piece" of music (or the "music" itself), conceived of as an object, is understood as being inside a container holding the arrangements of tones that we associate with D minor.

It is important to recognize how fundamental image schemas are to human thought. It might seem that image schemas are choices imposed at the level of language,<sup>4</sup> or at the level of conscious reflection. But they are even more fundamental than that. Recent cognitive science research has put into question the old distinction between perception and cognition, a holdover from faculty psychology, in which separate faculties were posited for the activities of sensation and reason. In fact, work in neural modeling suggests that "the conceptual system makes use of important parts of the sensorimotor system" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999:39). Models cited by Lakoff and Johnson indicate that

topographical maps of the visual field should be instrumental in the computation of image schemas that have topographical properties (e.g., the container schema); second, that orientation-sensitive cell assemblages should be able to compute the orientational aspects of spatial concepts that rely on body orientation (e.g., *above*); third, that center-surround receptive fields should be crucial to characterizing concepts like *contact*; and finally that the "filling-in" architecture . . . should play a central role in characterizing the notion of *containment*. (ibid.:40)

What we should take from this work is that there may well be no distinction between the neural structures that shape perception and those that shape cognition. It has even been suggested that "the same neural mechanism that can control bodily movements can perform logical inferences

about the structure of actions in general" (ibid.:42). In other words, image schematic concepts may indeed be formed by the same neural maps that carry out perception and body movement. According to this view, image schemas take part in every level of "perception" and "cognition."

The image schema of primary importance to this paper is "container," with the elements of an inside, a boundary, and an outside. This schema might also be called "in-out." These simple elements can be instantiated in a myriad of different ways as they are applied to physical and conceptual worlds. For example, the container schema is applied whenever we group entities together in a category.<sup>5</sup>

The music of Ornette Coleman in the late 1950s created intense reactions that may have resulted in part from metaphoric mapping of the container schema onto the domain of musical practice. In this case, on the inside of the container are the harmonic progressions, forms, and metric practices of jazz up to that point, as well as the normative procedure of basing solos on the harmony and form of the theme. Some critics called Coleman's music simply "far out."<sup>6</sup> Others reflected the lack of clear topography "outside" the normative container by calling the music "chaotic" or having "no form."<sup>7</sup>

The perception of chaos in a work often results in listeners mapping their response to the music onto the state of the composer's psyche. When trumpeter Rudy Braff states that Coleman's music "sounds like utter confusion and madness . . . disjointed and mixed up and crazy" (Feather 1960a: 37), he seems to be indirectly speculating about Coleman's mental stability as well. Critic John Tynan is more direct in his review of Coleman's 1960 album, *Free Jazz*, when he asks, "Where does the neurosis end and the psychosis begin? The answer must lie somewhere within this maelstrom" (1962:28). Just as the music falls outside the usual categories, the composer's mental state is perceived as outside of the norm: he's got to be out of his mind.

Roy Eldridge explicitly indicates where one goes outside of the normative container, referring to improvisations by Coleman's quartet: "They start with a nice lead-off figure, but then they go off into outer space" (Hentoff 1961:228).<sup>8</sup> Another musician claims, "those themes are so fresh and beautiful. Then they start to blow and it's Cape Canaveral!" (Williams 1963:24).<sup>9</sup>

Another container-schematic understanding of free jazz is displayed in a review of Coleman's 1960 album *This is Our Music* by Don DeMichael, editor of *Down Beat* magazine.<sup>10</sup>

His is not musical freedom; disdain for principles and boundaries is synonymous not with freedom but with anarchy . . . [Coleman] has been made a symbol of musical freedom when he is the antithesis of that freedom. (DeMichael 1961:25)

DeMichael is placing Coleman outside the bounds of what he considers acceptable musical practice. This statement, at the head of the review, sets the tone for his subsequent treatment of Coleman's music. Early creators of free jazz were often portrayed as having bypassed normal boundaries, and they thus accrued the attributes of "outsiders." For example, outsiders may be strange, foreign in the sense of outside the bounds of one's own territory and behavior. Outsiders sometimes attack other territories, with the intention of destroying them. Thus free jazz creators may be labeled as destructive or dangerous. Sometimes these dangerous elements are thought of as coming from treasonous insiders who are destroying jazz from within. Thus Coleman is characterized as an "anarchist" or "nihilist."<sup>11</sup>

The clear ascription of destructive intent in DeMichael's review brings me back to Raymond Gibbs. According to Gibbs,

We attribute more conscious intent to another when our goals or plans or intentions are clearly in conflict with another person's; . . . We [also] attribute more conscious intent to people if they deviate from a social convention they should know. (1999:90)

These conclusions imply that if we have, for some reason, understood others as being against our position, or if we assume that they know they are flouting convention, then we will strongly believe that they are acting consciously, with intent.<sup>12</sup> I would suggest that our natural disposition to categorize some human products—for example, new musical works—as "outside," and to view people who are outside of our belief system as having some intention that conflicts with ours, leads us to experience such products as conscious, intentional personal attacks.<sup>13</sup>

To Don DeMichael, the musical container seems to hold cherished traditional principles and values, and Ornette Coleman doesn't just pass over the boundary, he completely obliterates it. If one destroys this metaphorical domain's borders, then, DeMichael implies, the inhabitants are no longer "contained" by any organizing power. A state of anarchy and chaos results. Once categorized as a dangerous outsider, Coleman is considered by DeMichael to be a serious threat. At the end of the review, the nature of the threat is made explicit; if DeMichael doesn't metaphorically strike back at Coleman, then Coleman will destroy all that he holds dear:

If Coleman's work is to be the standard of excellence, then the work of Lester Young, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, and all the other jazzmen who have been accepted as important artists must be thrown on the trash heap. (DeMichael 1961:25)

Why does Don DeMichael have such a dramatic response to this record? It might be helpful to trace the point at which Ornette Coleman's music crossed over the boundary of acceptability for this critic. Luckily, we can locate that point in time somewhere between December 1959 and May 1961, because DeMichael gave a generally positive review to Coleman's 1959 album, *Tomorrow is the Question*, in the December 24, 1959 issue of *Down Beat*. The recording received a respectable three stars (the highest rating being five stars). Here are DeMichael's comments on Coleman's musical ideas and playing:

To say this is a strange album is an understatement. Astonishing comes closer to the mark, for the LP is an exposition of Coleman's conception, and if it's anything, this conception is astonishing. Coleman is almost certain to create a furor and start the biggest controversy since Thelonious Monk.

Most of his playing on this LP is very good, but some of it is outrageous. His wild, incoherent solos on *Tomorrow*, *Tears*, and *Mind* are marked by extremely bad intonation and sloppy execution. On the other hand, his work on *Lorraine*, *Compassion*, and *Giggin'* is startling in its emotional impact. Again, it must be emphasized that a greater percent of his playing is ★★★★★, but when he descends to playing hit-any-note-but-hit-it-fast, the rating falls to ★ . . .

All in all, this record demands attention and must be listened to many times before it can be digested even partly. Ornette Coleman may be the next great influence, but only time will tell. In the meantime, he should be heard so that a fair evaluation can be made. (DeMichael 1959:39-40)

The extreme difference in reaction to solos DeMichael perceives as either "wild" and "incoherent" or of "startling . . . emotional impact" is striking here. DeMichael apparently felt that these solos were either terrible or terrific, either outside the boundary of acceptable practice or within it. The reasons for this sharp delineation seem unclear today.<sup>14</sup> In any case, DeMichael concluded at the time that, in total, this recording deserved the many listenings that he claimed were required to understand it. Clearly he changed his mind after *This is Our Music* was released.

As we see even in DeMichael's 1959 review, Ornette Coleman's music seemed "strange" to some reviewers from 1958 to 1961. Several factors are involved in this reaction. First of all, Coleman literally was a stranger to many listeners. Several critics mention the fact that Coleman did not come up through the jazz "ranks" in the way that Dizzy Gillespie, for example, had. I think listeners, including many famous jazz players, did

not know how to interpret his musical intentions. Gibbs claims that readers feel more confident in their interpretations of what a speaker meant when that person is a friend than when he or she is a stranger. In other words,

common ground (in this case "community membership") constrains both the interpretation of speaker's messages and the speed with which people comprehend those messages. (Gibbs 1999:130)

This may provide an explanation for the many early descriptions of Coleman's playing as "out of tune." Audiences had no common ground to help them determine whether his pitch manipulations were made intentionally or not. If Coleman was not able to play *within* the accepted norms of saxophone tone, then, as some responses indicated, he was not capable of presenting any coherent intention. In other words, because these listeners categorized Coleman's tone as simply out of tune, they were not able to form an impression of his having purposefully altered his sound.<sup>15</sup>

Returning to Don DeMichael's later review, which focuses on Coleman's solos from *This is Our Music*, we find the following assessment:

Coleman's . . . ideas come in snatches, with yawning depressions between these snatches filled with meaningless notes, none having much relation to the main idea—if there is one—nor, for that matter, to each other. . . . His solo [on "Blues Connotation"], his "best" of the album, tends to wander, though it seems to have a direction, albeit an obscured one. (DeMichael 1961:25)

DeMichael seems to feel that Coleman is demonstrating a disregard for the "proper" relationship between themes and solos, a view expressed by other commentators of the time.<sup>16</sup> This view of "Blues Connotation," today one of Coleman's most well-known compositions, is in stark contrast to that of critic T. E. Martin in 1964, who states that in this tune

Coleman improvises easily giving no sense of lack of control at any time (. . . his solo develops from theme [*sic*] with absolute logic of method) . . . This is not uncontrolled passion but a rational statement in a form of which Coleman can now demonstrate a consistent mastery. Its consistency perhaps is a feature worthy of attention by those who feel that the new wave cannot produce solos analogous in its way to those of [Johnny] Hodges. (1964:14)<sup>17</sup>

Since we have here two strikingly opposed accounts of "Blues Connotation," it is instructive to examine the solo to see what about it was

so disturbing to one listener who placed it outside of jazz tradition, yet seemed so "rational" to another who placed it in the same category as the work of alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges, perhaps best known as a featured soloist with Duke Ellington's orchestra from the late 1920s to the 1960s. Two excerpts drawn from a transcription of "Blues Connotation" will serve to illustrate Coleman's mode of improvising.<sup>18</sup> My aim here is not to prove that either DeMichael or Martin was "right" or "wrong" about the recording, but to focus on certain aspects of this solo and Coleman's style that may have prompted the responses by listeners in the early 1960s.

Looking at measures 1–12 of the theme (0:00–0:10, ex. 1), one will notice that m. 1 is a pickup, and m. 12 has only two beats in it, so this blues form is really ten and one-half bars. I will discuss Coleman's deviations from standard forms below. In example 1, I have marked two motives and some variants that will be useful in discussing example 2: motive a, an eighth-note upper-neighbor figure, and motive b, an ascending minor third with an upbeat-downbeat metrical relationship. Motives b<sup>1</sup> and b<sup>2</sup> are major third and perfect fourth variants of b. Several other motivic elements of the theme are contained in the solo, but for my purpose these two are sufficient. After a repetition of the theme (the bass line changes but the melody remains essentially the same), the solo starts at 0:21 with some blues-tinged phrases that stay around the tonal center of B $\flat$ . However, Charlie Haden's bass line immediately starts moving by half steps as the solo begins, perhaps leaving room for Coleman to move away from B $\flat$ . During the approximately three-minute-long solo, Haden often moves chromatically, which allows Coleman to shift tonal centers above him.

Just before the passage transcribed in example 2, Coleman starts to emphasize the tone B $\sharp$ , while still retaining the B $\flat$  tonal center. Example 2 (1:26–2:00) continues within B $\flat$  at first, but in m. 102 we see that the B $\sharp$  recurs within a sharp-side phrase implying E major and then D major. Haden moves chromatically below (mm. 102–5). Although Coleman returns to his B $\flat$  tonal center by m. 112, apparently for many listeners of the early 1960s this kind of deviation was fairly unusual (see below). In m. 118, Coleman uses motive a, now with a quarter-eighth-eighth rhythm, to begin a series of sequential repetitions. First, he shortens the figure to two eighths in m. 120, then augments its rhythm in mm. 122–24. In m. 127, Coleman plays motive b, shifted to the downbeat, but returns it to its original upbeat-downbeat placement in m. 128. The label "b + a" indicates a combination of the upbeat-downbeat leap of motive b with the descending neighbor figure from motive a. The statement of b<sup>1</sup> + a<sup>2</sup> in m. 128 begins a chromatic move upwards away from B $\flat$  before being transposed at various intervals. By m. 131 Haden has followed Coleman to the sharp side. By m. 137 we are back in B $\flat$  again, and largely remain there until the end of the solo at 3:19.<sup>19</sup>



The temporary shifts of tonal orientation illustrated in example 2 were apparently enough to give pause to even T. E. Martin, the reviewer who places Coleman within the bounds of jazz. In order to discuss this aspect of "Blues Connotation," Martin feels as though he must first define some terms, including "pantonicity," "where all tonalities are possible."

Coleman's work is generally pantonal . . . but given this, the method can be made to approach [tonality or atonality] by simulating the even flow of tonal music . . . or the vertiginous discontinuities of atonality. The second choice is made here, but in expanded form so that a key centre is retained long enough to be established as point of reference then destroyed by the shifting of the melodic shape to a dissonant key. The effect is something like that felt on a train rushing through the numerous switches of a large railway junction. It is not tonality that is shunned per se but tonal resolution . . . Coleman reserves the right to change tonality . . . at points which are determined solely by his conception of form, which is of course how

**Example 1:** "Blues Connotation" (mm. 1–12).

(Swing the eighths)

The musical score is for "Blues Connotation" (mm. 1–12) by Duke Ellington. It is written for Alto Sax and Bass. The tempo is "Swing the eighths". The score is divided into three systems of staves. The first system (mm. 1-4) shows the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with accents 'a' and 'b' and fingerings 'b1', 'b2'. The Bass plays a supporting line. The second system (mm. 5-8) continues the melodic development. The third system (mm. 9-12) shows a key change to 2/4 time, indicated by a double bar line and a new key signature. The Alto Sax and Bass continue their respective parts.

**Example 2: “Blues Connotation” (mm. 97–136).**

97

Alto Sax

Bass

102

Alto

Bass

107

Alto

Bass

112

Alto

Bass

117

(behind the beat)

Alto

Bass

Detailed description: This image shows a musical score for Alto Sax and Bass, measures 97-117. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Alto Sax part is on the upper staff, and the Bass part is on the lower staff. Measures 97-101 show the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with a flat (b) and the Bass playing a rhythmic accompaniment. Measures 102-106 show the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with flats (b) and the Bass playing a rhythmic accompaniment. Measures 107-111 show the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with a triplet (3) and the Bass playing a rhythmic accompaniment. Measures 112-116 show the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with a flat (b) and the Bass playing a rhythmic accompaniment. Measure 117 shows the Alto Sax playing a melodic line with a flat (b) and the Bass playing a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.



notes themselves are unimportant, so in fact are the strict intervals they imply, thus harmony ceases to exist as a primary concept . . . but the shape of this cell now becomes the essence. (Litweiler 1994:72)

We can see from the tonal digressions in example 2 why Don DeMichael may have felt that this solo "wanders," and what caused T. E. Martin to speak of "vertiginous discontinuities" (although from today's perspective it might be difficult to experience the shocking effect these authors describe). In addition, from the use of motives a and b, we can understand why Martin, Schuller, and others talk of "motive evolution" in Coleman's playing.

Let us return now to the sharply contrasting reviews of *This is Our Music* by DeMichael and Martin. The second song on the album is the ballad, "Beauty is a Rare Thing." First, DeMichael:

Although it begins promisingly, *Beauty* [*is a Rare Thing*] descends into an orgy of squawks from Coleman, squeals from [trumpeter Don] Cherry, and above-the-bridge plinks from [bassist Charlie] Haden. The resulting chaos is an insult to the listener's intelligence. It sounds like some horrible joke, and the question here is not whether this is jazz, but whether it is music. (1961:25)

DeMichael denies the work not only inclusion in the body of jazz, but also inclusion as a piece of music, as evidenced by the combination of animal sounds and noises that he attributes to the players.<sup>20</sup> This reaction illustrates a feature of many container-schematic conceptions; a real-world object cannot be both inside and outside a container simultaneously. When this experience is applied to domains such as music, we get the absence of gray areas—it's either music or it's not; it's either *in* tune or it's *out*.

With respect to the same song, Martin, on the other hand, claims that

This "dirge" . . . is arguably the greatest track to be discussed [from the album] . . . one of the most important achievements is the total form which allows the "theme" to crystallise, dissolve and recrystallise within the fabric of individual statements. (1964:14)

These opposed views, depicting Coleman as outsider vs. insider, persist as the authors deal with the third song on the album, "Kaleidoscope." First, DeMichael:

Coleman's playing on *Kaleidoscope* strikes me as incoherent. It seems as if there is a given amount of space to fill with notes, but it makes

no difference to the player what notes are hurled into it. His solo consists mostly of flurries of notes that have no relation to one another or to the time that he's supposedly playing in. It is not pan-rhythmic, it is anti-swing.<sup>21</sup> (1961:25)

Now Martin:

As usual Coleman solos first and here he picks up the major motive to develop a strongly "thematic" solo retaining and exploring the vocalis legato of the theme. . . . We again find another of Coleman's ambiguous "quotations" as the patterns part at one stage on what seems to be a strongly stressed fragment of *There's a Small Hotel*. . . . The fusing substances are the basic melodic shapes and their pantonal echoes. (1964:15)

Yet again, we notice that Martin consistently seems to observe more detail in Coleman's work than does DeMichael. I would suggest that because DeMichael has categorized this music as "not jazz," even "not music," he is not going to look for the things one normally analyzes in jazz: the relationship of the solo to the theme, the quotation of previous tunes, some kind of musical direction or motion. In other words, the lack of analytical detail may well follow from his classification of the music and his attribution of negative intentions.

How did Ornette Coleman view his own work at the time? Much in the same vein as classical composers, the composers and performers of free jazz often tended to see their own work as extending rather than bursting the bounds of prevailing styles. Coleman put it this way:

A new phase in jazz does not make previous styles obsolete, but instead *incorporates* qualities that have preceded it. While the term "bop" had its eclipse, its musical elements are very much in evidence in today's "modern" or "progressive" jazz. (emphasis added, Coleman 1960a)

Similarly, he felt that "Bird would have understood us. He would have approved our aspiring to something beyond what we inherited" (Coleman 1959c). The Modern Jazz Quartet's pianist John Lewis used equivalent terms: "I feel he's an extension of Charlie Parker, but I mean a *real* extension. He doesn't copy Parker's licks or style" (liner notes to Coleman 1959a). In these two statements Coleman is viewed as within the bounds of tradition, but expanding the container to encompass new contents.

On the other hand, when Coleman described his search for new means of expression, he stated: "The members of my group and I are now attempting a break-through to a new, freer conception of jazz, one that departs from all that is 'standard' and cliché in 'modern' jazz." For example, the song "Change of the Century" "expresses our feeling that we have to make breaks with a lot of jazz's recent past, just as the boppers did with swing and traditional jazz" (liner notes to Coleman 1959c). Thus Coleman is able to see himself as being within a historical tradition while at the same time seek to break out of standard clichés to achieve freedom. In other words, when the metaphorical container holds previous norms that Coleman views as the basis for his own innovations, like those of bebop, he places himself within the container, identifying with Charlie Parker and others who have come before him. When his focus is the stifling constrictions of certain procedures or entities that prevent his individual expression, then he must see himself as breaking free.

Proponents of free jazz talked frequently about freedom of expression, equating the breaking out of boundaries with the removal of restraining force.<sup>22</sup> For example, Art Farmer recognized that "this style of playing is very extreme but it does show that there is more freedom to be taken advantage of than is as a rule" (Feather 1960b).<sup>23</sup> One reviewer stated that "freed of the 'restrictions' of bar lines, conventional harmonic sequences, et al, [the performers] are thus enabled to follow, individually and collectively, their own musical stars" (Welding 1962a). Elsewhere, the same reviewer again explicitly mentioned the removal of bonds, resulting in expressive freedom:

In [Coleman's] *Free Jazz* the soloist is free to explore any area of his improvisation that his musical aesthetic takes him to; he is not bound by harmonic, tonal, or rhythmic framework to which he must adhere rigidly. (Welding 1962b)

Such persistent metaphorical projections of the container schema in statements from the late fifties and early sixties, referring to confining forces that must be surpassed, attest to a need for new means of expression. Several authors posit "the chord" as the restraining force that must be overcome. George Russell, composer and jazz theorist, speaks of "liberation of the melodic idea from the chord prison" and claims that John Coltrane is "bursting at the seams to demolish the chord barrier" (Russell and Williams 1960:9). Martin Williams, in his liner notes to Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959b), elaborates on this view:

[I]f you put a conventional chord under my note, you limit the number of choices I have for my next note; if you do not, my melody may move freely in a far greater choice of directions. [Ornette] can work through and beyond the furthest intervals of the chords. . . . As several developments in jazz in the last few years have shown, no one really needs to state all those chords that nearly everyone uses, and as some events have shown, if someone does state them or if a soloist implies them, he may end up with harassed running up and down scales at those "advanced" intervals like a rat in a harmonic maze. Someone had to break through the walls that those harmonies have built and restore melody—but, again, we realize this only after an Ornette Coleman has begun to do it.

Chords were not the only perceived restraint to free expression. Williams uses similar container-schematic terms with respect to Coleman's approach to form:

[H]e breaks through the usual thirty-two, sixteen, and twelve bar forms both in his compositions and in his improvising, all spring from an inner musical necessity, not from an outer academic contrivance.

In the liner notes to the album *Tomorrow is the Question*, Shelly Manne, Coleman's drummer, focuses on the metric freedom that Coleman helped him achieve:

I've always been bugged by having to stay within certain boundaries. Here is a guy that came along that was able to free me—from my having played with him—of all those things I wanted to throw off. Meter structure, for example. Sometimes Ornette ignores it. He makes you listen so hard to what he's doing in order to *know* where he is in the tune and what he's trying to express. It's just a complete freedom from every way you might have been forced to play before.

Neither the intentions of the creator nor our image-schematic mode of understanding may be on our minds as we sit down to listen to or write about music, but, in fact, they color our emotional responses to music, they affect the very way in which we define what it is we are hearing, they affect the choice of analytical tools that we use, and they shape the kinds of results that we obtain. As Raymond Gibbs concludes, people pay attention to information that seems most relevant to them (1999:119). Ornette Coleman seems to have recognized this fact when he said about his music:

"If you listen with pre-conceived ideas, you might miss a lot that's in it" (Coleman 1960b:38).

I have suggested here that intentional and image-schematic understanding of musical works may be immediate and unconscious. So what are we to do with this information? First of all, we must recognize that we do not have conscious access to many of our own cognitive processes. There are undoubtedly many more structuring processes like intentionality and image schema that operate without our awareness. We must then realize the results of this lack of access, which include the feeling of certainty that our perceptions are objectively real; it feels like there just is a butterfly *in* the garden or that a piece of music is *in* D minor (or that Ornette Coleman's music is/is not jazz). However, these convictions need to be questioned. I do not mean to question that the butterfly or the music exist in the world, but rather I mean that the structuring of that world is largely determined by the make-up of our minds and their being situated in our bodies. This is a conclusion that should inform any conscious consideration of musical works. When we assess the analyses of others, we can use our knowledge of these processes to understand views that are different from our own. And in our own reception and analyses, this knowledge might enable us to move outside of our old categories/ containers and hear music in a new way.

#### Notes

1. Although Lakoff and Johnson (1999) is the most recent publication from these authors, also important are Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987), and Turner (1996).

2. These authors' definition of metaphor differs from the standard sense of the term. In this case "metaphor" means the cognitive process of mapping understanding from one domain of thought to another, such as body motion to music, or military conflict to personal relationships.

3. I have dealt with image schemas in the conceptualization of music in two previously published articles. See Saslaw (1996, 1997-98).

4. Although Lakoff and Johnson do not make it clear exactly what kind of cognitive structures image schemas are, they do refer to "image schematic concepts." This phrase implies that image schemas may be concepts or they may exist prior to concepts. Neurobiologist Gerald Edelman has considered the biological mechanism of concepts. See Edelman (1989, 1992) and Edelman and Tononi (2000). Edelman cites Lakoff's work as consistent with his theory of the biological mechanisms of thought (Edelman 1992:246-52). Edelman and Tononi underscore the fact that "concepts are not propositions in a language (the common usage of this term); rather, they are constructs the brain develops by mapping its own responses prior to language" (2000:215-16).



5. According to Antonio Damasio (1999), the ubiquity of the container schema is supported by the significance given to inside/outside distinctions in living creatures. Damasio states, "Life is carried out inside a boundary that defines a body. Life and the life urge exist inside a boundary, the selectively permeable wall that separates the internal environment from the external environment. . . . If there is no boundary, there is no body, and if there is no body, there is no organism. Life needs a boundary. I believe that minds and consciousness, when they eventually appeared in evolution, were first and foremost about life and the life urge within a boundary" (137).

6. Even today, jazz musicians and aficionados describe jazz that is considered to deviate from set chord progressions and forms as "outside" or "out."

7. See, for example, Hoefer (1960).

8. The quotation continues, "They disregard the chords and they play odd numbers of bars. I can't *follow* them" [emphasis added]. This statement shows inference based upon a container-schematic conception. If the musicians have gone into "outer space" then one can't "follow" them.

9. Cape Canaveral, Florida is the site of a U.S. Space Center.

10. DeMichael's views on Coleman's work were chosen because they are somewhat representative of other negative sentiments expressed at the time, because they were presented in such clear container-schematic terms, and also because they were in such striking contrast to the reception of the same music by T. E. Martin (see below).

11. See also Andre Previn on Coleman's "Focus on Sanity"—"turning your back on any tradition is anarchy" (Feather 1961b)—and John Tynan on Coleman's *Free Jazz*: "'Collective improvisation?' Nonsense. The only semblance of collectivity lies in the fact that these eight nihilists were collected in one studio at one time and with one common cause; to destroy the music that gave them birth" (Tynan 1962:28). Rudy Blesh applies the same terms to swing music (Blesh 1958:290).

12. Corroboration for this view comes from an account of deviance contemporaneous with Coleman's early work by Howard Becker. Becker states: "People usually think of deviant acts as motivated. They believe that the person, even for the first time (and perhaps especially for the first time), does so purposely" (1963:25). Becker's book includes a discussion of swing band musicians as deviants.

13. A biological basis for the rejection of radically new perceptual stimuli, specifically artworks, is posited in Perin (1994).

14. I had initially thought that the presence of pitch bending, fast passages, and/or deviation from the form or harmonies of the theme might have caused the rejection of the three solos singled out by DeMichael. However, close comparison shows that each of these features occurs in the tunes he liked as well. It is possible that the more nasal tone or slightly more hesitant quality of "Tomorrow" and "Tears" played some part in his negative response. I played these tunes for two other jazz musicians, including a saxophonist, and neither could discern any sharp differences in practice between the two sets of solos.

15. Some favorable reviews, however, compared Coleman's sound to human vocalization. For example, Whitney Balliett stresses the importance of "Coleman's tone, which is replete with attempts to reproduce the more wayward sounds of the human voice" (1959:151). Coleman himself stated at the time, "There are some intervals . . . that carry that *human* quality if you play them in the right pitch. You

reach into the human sounds of a voice on your horn if you're actually hearing and trying to express the warmth of a human voice" (Hentoff 1961:241).

16. Trumpeter Art Farmer said about "Endless" from *Tomorrow is the Question*: "I like Ornette's approach to writing. I wish I could see more of a link between the writing and the solos. It's like a building without any foundation, and something's got to keep it up in the air. You can't just fly around forever, even an atom-powered submarine has to go back to home base sometime. If you had an airplane that could fly around the world 3,000 times, it would still have to land sometime. You've got to know where home is . . . you've got to acknowledge that somewhere" (Feather 1960b). Quincy Jones used terms similar to those of DeMichael with respect to Coleman's "Ramblin'": "now it's just wandering, and because of the lack of a certain basis for form, you know, it has a restless feeling—which, of course, they might be looking for. . . . I think a little bit more in terms of form, construction" (Feather 1961a).

17. One might think that the three-year difference in the dates lies behind the differences between these reviews. However, another assessment by Michael James, dating from 1961, uses much the same terms as Martin does later: "For all his virtuosity in rhythmic and melodic fields, [Coleman] displays real continuity of line. In *Blues Connotation* his solo evolves with astonishing logic, each phrase growing almost inexorably out of the one before, whilst the general melodic shape bears continual affinity to the tune" (James 1961:21).

18. Measures 1–133 (0:00–1:58) are my own transcription, based on the rereleased version on the CD compilation *Beauty is a Rare Thing* (Coleman 1993). All timings provided come from this compilation, which is a collection of all of Coleman's Atlantic Records releases. The CD also contains an alternate take of "Blues Connotation," recorded at the same session, but previously released only in 1975 (in Japan) as "P.S., Unless One Has." (All the titles on this album were portions of a sentence: "Music Always/Brings Goodness/To Us/All/P.S. Unless One Has/Some Other/Motive For Its Use"). The solos in this version are, in fact, fairly similar in character and motivic work to the ones in the original. For the notation of the head, I also consulted the version in *The New Real Book* (Scher and Bauer 1988:27). I would like to acknowledge the aid of Joshua Q. Paxton in transcribing measures 134ff. Since I have edited his version, I take full responsibility for any errors in that section.

19. With respect to rhythm, one may note that at various points in the solo Coleman seems to float above the beat, or moves ahead or behind it (e.g., at m. 118 of example 2 at 1:44), and that the transcription only approximately captures where his notes fall. The full impact of tone quality and pitch slides or bends was also difficult to capture in the transcription. Although false fingerings and pitch bends (the latter in mm. 107, 112, 116, etc.) are indicated, their effect does not really come across on paper. Downward- or upward-pointing arrows in example 2 indicate that the pitch is slightly lower or higher than the written note.

20. One need only look through Slonimsky (1965) for similar rhetoric describing new music by classical composers.

21. In other reviews in *Down Beat* from 1960, the most often mentioned feature of a recording deemed good by DeMichael is "swing." For example, DeMichael

praises a recording by Donald Byrd as "a steaming, swinging, utterly satisfying performance" (1960a:34) and one by Pee Wee Erwin as a "nice album for Sunday swinging" (1960b:36). This might explain DeMichael's violent reaction to "Kaleidoscope" and also to "Beauty is a Rare Thing," the latter of which displays the boldest tonal and temporal experiments on the album, including a lack of any regularly articulated meter by drummer Ed Blackwell.

22. For a general discussion of various kinds of force image schemas see Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999). For the role of force schemas in the conception of music, see Saslaw (1996, 1997-98).

23. The recording to which Farmer responded was "Endless" from Coleman's *Tomorrow is the Question* (1959a).

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