

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN.

ANALOGIES IN THE WORK AND LIFE
OF JACKSON POLLOCK, PAINTER, AND
CHARLIE PARKER, JAZZ SAXOPHONIST.

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BY

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To Colman and Celine for their assistance

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Introduction.....

Being primarily a painter with a keen interest in jazz my initial idea for this thesis came from reading statements like this from the biography of jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker. "Together with Jackson Pollock, Dylan Thomas, and James Dean he became a symbol of protest for a whole generation". This and similar statement I found seemed to be based on the premise that all the men mentioned above are accepted as important innovators, they all lived very excessive or complicated lives and as a result of this have become subjects of popular modern mythology. There was a possibility that the linking of these people was based more on coincidence and romantic idealism rather than meaningful facts. At first hesitant, my motivation to follow up the possibility of something more significant was greatly increased through the ideas expressed in John Burnham book "The Structure of Art", where he questions the linear progression of art history and the concept of "art for arts sake". Instead he proposes a more lateral progression with influential ideas coming from all the arts. It is my own belief that ideas which are significant to the visual arts are rarely confined to that medium but come instead from a very wide range of sources. For this reason I have chosen to study two of the artists mentioned above, both American, whose careers ran almost concurrently and while evolving from a totally different social and political background I feel under close examination their work untimately shows up very strong analogies.

They were Jackson Pollock, painter and Charlie Parker jazz saxophonist. I have treated each artist separately and in this way the thesis can be read in two halves. It is only in the summary that I have attempted to draw any similarities between the two men for I must stress this thesis is more of an open argument than a conclusive proof and as such is open to debate. In the case histories I have written on each artist I have dwelt mainly on those areas which I feel will support my argument and they should not be read as complete histories.

In a way Jackson Pollock himself predicted this thesis in an interview with William Wright. When asked "What is the meaning of modern art"? he replied "Modern art to me is nothing more than the expression of contemporary ^{times} of the age that we are living in".

It is my hope to establish the aims of two, then contemporary artists, and if those aims were similar, then how and why.

CHAPTER I

A SHORT HISTORY OF AMERICAN PAINTING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM WITH BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF JACKSON POLLOCK

The Armory Show of 1913 was more than just an art exhibition for the people and artists of America in that for nearly thirty years it established the superiority of European art and left the Americans with a feeling of cultural inferiority which gave rise to an attitude of defiance with chauvinistic overtones. This reaction was of considerable importance for subsequent artistic development in America for in a way it applied pressure on American artists to not only come up with new ideas but ideas so radical that they could truly be called an all American art. I am sure that no American artist in the thirties and forties thought of himself as a fulfilment to a national identity crisis but I would say there was a certain surprise at the positive enthusiasm so quickly shown towards their ideas. In 1954 Robert Motherwell wrote, "When my generation of 'abstract' painters began exhibiting ten years ago we never expected a general audience,..... ten years ago it seemed we were embarked upon a solitary voyage undertaken in the belief that the essence of life is to be found in frustrations of established order".

In this isolation from, and antagonism to, society, raised to the point of paroxysm by the tragic background of the war and the prevailing despair in human nature which seemed capable of the most unconscionable crimes a painter could feel free to do anything. At the time, just prior to Abstract Expressionism the influence of European painting was still very strong in American art. Art however, had reached a point of crisis

and that crisis which had to be resolved was one of subject matter. Due to the war the hopeful rationalism of society was discredited. As far as art was concerned, the logical, idealistic premises of Cubism, Constructivism and the movements which sprang from it in the years between the two wars had temporarily lost their appeal. The new aesthetic which painters were moving towards was one which denied the superiority of intellect and allowed the artist to express himself freely and subjectively.

The very act of painting itself became subject for discussion, many artists electing to allow themselves be unimpeded by anything save the decision to paint. The principle behind this decision had already been well established by the Surrealists who used modern depth psychology and psychoanalysis, especially free association from which they devised the techniques of automatism. The Surrealist artist welcomed accident and exploited the random. Andre Bretons original definition of Surrealism in 1924 still held good, "Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express either verbally or visually, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations". There were other influences at work also. Many artists were indebted to Paul Klee who took a post-Freudian interest in dreams and combined a sophisticated wit with child like candour. There were also a group of Northern European artists who drew German Expressionism into a vigorous painterly style. These so called matter painters mixed sand, plaster and other materials into their paint to give their flat canvas the three-dimensional solidity of canvas sculpture.

The art of painting may have seemed relatively new in the West but in the East these ideas had been practised for centuries. Oriental art contained a wealth of information and especially in Chinese calligraphy where the brush stroke is of prime importance. In Oriental art the painter-scribe abolishes the contradiction between subject and object, and by concentrating on the process of sign making, feels that he is actively participating in a continuous and potentially endless series of events. The painter Mark Tobey was one of the first to pay serious attention to East Asian Art.

The abstract expressionists used Oriental calligraphy as a visual stimulus and in that sense out of context with its Eastern tradition. To the Oriental artist his gestures represent a sense of unity with all which were in philosophical opposition to the expressionists who saw themselves as the outcasts of society. Art was seen not as a statement of unity but as an assertion of identity. For a theoretical basis to this attitude the expressionists turned to existentialism but more as a climate of opinion than a coherent philosophy. The writings of Sartre and Kierkegaard offered the sympathetic argument that man alone is responsible for his own faith which he has to make and remake for himself. The existentialist thesis that 'being is doing' gave intellectual justification to an approach which emphasized 'process' at the expense of 'product'.

It is difficult to argue with historical sequence but looking back it seems difficult to see abstract expressionism happening anywhere else but in New York in the late 1930's and early forties. Certainly the circumstances were rather unique. A financial collapse and later a World War. Some of the worst hit people after the Wall Street Crash

of twenty nine were artists in all fields. It was felt by the Authorities that something had to be done to support professional artists to stop them being forced onto the streets. Rescue came from an unlikely source. In 1933 the Federal Government under Roosevelt set up the Public Works of Art Project. In six months it hired 3749 artists who turned out 15,633 works of art for public institutions. A more ambitious Federal Arts Project which became known as just "The Project" employed 5,500 artists, teachers, designers and researchers. The pay was one dollar an hour and painters were expected to show evidence of studio work. Such political benevolence was unusual in a nation where art had never been terribly prominent but the motives behind it must have been related to the States new-found social idealism. Whatever the motives, the project was very important for American artists, for it gave many their first opportunity to work freely with a minimum of economic distraction.

The American art scene at the time was fragmented. Representational painters rallied to the flag, and under the general title of Regionalism offered a folksy celebration of the American agrarian past. In New York the Communist Party attracted artists of many aesthetic persuasions including a band of devoted Social Realists. These included the Mexican revolutionary painters, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera whom Pollock had contact with during his early development. In 1937 Josef Albers founded the group called American Abstract Artists whose members worked mainly in a structural, geometric, post Cubist manner. The young painters of the time soon tired of the A.A.A.'s derivative formulas and some of them for the reasons I specified earlier grouped

together and were later given the collective name of the Abstract Expressionists. One thing that sets the Abstract Expressionists apart from their contemporaries was their intensity of purpose. Clement Greenberg who became the spokesman for the group called it a new "paint quality" and later claimed that their vision was characterized by a "fresher, opener, more immediate surface". He related this quality to "a more intimate and habitual acquaintance with isolation", which was in his view "the quality under which the true quality of the age is experienced".

As I have already mentioned the Surrealists had developed "Automatism" from the principles of Sigmund Freud. However, Freuds observations had come under much contraversial scrutiny and had been found lacking. In a search for a wider depth of experience the New York painters turned to the philosophies of Carl G. Jung for whom the unconscious opened doors not merely to individual neuroses but to the universal archetypes of human experience. Pollock used Jungian therapy in the hope of alleviating his own personal problems. This therapy lies not only in the exorcism of the traumas of childhood but more significantly in an interpretation of these in the light of collective experience imprinted during the evolution of the human brain. Using Jungs own terms, the key to the unconscious was the 'archetype' which emanated from the 'collective unconscious'. The archetype was often a symbol of religious or mythic origin which recurred throughout history in different contexts and in different cultures. Its universality and power as well as its dissociation from the modern world was to prove attractive to Pollock as well as to a number of other artists who were also looking for renewal through a return

to primitive feeling. Pollock also studied theosophy and the mystical ideas of Krishnamurti. He would have been well aware of the theory that the split self was the cause of neuroses and that reconciliation or healing could be brought about by creativity. In his work of the early forties Pollock looked back to the mythologies, totems, stories and images of both the American Indian and classical antiquity to provide archetypal subject matter unvencered by the niceties of contemporary culture. (See the "She Wolf" and the "Moon Woman Cuts the Circle" which are discussed later on in the essay). At this stage rather than go straight into the work of Pollock I think it better to look at his life and the effects it had on his art. It may seem as if I am saying that Abstract Expressionism grew totally out of Surrealism but in my research on the subject and expecially in the case of Pollock I must agree with Barbara Rose's statement on American Painting of the Period(for reasons I shall expand on later) that "To synthesize Cubism and Surrealism in an entirely new pictorial style became the goal of American Artists".¹

Paul Jackson Pollock was born on January 28th, 1912 on the Watkins Ranch at Cody, Wyoming. Both his parents were of Scotch Irish extraction and both were raised in Tingley, Iowa. Though nominally presbyterian they did not raise their sons in any church. There were five sons in the Pollock family, Charles Cecil, Marvin Jay, Frank Leslie, Sanford LeRoy, and youngest Paul Jackson. Jackson dropped his first name when he cam to New York in 1930. The earlier years of the Pollock family were unsettled with the family moving several times. In 1922 the family moved to a farm at Orland, California. Charles the eldest son left home and took a job in the layout department of the "Los Angeles Times". He studied at the Otis Art Institute through 1924. During this time he sent his brothers copies of the "Dial" which contained many reproductions of the "School of Paris" and other avant-garde art. An



Jackson Pollock, southern California, about
1927-28

Fig. 1

important year in the development of Jacksons later ideas in art happened as early as 1923 when he was only eleven years old. In the autumn of that year the family returned to Arizona to a farm near Phoenix. Jackson was enrolled in the sixth grade of the Monroe Elementary School in September and remained there until February of the next year. During this period he had many opportunities to explore the old Indian ruins outside Phoenix with his brothers and friends. These boyhood trips left an impression on Pollock and references to the content of the old ruins and the art contained within were to emerge when Pollock became a mature artist. During (Fig.1) the summer of 1927 Jackson and Sanford worked on a surveying gang along the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. In September he enrolled at Riverside High School. The following year he enrolled at Manual Arts High School and came under the influence of an art teacher named Fredrick John de St Vrain Schwankovsky, who introduced him to theosophy and the teachings of Krishnamurti. Since he had not been raised in any particular church this probably constituted his first religious experience.

Sometime during the academic year 1928/29 he was expelled from Manual Arts for having taken part in the publishing and distribution of two broadsides attacking the faculty and the schools over-emphasis on sports. With the help of Schwankovsky he was permitted to enrol again at Manual Arts on a part-time basis. He took classes in clay modelling and life drawing for half the day and worked and read at home the other half. He found this arrangement to his liking. Writing to his brother Charles in New York he wrote, "I am continually having new experiences and I am going through a wavering evolution which leaves my mind in an unsettled state -

my drawing I will tell you frankly is rotten it seems to lack freedom and rhythm it is cold and lifeless. It isn't worth the postage to send it. I think there should be an advancement soon if it is ever to come and then I will send you some drawings. The truth is I never really get down to some real work and finish a piece I usually get disgusted with it and lose interest. Although I feel I will make an artist of some kind I have never proven to myself nor anybody else that I have it in me".

There is not much here to distinguish Pollock apart from any other struggling art student except the feeling I get of a sense of apprehension. Pollock seems to foresee the coming struggle he will face achieving distinction as an artist. From 1930 - 1931 Pollock studied life drawing, painting and composition at the Art Students League, New York City, under Thomas Hart Benton. In December of 1932 Benton left the League to take a major mural commission offered by the State of Indiana. The same month Pollock became a member of the League. This membership allowed him to use the graphic arts studio on Saturdays. Although Pollock made lithographs on occasions throughout the thirties it is not clear whether he took advantage of the Leagues facilities immediately. After about 1934 however, he usually relied on the technical assistance of the printmaker Theodore Wahl, who pulled many of his editions. Pollock's father died in March 1933. Neither Jackson, Charles or Frank could afford to attend the funeral in Los Angeles. Pollock went down to Kansas City during that summer to stay with the Bentons. He returned each summer until 1937 to spend a few weeks with the Benton family at their home in Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard, and some of Pollocks early paintings depict Vineyard scenes. Benton was a constant source of encouragement to the young man.

In an undated letter, which can be placed sometime before the spring of 1935, Benton wrote:

"Before I get started on my own stuff and forget everything else I want to tell you I think the little sketches you left around here are magnificent. Your colour is rich and beautiful, you've the stuff old kid - all you have to do is keep it up.

On August 1st of that year Pollock signed up with the newly created Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). He joined the easel division at an initial salary of \$103.40 per month. He was required to submit one painting about every eight weeks, depending on its size and his normal rate of production. He continued doing this until the end of the project in 1943. The W.P.A. was a financial lifeline for Pollock allowing him enough security to experiment freely; developing his own personal style that started to mature after 1938. Despite his new found security Pollocks personal life had started its slow disintegration. In September 1935 Charles went to Washington D.C. to work with the Resettlement Administration. Sanford and Jackson moved into the apartment at 46 East 8th Street which was to remain Pollock's home and studio until he moved to East Hampton in 1945. Sanford was to play a most important role in Pollocks life. He made many sacrifices to help his roubled younger brother, often to the detriment of his own artistic career. By this time Pollock had developed a serious drinking problem.

1936 was an important year in Pollocks career as an artist. In the spring Siqueiros established an "experimental workshop in which both

Sanford and Jackson worked. Siqueiros was engaged in exploring new techniques and mediums applicable to mural painting as well as to the banners and floats he frequently produced for Communist demonstrations. Among the many experiments was the use of spray-guns and air brushes along with the latest synthetic paints and lacquers, including Duco. The spontaneous application of paint and the problems of "controlled accidents" occupied the members of the workshop. The floor of the studio would have been covered with spatter and drip. It is certain that the time spent in the "workshop" had an influence on Pollocks later development.

Sometime in January 1957 Pollock began psychiatric treatment for alcoholism. Later that year he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly at Martha's Vineyard. In July Sanford wrote to Charles explaining why he couldn't come to Detroit to take a job with the United Automobile Workers newspaper.

"Jack has been having a very difficult time with himself. This past year has been a succession of periods of emotional instability for him which is usually expressed by a complete loss of responsibility both to himself and to us. Accompanied of course, with drinking, it came to the point where it was obvious the man needed help. He was mentally sick. I have taken him to a Psychiatrist, who has been trying to help the man find himself. As you know troubles such as his are very deep-rooted in childhood usually (amateur pschiatry) and it takes a long time to get them ironed out. There is no cause for alarm, he simply must be watched and guided intelligently".

In September Sanford closed off the front room of the 8th Street

apartment so that Jackson could have a studio. Early in December Benton came to New York and invited Jackson and Sanford to spend Christmas in Kansas City. Jackson travelled there by bus and apart from a few brief encounters this was the last time Pollock spent any time with his former teacher. On June 9th, 1938 Pollock lost his job at the W.P.A. due to continued absence. Shortly afterwards he entered the Westchester Division of New York hospital for treatment of acute alcoholism. He remained there until September, during therapy he made a number of hammered copper bowls and plaques. On November, 23rd Pollock was reassigned to the easel division of the project though his wage was cut. 1939 was the year the Second World War started and although America technically didn't become actively involved for another two years pressure was already being put on the W.P.A. to cut back on its operations. Under one of the new provisions enacted by Congress all artists employed over eighteen months were to be fired. Sanford was laid off in August 1939 and Jackson in May 1940. There was also political pressure and the draft to worry about. People working on the Project had to sign an affidavit that they belonged to neither the Communist or Nazi parties and the army were snooping around the project finding out how the artists could fit into the "Defence Programme". In the summer of 1940 Jackson wrote to Charles.

"I haven't much to say about my work and things - only that I have been going through violent changes the past couple of years, God knows what will come out of it all - its pretty negative stuff so far.....".

In 1941 Pollock met Lee Krasner, a recent student of Hans Hofmann,

at an exhibition in the MacMillan gallery. On learning that Pollock lived near her she visited him thus starting a relationship that would last until his death. Around this time Robert Motherwell met Pollock through Baziotes. Motherwell invited Pollock to participate in a major exhibition being planned by the Surrealists. He explained the principles of "psychic automatism" only to find Pollock already convinced of the role of the unconscious in art. Pollock refused to participate in the exhibition on the grounds that he did not like "group activity" (emphasising again his lonely character). However, Pollock and Lee Krasner did experiment on several occasions at writing automatic poetry with Motherwell, Baziotes and their wives.

From January 20th - February 6th, 1942 Pollock exhibited at the "American and French Paintings" one painting titled "Birth". The exhibition included the "French" painters, Braque, Bonnard, Matisse, Modigliani, and Picasso; among the "Americans", Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Walt Kuhn and Lee Krasner. This was probably Pollock's first mention in the art Press.

James Lane (Art News January 15 - 31)

"Pollock resembles Hayter in general whirling figures".

not much but it was a start to his recognition.

In 1943 he met Peggy Guggenheim of the famed altruist family who had the previous October opened a museum - gallery called "Art of this Century" which housed a permanent collection of contemporary paintings which Miss Guggenheim had accumulated since 1938. She was especially close to those Surrealists who had come to New York because of the war.

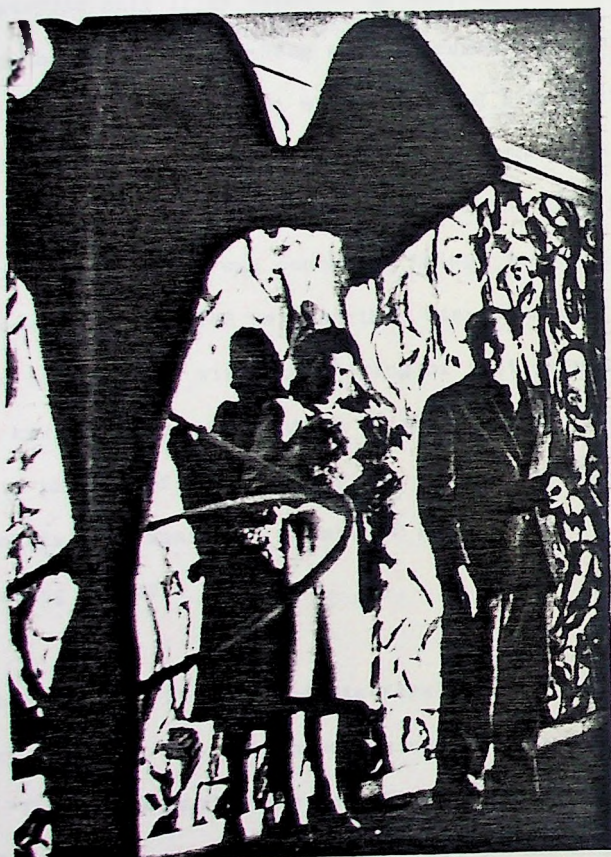


Fig.2

Peggy Guggenheim in front of the mural he painted for
the hallway of her home.

She had helped Max Ernst escape from occupied France and had married him shortly after she arrived back in the U.S.A. with her collection in the summer of 1941. Her main interest was to help young artists and at the opening of her new museum - gallery she thought it would "serve its purpose only if it succeeds in serving the future instead of recording the past". Guggenheim was impressed with Pollocks work and she gave him a years contract which promised him \$150 a month. She also scheduled a one man show for Pollock in November and commissioned (Fig.2) a mural sized painting for the entrance hall of her town house. As far as success in the art world was concerned things had really begun to pick up for Pollock. In July 1943 he described his situation to Charles.

"Things really broke with the showing of that painting (Stenographic Figure). I had a pretty good mention in the "Nation" - I have a years contract with the Art of this Century and a large painting to do for Peggy Guggenheim - he finishes, I have it sketched now. It looks pretty big but exciting as hell.

From November 9 - 27th he had his first one man show at the Art of this Century gallery. The catalogue included the following works, "The She Wolf", "The Moon Woman", "The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle", "The Mad Moon Woman", "Stenographic Figure", "Conflict", "The Magic Mirror". The catalogue essay by James Johnson Sweeney was the first critical evaluation of Pollock. Sweeney wrote "What we need is more young men who paint from inner impulsion without an ear to what the critic or spectator may feel. It is true that Pollock needs self discipline. But to profit from pruning, a plant must have vitality. In art we are only too familiar with the application of self-discipline where liberation would have been more profitable. Pollock can stand it. In his early work as a student of

Thomas Benton he showed a conventional academic competence. Today his creed is evidently that of Hugo. "Ballast yourself with reality and throw yourself into the sea. The sea is inspiration".

Pollock certainly did throw himself into the sea however, its almost ironic that he never learned to swim and in the intensity of his effort he eventually drowned. For Pollock the drama of contemporary existence, the tragic element which painters like Mondrian had set out to overcome, became once more the central theme of modern art. Intense tragic feeling became the sole justification of painting. Since real expression could be sustained only by the most intense life feeling, the authentic artist had to live at the highest emotional level. Painting became a tragic action, an act of self-destruction, for in it a part of the painter's life energy is consumed. Pollock paid the price. In his work and in his life. He set an example that enjoins every painter who employs that method to commit himself in the same way.

CHAPTER I FOOTNOTES

¹

Rose Barbara. American Art Since 1900

(Thames and Hudson London 1976) P.131.

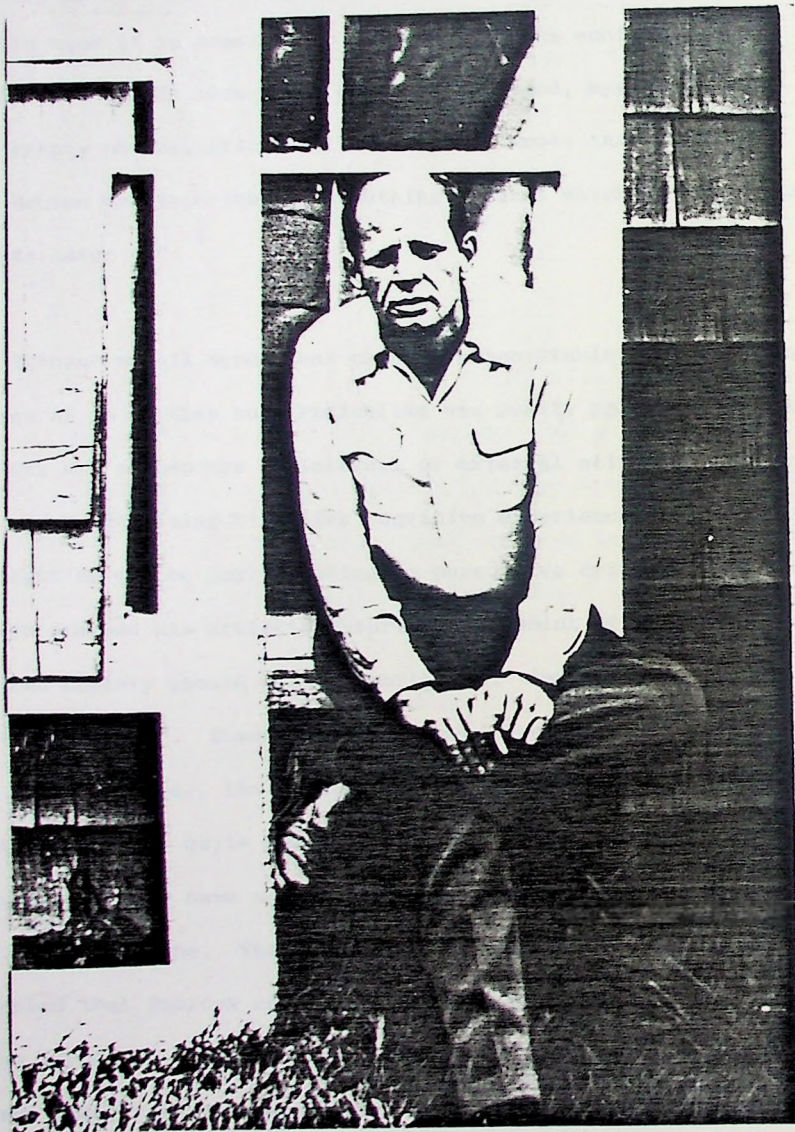


Fig.3

Pollock outside his studio in Springs, East Hampton,
Long Island. - Photograph Hans Namuth

CHAPTER II

THE MYTH AND THE MAN

The need to see things in perspective is constant. With this in mind it is possible to see how Pollocks contemporary critics and public were often confused, enraged, mystified and only rarely enthusiastic. Pollock himself wrote that "My work with Benton was important as something against which to react very strongly later on".¹

I think we all agree that change is inevitable, but the question arises as to whether such radicalism was reallyprecedented. Was Pollocks art a response to internal or external stimulus. By this I mean was he combining his lifes cognitive experiences with intuitive foresight or was he just reacting to persuasive criticism. The fact that Pollock reached his artistic maturity at a point of social crisis in American history should not be overlooked. America was recovering from a devastating war. Eisenhower had become President but he had ceased to be a hero. However, the appetite for a heroic figure appeared to have survived and it is quite possible that for a battle scarred nation a cultural hero may have seemed more appropriate in its need to forget than a military one. Whatever were the needs of the people it cannot be denied that Pollock caught the popular imagination. "His image became larger than life and his myth began to dominate his art". The pre-war ideals and philosophies of the thirty's suddenly seemed empty, especially after the newsreels of Auchwitz and Belsen. If a society reveals itself by its heroes then a new type of person was emerging from the changed intellectual and political climate. In Europe as in America the 'forties' could be characterised by the massive alienation of the individual - a positive faith in the reasonableness of human

nature was for many no longer possible. A feeling of uncertainty, of revolt characterised the period, in popular culture the hero was gradually replaced by the anti-hero. For American painters this pointed towards a breaking away from the dominant European tradition a move which American writers had accomplished a decade earlier. The wish to create art that was direct and honest became one of the most important principles and to do this it was necessary to re-invent the basic premise of art.

In this respect Jackson Pollock's troubled career and early death in a car crash at the age of forty four are wholly in keeping with this pattern; his life and death as well as his work have both been absorbed into cultural history. As Barbara Rose wrote in her essay "The Artist as cultural hero" Pollock was the original "rebel without a cause".

The difficulty in writing about any 'myth' is in trying to establish just where fact becomes fantasy and visa versa. It is never an easy task and the only real way around it is to deal only with positive facts. However, the fact of someone becoming a cultural hero is in itself important and for this reason I feel it necessary to tackle both subjects while exercising caution on the latter.

Personally I feel there are three basic levels on which an artists work can be criticized. (1) On the content of individual works. (2) The content of the artists work taken as a whole. (3) The last category is very broad and involves seeing the artist in a historical perspective. By this I mean considering the cumulative effect the artist had on his society then and has on the present society now. Considering that Pollock



Fig.4

Drip technique

died less than thirty years ago this is not easy for as Peter Schjeldahl writes "to be close enough to the work to judge it is to be waylaid by the power of a revolutionary faith that still conditions the very idea of what art is in our time".² It is the nature of art history to require time to form a definite judgement of an artists merit. It is not for me to come to a conclusion. However, through this thesis I hope to open up as yet unexplored possibilities.

In the Winter of 1946 - 1947 Pollock departed radically from the techniques and concepts of traditional painting. Dripping and pouring enamel paint directly onto a horizontal painting surface, he eliminated at least for a period, that part of Western artistic tradition in which painting is an illusionistic picture of part of the world. The same radical break took place in his graphic work, he stopped making traditional drawings with pencil, pen, crayons etc. For some months in 1947 he even seemed to have given up working on paper entirely. By 1948 he had adapted the drip technique to work on paper as well as on canvas using the sheet of paper, like the canvas as a horizontal surface to facilitate the dripping and pouring of the linear skeins and puddles of paint that generated the specific qualities of the style. A year later he was the subject of a three page article in Life, one of the most widely read pictorial magazines. The title of the piece was "Jackson Pollock: Is he the greatest living painter in the United States". Here we have Pollock as the mature artist, in full control, for the moment anyway of his artistic career, confident in the importance of his artistic technique and conceptual innovations having gained the respect and attention of his contemporaries. The myth was in the making. However, as in the case of most artists Pollock didn't simply arrive at this conjecture but had to go through the slow

gradual process of artistic development.

Pollock's interest in interwoven linear surface forms and centrifugal motion is revealed in some of the earliest remaining drawings, a group of 1938 sketch book studies after Michelangelo, El Greco and Rubens.

His earlier realist expressionism influenced by his teacher Thomas Benton grew more abstract and was increasingly influenced in the late "thirties" and "forties" by the emotionally charged style and symbolic figures of the Mexican Muralists, Orozco, Rivera, and Siqueiros. The pictographic limitations of the mural imposed by architectural setting and the ambition for "large moveable pictures which will function between easel and mural"³ were impressions left on Pollock by his contact with Benton and the Mexicans that affected him for the rest of his life. In 1936 Pollock spent a brief period in Siqueiros experimental work shop. It was the first time he was exposed first hand to a recognised artist with fully developed experimental plastic ideas. Siqueiros was probably the first to draw Pollocks attention to the "generating value" of medium and technique as a source of style. It was through his continual probing of the limits of media allied with his automatic drawing experiments led him finally to adopt the drip style.

Pollock liked to work in series until he had exhausted an idea. The next series would often start either as an accidental logical development from the previous series or as a direct result of material stimulus. The idea of using technique as a catalyst and probing the limits of media was important in Pollocks work. Beyond the idea of

technique, the material means for making a work of art was also stimulating. For instance in the drip paintings the lines within the paintings are very much a function of the quality, the liquidity and viscosity - of the enamel paint itself.

The arrival in New York during the second World War of many of the key figures of Twentieth Century art in exile from their home countries was important for the development of Pollock. They included Breton, Chagall, Ernst, Leger, Lipchitz, Masson, Matta and Mondrian among them. Pollock had been affected by Surrealism as early as the 1936 - 1937 Museum of Modern Art Exhibition, Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism. Siqueiros had said that it was legitimate to let medium take over. Surrealism helped to reinforce this idea. By 1939 Pollock was using a Surrealist technique, automatic drawing as a release for "unconscious imagery". At the same time psychiatric therapy gave Pollock access to his own unconscious images, not only freeing him of the fear of revealing them, but encouraging him to do so, establishing in his mind another life long idea, that of the images of the collective unconscious and collective mythology of the Jungians. Surrealism was also involved with similar ideas in addition to the Freudian free association underlying automatism.

By 1941 most vestiges of the influence of Orozco and Siqueiros were gone. He was now involved with the drawings of Picasso. American Indian Motifs, Surrealism and Jungian symbolism. The dry pastel colours of the "thirties" and early "forties" soon gave way to a more brilliant range of secondary colours in high key. At this stage Pollock began to introduce his more constant figurative motifs, some which remained throughout his artistic career. The mandala, the womb, totems, snakes, female figures,



Plate 10. Colored pencil, ink, ink wash, 14 x 11 in.

Fig. 5

Studies (1939-40) Coloured pencil, crayon, pen and ink.

Drawing used in psychoanalysis.



Fig.6

The She Wolf (1943) Oil on canvas 41" x 67"



Fig.7

Pasiphae (1943) Oil on canvas 227 x 300 cm

(sometimes pregnant with another form) and the disembodied head, frequently a kind of Janus head, derived from Picasso's "Woman before the Mirror". However, as used by Pollock in a 1941 drawing the last two images are rather literal Jungian interpretations of the King and Queen figures also called the Sun and Moon, which represent the union of male and female in the sixteenth century alchemical treatise "Rosarium Philosophorum" from which Jung had developed his concepts of archetypal dynamics.

From 1934 to 1946 the unconscious as a source dominated Pollocks work. It was expressed in terms of the Jungian collective unconscious, though symbols modified artistically by Surrealist additions which were inspired mostly by Orozco then Picasso and Miro. There is also a likelihood that he was influenced by Kandinsky, particularly in the use of colour. Many of the drawings of this period used animal imagery. In Jungian terms the self is often symbolised as an animal representing our (Fig.5) instinctive nature and its connectedness with ones surroundings. The beast was for the surrealists a visible symbol of mans instinctive life, the animal side of man close to nature and to impulse. In Pollocks subsequent work the duality of animal/human nature finds expression firstly in the themes of the Minotaur and Pasiphae from Greek mythology and then in later drawings which culminated in paintings like the "She Wolf" and "Pasiphae". (Figs.6 & 7) In the work of this period Pollock was hoping through Jungian concepts to establish the most basic and honest art possible. In this way each painting decision became a moral question as well where by pushing oneself into an unexplored and extreme position in which honesty to ones own feelings is the only guide. Pollocks aim as an artist was that through his uniqueness he could render as intensely as possible the sum of his

experiences as a painter and individual. By making the work process a question of moral decisions the painter becomes identified with the moral crisis of all men and the subject of the paintings becomes universal.

Through his experiments with automatic drawing and the strong influence of the Surrealists Miro and Masson, Pollock developed his "all over style" of painting. Bernice Rose accounts a painting by Miro called "The Poetess" and a print called "Rapt" by Masson as the bridge between his early and mature style. She says "(The Poetess) Its all-over composition and curved linear rhythm as well as its figures, provided Pollock with the immediate stimulus for a 1945 print... But it was Masson's print (Rapt) that provided Pollock with the means to connect the independently placed motifs of the Miro and transform the geometry of Miro's all over pattern into a continuous expressionistic, linear configuration, and showed how line, which is specifically figurative in the Miro, could be made to work virtually independent of figuration..... It was in the next year and a half that Pollock was able to combine these interacting elements, and make the connection between the automatic linear configuration and the drip line".⁴

What Pollock achieved in his "all over" paintings was the translation of painting into drawing by the fusion of draughtsmanship, paint and colour in a technique radically graphic in execution. Pollock's expressive line of dripped and poured paint was at the same time object, means and colour". Gesture became equivalent with colour, giving each line colour - even within a limited palette of greys, blacks and whites.

In the opening sentence of this chapter I said the need to see things

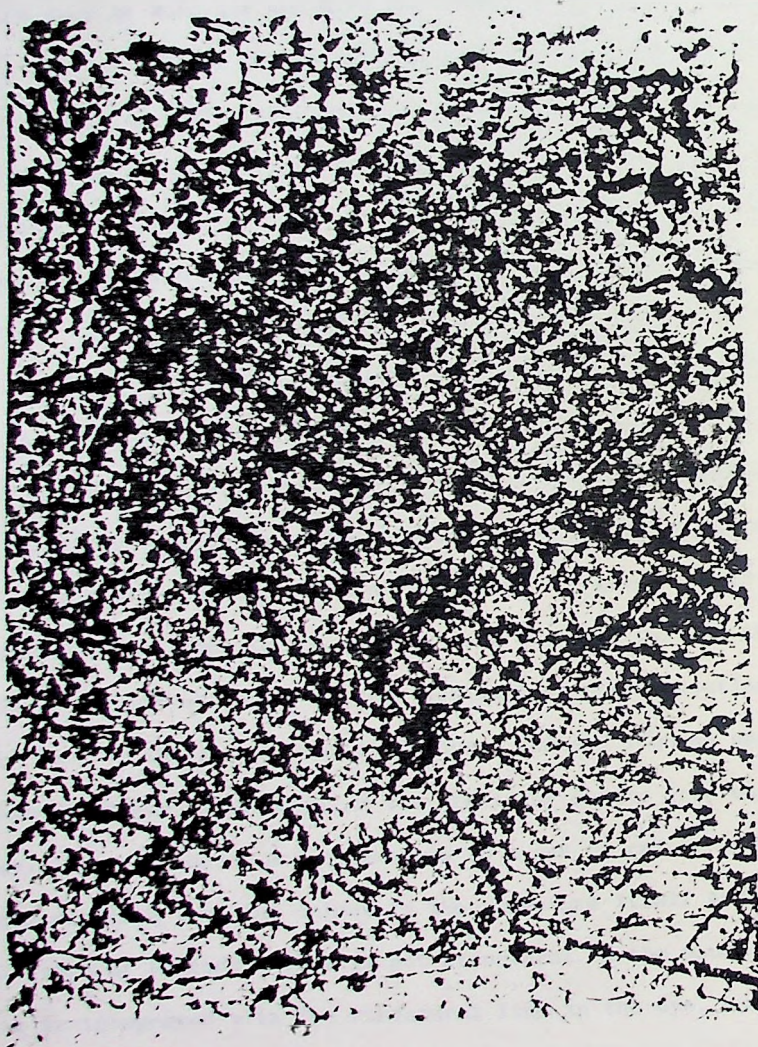


Fig.8

Lavender Mist (No.1 1950) Enamel and aluminium paint on
canvas. 227 x 300 cm

in perspective is constant. We have so far discovered that Pollock worked out a means to free line from figuration. This in itself may not seem terribly important but when seen in the context of Western modernist painting this step was very radical indeed. What other painters such as Mondrian and Miro had hinted at in their work was finally realised in the mature paintings of Pollock. In the all over drip paintings of 1947 - 1950 Pollock managed to breakaway from the idea that was prevalent in Western Painting since the Renaissance, that of seeing the picture support as a sort of window through which the spectator viewed a composition. By using an all over technique the canvas became an 'object' to be viewed as a whole. The surface achieves a sort of equality making no part of the canvas more important than another. The eye is never held but tends to move over the whole canvas. If one takes (Fig.8) a painting like "Lavender Mist" (No 1 1950) enamel and aluminium paint on canvas 227 x 300 cm, or any other of Pollock's best paintings of this period it reveals that the all over line does not give rise to positive and negative areas; one is not made to feel that one part of the canvas demands to be read as figure whether abstract or representational, against another part of the canvas read as ground. Instead figures seem to appear and then disappear as the gaze of the spectator shifts from one area to another. Line dissolves and re-emerges in a sea of colour where one suddenly realises that the colour is the structure itself and yet the visual field of Pollock's work is not structural in the usual sense i.e. that it is integrated with the structural line in the eye, but it is actually "hung" over an understructure of 'figurative' line, deploying itself in an interweaving pattern, at first as though following the edges of invisible planes, then breaking free of any figural or planar reference.

33.
Number 33, 1949. Enamel, aluminium paint on glass ground on paper.
mounted on composition board. 57.1 x 78.7 cm.
Collection: Robert U. Owsen, New York. CM.33.



Fig. 9

No.33 (1949) Enamel and aluminium paint on board.



Fig.10

No.7 (1951) Black and coloured inks on mulberry paper.

The intersection of these interweaving lines provide an articulation of evenly distributed surface accents or "incidents" (like those in Analytic Cubism) that became the new structural premise. Unlike Analytic Cubism however, parts are no longer related to one another in an ordered hierarchical system of proportional parts and the whole too, is completely different from any of its parts. Michael Fried refers to these paintings as being purely "optical", as they address the eye sight alone. He continues "The Materiality of his pigment is rendered sheerly visual, and the result is a new kind of space - if it still makes sense to call it space - in which conditions of seeing prevail rather than one where objects exist, flat shapes are juxtaposed or physical events transpire.⁵

Seen in the context of Modern Art History the ideas expressed above are of great importance. The formal concepts initiated by Pollock were to effect radically the course of modern painting and indeed modern sculpture. Summing up Pollocks paintings from 1947 - 1950, he used line in such a way as to defy being read in terms of figuration. By doing so Pollock helped clarify a problem that was central to the new approach in painting. Pollock was not the only person involved with this problem. In an essay I wrote last year entitled, "Barrett Newman and The response to formal concepts of his work by Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella", I found that Newman also had to clarify for himself the fundamental issue between the terms figurative, non-figurative, representational and non-representational in relation to abstract art. By this I mean the possibility of a painting or drawing being both non-representational i.e. what is usually termed "abstract" and "figurative" at the same time. Until Pollock this was all "abstract"

painting had ever been. Such was the case for those Abstract Expressionists whose work relied on late Cubist principles of internal coherence.⁶ This is true also in the case of Kandinsky who painted time abstract paintings but could never rid himself of a reliance on natural objects for his imagery. Newman discussed this idea in his essay "The Plasmic Image". He likened the misconceptions of modern painting to the misconceptions that surround primitive art. He stated that primitive art is often misunderstood as being purely abstract. However, there are really two types of primitive art, pure abstraction i.e. geometric and what appears to be abstract but is in fact a distorted realism. "In primitive art distortion was used as a device whereby the artist could create symbols". On realizing this Newman set about forming his own approach to abstract painting and came up with the idea of the vertical line in a field of colour. As I discussed in the previous essay this vertical line by mirroring the edges of the canvas gave the canvas a new sense of objecthood as did the over-all field of Pollock.

It took some time for the importance of Pollocks work to be assimilated so that it was useful to other artists. But his new structure - the all-over field with its non-hierarchical composition and non-cubist space and his new use of material can now be seen as the basis for the work of artists as diverse as Jasper Johns, Donald Judd and Sol Le Witt. John's impastoed numbers and alphabets which renders effects in evenly accented equal elements in an all-over composition must owe something to Pollock. Don Judd discusses Pollock in terms of his own work. Although his material is steel and wood it is still

seen as a whole where no part achieves dominance over another. Each part is clearly identifiable and the colour which is absolutely identified with the material and its structure is also seen as a specific element on its own. Likewise the spacial effect of Sol Le Witts drawings generated by the independent elements of his system is a new transposition of the space and structure first proposed by Pollock. The list of artists influenced is long, however, what is important is that Pollocks work and achievements opened up art to a new set of possibilities for everyone.

CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

- ¹ From an answer to a questionnaire written by Jackson Pollock.
(Arts and Architecture Vol LXI February 1944)
- ² Schjoldahl Peter. Anxieties of Eminence Art in America September 1980
P.107
- ³ Rose Bernice Drawing into Painting (Museum of Modern Art Oxford 1979)
P.15
- ⁴ Ibid P.22
- ⁵ Fried Michael 3 American Painters (Catalogue Fogg Art Museum Harvard
University 1965) P.14
- ⁶ Rubin William S. Toward a Critical Framework. Post Cubist Morphology
Artforum September 1966 P.55

CHAPTER III

A HISTORY OF JAZZ IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARLIE PARKER

Black slaves came to America from all parts of the African continent, however, the largest proportion came from the clans and tribes which populated the west coast of Africa south of the Sahara. This region has been called the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast and includes such tribes as the Yoruba, Ibo, Fauti, Ashanti, Susu, Ewe and others. African tribes unlike other non-literate societies, award a place of honour in the social structure of the tribe to professional musicians who make a living from their music.

The entire tribe participates in musical activities, but the call-and-response pattern of West African music, an important link between the blues of jazz and the music of Africa was a result of the division between the individual singer, the soloist and the rest of the group. African music to be understood must be examined in context, for the attitudes about the music held by the musicians determined their behaviour. In contrast to the traditional approach of Western music in which the finished composition is an entity in itself, African music is so integrated into the actual performance and lives of the participants that its description must include all of these elements. In Africa music often expresses what could never be expressed in everyday life. The concept of talking drums and a private language reserved for a subculture are elements that seem to have continued unchanged right through slavery and into jazz. In pre Civil War America and to a certain extent after the war as well, blacks were not allowed freedom of expression but the messages of



Dancing African drummers.

Fig. 11

Dancing African Drummers

the "grapevine telegraph" - the underground railway were sent from station to station in codes, some of them musical that only initiates could understand. This system of closed circle communication was carried into the practices of black musicians too. Bud Freeman, a white jazzman discussed this language used by black jazz musicians during the twenties.

When I say the black mans language you have to understand that the black man of that day (1920) who was not educated, had to find a way to make it in the white world. He had to "Yes" the white man, there were underground phrases that he had to use that the white man didn't understand. ¹

The be bop era of which Parker was the main exponent developed a whole new phraseology dedicated to being cool and keeping one step ahead of the riff-raff, outsiders and most white people in general.

The Yourba tribe in Africa has at least ten kinds of drums and these are used within a general culture of tonal languages i.e. talking drums. In their part of Africa voice inflection can change the meaning of words and these subtleties in the music and language are, in a sense privileged and in a sense reserved for the members of that subculture. (Fig.11) Because of this tonality in language any instrument can be made to talk. A basically percussive attitude towards music persists in West Africa and it seems that percussion and rhythm are even more important than melody. A good example of relative pitch and talking drums can be taken from Jabo, a language spoken in Liberia. In Jabo there are four separate tones, that is, four different relative pitch levels of speech

are distinguished for purposes of meaning. The word 'ba' for instance may mean four different things depending on the pitch. Naturally, this pitch is not constant when spoken but depends on being understood in context with the surrounding syllables and of their place within the speakers voice range. A message can then be transferred to the drum. Jabo signalling is done with two drums, one large the other smaller, made of hollowed logs with slits. Messages tend to be restricted to only a few well known phrases. Understanding must come from a knowledge of the type of things likely to be signalled which are most often simple messages like "our neighbours are on the warpath", or more appropriately nowadays "hide, the tax collector is coming".

African music can be categorized in at least seven different important contexts. They are community context, musical performers, instruments (including voice) rhythm, melodic material, form and texture. All African music tends to be occasional, that is it functions as an accompaniment to social activity. There are songs to comment on all aspects of the community, religious and social. Work songs, story songs, hunting songs, all carried out with an appropriate ritual. A question that must arise out of this is what transformations take place to tribal music when the conditions of life are rapidly and radically changed through displacement, enslavement, and the infusion of non tribal, western musical and cultural elements. If, as in the case of West Africa, music is a primary vehicle for mans communication with the supernatural and it symbolizes a persons identity with a group and it reflects the dominant characteristics, values, and directions of a culture, then what happens to the music when a society is moved, changed

and not allowed to pursue its old religion? It is readily seen where rural African work songs might be used unchanged as rural Afro-American slave work songs. But other forms of music must undergo severe transformation in a slave society.

The performers of African music include both men and women as soloist or ensemble. A complete piece of music may be played by an instrumental soloist or a soloist in an instrumental ensemble. The soloist may be a leader in a call-and-response ceremonial song, The call-and-response was taken from its tribal setting by modern jazz musicians and often used as a sort of duel where two improvising soloists would try to out - manoeuvre the other. One musician would play a phrase and the other would either copy it exactly or elaborate on it thus continuing until both were exhausted physically or conceptually. The soloist can be either a man or a woman. African women sing and dance but only men play the instruments. Instruments are used singly and in combination and a wide variety are present; tuned and untuned percussion, bowed and plucked strings and wind instruments of all types - flutes, reeds, and lip-vibrated winds. The intimate relationship between language and musical sound in the performance of all these instruments is an essential feature of African instrumental music.

Probably the most advanced feature of African music is its rhythm. A metrical structure with regular beats is characteristic of most tribal music.

"Consistent use of isometric patterns (those without change in metre during the course of the music) occurs only in African negro

music. This suggests some relationship between African and Western music, a great deal of isometric material may have assumed this form because of repeated rhythmic patterns in a percussive accompaniment".² Having established a beat the musicians proceed inevitably to the creation of syncopation. This is another universal feature of African drumming and it involves a steady tempo for long periods of time. This monotonous, propulsive metronomic effect gives cohesion to the music and affects the listener with a force bordering on the physical. The rigid unchanging steady beat is termed "hot" not only in early jazz, but also in West African terminology.

Melody in African music more or less fits into the diatonic scheme that is also the basis of most Western Art or Folk music. No-one has been able to discover a timely African scale or system. Some of the systems in use are the diatonic, i.e. (Tone, T Semi Tone T.T.S.) diatonic tritonic, peritonic, peritachordal, heptonic and occasionally chromatic (i.e. consisting solely of semitones). There are certain exceptions especially the tendency in heptonic songs to use the minor 3rd and min 7 intervals above the tonic. The interesting feature about this is that these same notes are part of the blues scale. It is normally the flatted or minor, 3rd, 5th and 7th degrees of the scale that gives a song its blues quality. However, this isn't a feature common to all West and African music.

The call-and-response motif can also be equated to the blues in the dualing form already mentioned. Another striking characteristic of African music is the tendency to use short phrases or short motives to build longer patterns. The additive nature of the melodies in

combination with the additive nature of rhythms are two of the key ingredients that set African tribal music apart as a unique and distinct body of music. In conclusion one can say that true West African music is and was socially orientated music performed as solos and in ensemble. The professional musician played a major role in performing this music, and instruments as well as voice both alone and in combination were used to produce pieces with characteristic rhythms, forms and melodies. The close association between rhythm and tone with language and body movement is an essential feature of this repertoire and this music was the heritage of the black Africans who were enslaved and brought to America.

An interesting conjecture arises at this point and it involves the rhythms of African music. As already stated African music, rhythmically, was very sophisticated and involved the multi layered use of polyrhythms. Jazz rhythms however, tend to be of a simpler nature and for this reason alone it becomes obvious then that jazz while deeply related to West African music experienced radical changes in the evolution to its present form. I hope to point out some of the major changes as the essay continues.

It must be remembered that African slaves were abducted to all parts of the Americas, North and South, and yet the black music of South America has remained very close to its African origins. One wonders why jazz didn't start there or in the West Indies which also had a high proportion of slaves. The answer curiously enough seems to lie in the ethics of the enslavers. The Spanish who colonised most of South America had a very different outlook on slavery in comparison to

the British who colonised the North. The Spanish and Portuguese slave owners assumed that slavery owned the body of the slave not his mind. Slavery was a misfortune rather than a human element. The British on the other hand found slavery to be morally indefensible and consequently assumed that all slaves were morally tainted. The slave was deemed inferior in order to be owned body and soul. The Catholic Church took an interest in the welfare of the slaves, even if just their souls, the Protestant Church however considered slaves outside the realm of redemption and took no interest in slaves. The British owners did as they saw fit and often showed incredible cruelty to the physical and spirited well-being of their slaves. Within the Catholic Church marriage was a sacrament which when applied to a slave, kept the family together. Under British rule enslaved couples could be separated at will. Under British rule slavery was a closed system which tended to undermine all the personal and social values of the black. Logically, therefore, jazz grew out of an environment where change had to take place and the reason why it never developed in Latin America was because there was no inner need for something new.

Because of the lack of authentic records it is very difficult to say just where and when the transition from traditional African folk songs to a coherent music idiom which one can definitely call jazz took place. Scholars are still debating on the precise roots of jazz however, one place that is agreed upon as one of the most important melting pots for the new musical movement was the Post Civil War, British and French society of New Orleans.

Marshall Winslow Sterns writes in "The Story of Jazz" P33.

New Orleans has a special place in the story of jazz. A Latin-Catholic possession for eighty two years, it became party of a predominantly British-Protestant country after the Louisiana Purchase. At times the patterns of music in New Orleans resembled those of different islands in the West Indies. The combination and the timing in the blend of West African music with European was unique, however, and led to the birth of a new music. For the New Orleans environment was decidedly different from that of the rest of the United States.

That New Orleans was unique cannot be denied however, recent scholarship tends to support the belief that the origins of jazz were more diverse throughout the whole south rather than just one epicentre.

"Background to Parker the History of Jazz"

So far we have established a direct link with jazz to its earliest origins in West Africa, and have established reasons as to its sole development in North America. The next objective is to find a link from these early origins up to the maturing of jazz as a well defined and demarcated musical concept. However, as the point of this chapter is to help the reader into an understanding of the musical background of Parker and is not in itself a history of jazz I intend to deal only briefly with the period from 1800, ie. the Post Civil War era and the Black American music of the Colonial Period right up to the 1930's and the era of swing where we see jazz firmly established but reduced to pure entertainment with little or no acceptance as a serious musical form.

This will encompass, early slave music, Pre jazz, Ragtime, the Blues, Dixieland, big bands and swing.

After 1800 regular organised missions to the slaves began. Church was one of the few places where blacks were allowed to congregate and sing, and it was here that we see the birth of the black spirituals. Although we can not be certain as to the exact type of music we can deduce that it was that they were led by a soloist, often improvising with others answering in refrain. The melodies would be made up with fairly short fragments with frequent 'blue' notes. One of the reasons why little is known of the true black culture of this time is that all contemporary accounts came from whites and this usually represented only what blacks wanted white to hear "Double entendre, words with at least two disparate meanings has long been a part of the African Musical Heritage". Because the blacks, being a slave race, had to be totally conformist, the only way they could voice social protest was through double meaning, which was rarely understood by outside observers. This purposeful use of esoterics has been used throughout the history of jazz in order to avoid confrontation with the authorities.

The first occurrence of the word "jazz" in print, uncovered to date was in March 6th, 1913 issue of the San Francisco 'Bulletin', where it is written "The team which speeded into town this morning comes pretty close to representing the pick of the army. It's members have trained on ragtime and jazz". (The team referred to is a baseball team).

The word jazz wasn't seen in regular print until as late as 1917

and would only have become a household word in the early 20's the origins of the word are still undecided. The name seems to have come into common usage in the years 1913 - 1915, according to jazz musicians of that period. It may have been used originally as a minstrel or vaudeville term but it may also have had African or Arabic origins. It has been suggested by some writers that it is possibly associated with the sex act, for which the word is used in slang as a synonym. Equally plausible is its possible derivation, because of the French Culture of New Orleans, from the french verb 'jaser' which may be translated to "chatter or have an animated conversation among diverse people".

The actual derivation of the word 'jazz' is relatively unimportant. What is important however, is that black American music through the formation of ragtime and the blues had initiated certain stylistic elements and produced a sound which when played in combination would be recognisable as jazz to even the untrained ear. The elements of this sound may be present in varying proportions depending upon the style of the performers, and sometimes accidental circumstances but they had certain common features which are:-

1. Improvisation both group and solo.
2. Rhythm sections in ensembles ie. usually drums, bass, and chordal instruments such as piano, banjo or guitar !
3. A steady metronomical pulse to which syncopated melodies and rhythmic figures are added. The most frequent rhythm used is additive and this deserves some detailed explanation. The importance of rhythm on jazz cannot be overstated and it helps to emphasise the fundamental differences between European music

and jazz. It was generally understood by those trained in the European style of music that jazz musicians improvised even if they didn't always understand the precise application of melodic invention with a given harmonic sequence. It was also understood that jazz had borrowed from the blues the tendency to flatten the third, seventh and fifth degrees of the major diatonic scale. This is quite correct as far as it goes however, what was often missed was the importance of rhythmic innovations developed by black musicians and dancers which were to become the basis and most distinctive characteristics of jazz. John Bubbles, a jazz dancer describes the new rhythms. "Jazz is music in double time. You may get certain amounts of music say its four bars - of two beats to a bar. Then you get four beats to a bar. Then you get eight beats to a bar. It's different tempo's that you set up to point out the idea of jazz because you couldn't play it if you didn't double the tempo, you couldn't do it otherwise, that's my idea of jazz".

When he talks about doubling the tempo it does not mean doubling the speed at which the piece is played. On the contrary it means doubling the time in which the piece achieves its harmonic resolution. A good way of demonstrating this idea is to take a simple song ie. the french song "Frere Jacques" with the traditional two beats to the bar emphasis.

1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Fre	- re	Jac	- ques	Fre	- re	Jac	- ques
Dor	- mez	Vous		Dor	- mez	Vous	
Sonnez	- lez	Ma	-tin - es	Sonnez	-lez	Ma	- tin - es
Dor	- mez	Vous					

p.s. it is important to tap out the rhythm of this example.

The fast jerky rhythm has an entirely different emotional feel when the two beats to the bar are increased to four. This contrasting smoothness is an essential element if jazz is to swing.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Fre	-	re		Jac	-	ques	
Fre	-	re		Jac	-	ques	
Dor	-	mez		Vous	-		
Dor	-	mez		Vous	-		
Son-nez	les	ma		Tin	-	es	
Dor	-	mez		Vous	-		
Dor	-	mez		Vous	-		

When talking about "double time" we come to a term coined by Gunther Schuller. "The democratization of the beat" where its simplest expression is the jazzman's habit of clapping or otherwise stressing the weaker second and forth beats in the bar, against the stronger first and third on which most Western melodies are constructed. It is by this rhythmic emphasis that the black musician reconciles his inherited polyrhythmic approach to playing with the European habit of trying a melody to a single time signature. The evidence shows that jazz took the basic four to the bar beat from European music, but that the blacks found the resulting patterns too monotonous and used their inherent sense of time to lay counter rhythms on top of it. The competition between these two rhythmic pulses is what gives jazz its tension and excitement, and is the pivot on which the music swings.

In this respect, the differences between African and European music are absolute and fundamental. The two rhythmic approaches can best be described by the terms 'additive' and 'divisive'. In the latter

ie. the European way all music is rhythmically "divisive". A conductor stands in front of an orchestra and physically divides the time into so many beats to the bar with his baton. African music on the other hand is "additive". In this the beat is irregular in time so, in effect the musicians are adding together bits of time of unequal length.

Jazz is therefore a sort of compromise between these two rhythmic concepts. In a sense the additive requires less technical skill as the process becomes easier the more the basic unit of time is broken down however, by doubling the number of beats in the bar it allows the performer more scope for improvising cross-rhythms. For this reason the first step which jazz took towards being able to swing was to exchange a two beat conception for a four beat one. From here a musician could develop the capacity to feel the eighth note (♪) as the basic rhythmic unit. As a result he had greater freedom to impose his own counter rhythms over the basic beat without losing his place in the melody. Before it became firmly established as a musical genre white European musicians had great difficulty in coming to terms with the new rhythmic approach. So it was, that all great soloists have been able to construct their melodic lines, not only on the weak beats, but on subdivisions of weak beats, and it has been the special achievement of modern jazz to refine this process to a supremely complex and subtle level.

4. Reliance on popular song form and blues form in most performances.
5. Tonal harmonic organization with frequent use of the blues scale for melodic material.

6. Timbrel features, both vocal and instrumental as well as other performance - practice techniques which are characteristic of particular jazz styles such as vibratos, glissandi (a fast sequence of notes ie. running a hand across a harp playing all the notes) and assorted articulations.
7. Emphasis on the performer or performer-composer aesthetic rather than a composer centered orientation.

In any particular jazz performance, one or more of these elements may be absent, for example, some big-band arrangements of the swing era allowed for no improvisation, and others limited improvised solos to one or two short instrumental breaks. Duke Ellington and his music represent a jazz composer's world much more than that of the jazz performer. A clarinet player like Buddy De Franco achieves a sound closely akin to symphonic timbre. It is important to say that the seven features featured are not exclusive to jazz. Improvisation is not limited entirely to jazz musicians and we see it in the work of European organists and many avant-garde ensembles today. Furthermore it was a major practice in the music of the Baroque, the Renaissance and other great periods of Western Classical Music. A metronomic pulse can be observed in marches and classical symphonies and additive rhythms may be observed in French secular music of the late fourteenth century as well as in African drumming. It is the employment of several of the features in combination which is unique to jazz and which characterizes its distinctive sound and spiritual essence.



Fig. 12

Cover illustration to "All Coons Look Alike To Me"

Early Jazz, The Blues, Ragtime, Swing.

It is not my intention to dwell too long on the formative years of jazz and I will consider those points I think were important in context with the innovations of Parker and his contemporaries. Having established the roots of jazz and the basic features inherent in that music I think it important that the reader should understand the historical ascendancy of the music.

The "gay nineties and the first decade of the twentieth century saw young people dancing to a new kind of syncopated music. The minstrels and the coons had more or less been phased out and the cake walk and ragtime piano play had become popular."

After the Civil War theoretically the welfare of the black American should have improved and in most cases it did but that strong racist element was still present in American society as it is today. This is important in the development of jazz as I believe that strong racial pressure to which the black population was subjected was an important element in the tension and excitement that jazz invoked. It was almost like a relief valve where when the pressure got to much there would at least be some temporary release and the maintenance of an all to important status quo.

A typical song from the minstrel era which fortified the racial attitude was a new ragtime hit entitled "All Coons look alike to me". (Fig.12) Whats more puzzling is the motivations of the black song writer

Ernst Hogan who exploited the clichés and superstitions of White America seemingly for financial profit and fame. In the "Art of Ragtime" by Schafer and Riedel, the implications of the songs are analysed. "The chorus expounds what is clearly a white attitude ie. all black people look alike lacking individuality. The fact that it came from the mouth of a black person doubly damning for it makes "black" people say exactly what a white racist would want them to admit.

All Coons look alike to me
I've got another beau you see
And he's just as good to me
As you Nig! ever tried to be.

He spends his money free,
I know we can't agree
So I don't like you no how
All Coons look alike to me

The black woman singing this song would satisfy the complex demands of the devious racist. She is promiscuous going from one 'beau' to another. She is stupid (only a stupid person could not identify members of her own race) she is avaricious looking only for a free spender and she says precisely what all racists want to hear, that black individuals lack the nobility and intelligence of real human beings. Set against such a background it is not difficult to see where jazz gets its inner strength in reaction to such bias.

Ragtime was the first black music ever to achieve widespread popularity and commercial distribution. The piano was the principle performing instrument but the style since it was also suitable for other combinations was frequently adopted by brass bands, solo banjo

Ragtime Characteristics

a. Meter [occasionally] [very rarely]

b. Harmony: Common Progressions

I V I IV V I V of II V of V V I

c. Form: Typical Structural Outline

Intro. A B Vamp C D

4 mm. 16 mm. 16 mm. 4 mm. 16 mm. 16 mm.

[Trio] Fine D.C.

d. Rhythm: Usual Relationship of Melody and Bass

Fig. 13

The Blues Scale

a. In the key of C

P4 Tetrachord P4 Tetrachord

1 2 3 (blue) 4 5 6 7 (blue) 8

b. Transposed to the key of A^b

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

c. A blues in A^b (*Chi Chi*, by Charlie Parker) with flat and sharp thirds and sevenths (to an A^b harmony [tonic chord]) marked with asterisks.


Chi Chi: take 1

A^b D^b D^bm A^b A^b7 D^b6 D^bm C^bm C^bm B^bm B^b7(A) A^b

[1. B^bm E^b7] [2. B^bm F^b6]

[The asterisks, in order - 3^b, 7^b, 7^b, 3^b]

Fig. 16 The Blues Scale in C.

and vocal solo with accompaniment. The chief stylistic characteristics of this music are its duple meter (2/4 or 4/4) but nearly always in the former. It has a functional diatonic harmony stressing the 1st IV and V degrees of the diatonic scale in a 16 or 32 bar measure. The main feature is a syncopated treble melody ie.  clef which operates in opposition to a harmonic and nonsyncopated bass line which moves at approximately half the speed of the melody. (Fig 13)

It can be seen that ragtime contained two layers of rhythmic activity, a fast moving treble melody which strongly cross-accented the regularly accented progression of the bass. Ragtime when played on piano would normally call for the pianists hand to "stride" up and down, that is he would use the left hand in a down beat up beat manner in which beats one and three in (4/4) were heavily accented single notes, octaves or tenths and beats two and four were unaccented triads. The three big names in ragtime were Scott Joplin (1860 - 1917) and his two disciples James Scott (1886 - 1938) and Joseph Lamb (1887 - 1960)

The blues have a long history in black America and sum up the very soul of the accepted black tradition. The blues is a personal statement which is nevertheless valid for all members of a society. They can differ in mood, theme, approach or style of delivery. Blues are not intrinsically pessimistic even though they often tell of defeat or downheartedness, for while expressing the problems of poverty, migration, family disputes and oppression the blues provides a medium in which the participants could return to life with resignation if not optimism. Personal feelings are verbalised and serve to call the

A.												
measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
harmony	I				IV				V			
	(IV)											

B.												
measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
harmony	I	V ⁷	I	I ^{b7}	IV	II	III [#]	VI	II ⁷	V ⁷	I	

C.												
measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
harmony	B ^b F [#] m ⁷ Bm ⁷ Em ⁷ A ⁷ Dm ⁷ Bm ⁷ E ⁷				E ^{b7} B ^b A ⁷ B ^b Cm ⁷ Dm ⁷ G ⁷				Cm ⁷ F ⁷ B ^b G ⁷ Cm ⁷ F ⁷			
	(I)				(IV)				(I) (II ⁷) (V ⁷)(I)			

Fig. 14

Typical Blues Pattern

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Singer	a — rest				a — rest				b — rest			
Instruments	back — break —				back — break —				back — break —			
Harmony	A				B				C			
	I —				IV — I —				V — IV — I —			

Fig. 15

community to ones predicament and misfortune. Again, the blues made use of words which would hold little meaning for the outsider. Few whites would be familiar with voodoo terms such as "black cat bone" and "John the Conqueror root" which are found in many blue tunes. In effect the language of blues is a cultural code, in the sense that few whites could grasp its sexual and racial levels of meaning. As music the blues form was originally variable and stretched from eight to sixteen measures in length, but eventually was standardized as the twelve bar blues. "In country blues with vocal lines approximately two measures long the singer was able to play instrumental "breaks" between each phrase and this pattern is commonly cited as the tie between American blue and African call-and-response singing.

Blues refers to a style of music, a type of performance and a state of mind. Structurally its chief characteristics is a repeated harmonic pattern of twelve measures in 4/4 time. This twelve measure period is divided into one three four measure phrases, the first in the tonic, the second in the subdominant and tonic and the last in the dominant and tonic (see fig 14)

In the classic blues phase, instruments would play background music for the first two measures while the singer would carry the text and the tune.

The melody instruments would then fill in with a break during the following two measures. The call-and-response pattern between singer and



The Original Dixieland Jazz Band in London, England, c. 1920. (Left to right) Anthony Sbarbaro (Serge), drums; Emile Christian, trombone; Dominic James "Nick" La Rocca, clarinet; Lerry Shields, piano.

Fig. 17.

The Original Dixieland Jazz Band

instrumental soloist can be seen graphically as follows (fig 15)

The musical quality that gives the blues its distinct sound is the use of certain "blue notes", ie. the lowered third and seventh degrees of the scale. shown, is a "blues" scale in the key of C (fig 16)

By flattening the third and seventh degrees of a scale one sets up a tension as the sound achieved is unresolved and one feels it needs another note to do so. In this way it allows for constant embellishment and variation as the music is constantly in a state of flux waiting for resolution. The blues has a strong regular rhythm in contrast to ragtime. Whereas the ragtime performer syncopated the music accenting midway between beats or on weaker beats, the blues performer often syncopated by missing rather than hitting a particular accent. This improvisatory rhythmic style allows for great flexibility.

Historically the first jazz band to achieve any real fame were the "Original Dixieland Jazz Band" who were formed in 1917 by Dominick J. Nick La Rocca, a white left handed cornet player. Having formed in New Orleans they went on tour of America and achieved great popularity. (Fig.17) The band didn't have any outstanding soloists but managed to conglomerate the influences of ragtime the blues and earlier jazz elements into an original sound. Purists argue that the dixieland sound wasn't real jazz being white in tone but this is not definitely the case. What is important though is that dixieland popularized jazz and laid a path so that shortly after the first world war and right up to the second world war jazz became the most popular form of musical entertainment in America for black and white people alike. We are now entering the land of the big

jazz orchestra and the era of swing.

After the dixieland sound only a few names stand out above the splintering effect that popularity had on jazz. Names like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington for their originality and individual sound.

Generally however, jazz lost touch with innovation after the Wall Street Crash and became assimilated into a form of mid tempo social dance music. Whether jazz during these years was in ascent or decline is a matter of conjecture.

Marshall Sterns writes of the big band era, "The number of prosperous dance bands at the popular level multiplied while the jazz content remained slight. None of these large dance bands however could swing as a whole. The formula consisted of importing one or two "hot" soloists, letting them take a chorus once in a while surrounded by acres of uninspired musicians".

This commentator considered what was happening at the time a cultural tragedy however, this wasn't necessarily the case. Out of this era came if not the most innovative at least some of the most famous and popular music of the century in the distinctive sounds of Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Lionel Hampton. The swing era had greatly popularized jazz. However, towards the end of World War II it became apparent that a new style of jazz was in the process of being created.

CHAPTER III FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Tirro Frank. Jazz a History (New York, W.W.Norton 1977) P.32
- ² Nettl Bruno. Music in Primitive Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1956) P.64
- ³ Sterns Marshall Winslow. The Story of Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press 1970) P.33
- ⁴ Tirro Frank P.44
- ⁵ For further information on Ragtime see W.Schafer and J.Riedel. The Art of Ragtime Louisiana State University Press 1973
- ⁶ Tirro Frank P.118



Charles Christopher "Bird" or "Yardbird" Parker (1920-55).

Fig. 18

Charlie Parker

CHAPTER IV

CHARLIE PARKER

I think it is safe to say that it is the nature of the avant garde to move and become known in small circles. In the opening paragraph of his essay on Parker Martin Williams writes about the reaction of his death on the jazz avant garde. "When Charlie Parker was dead less than a year they still spoke of him often, but it became more and more unusual for anyone to discuss his music. They were begining to speak of him as a God, perhaps because it saved them the trouble of reflecting either on his playing or on his life." ¹ As is the case with Jackson Pollock, Parker who was nonetheless a remarkable man has become established as a legendary myth. He was at the centre of movement that was to revolutionize jazz as much as Abstract Expressionism revolutionized American painting. Much of what I wrote in my introduction to the work of Pollock holds good for Parker also. The Second World War not only changed the ideals of the American people but I think also made them more receptive to cultural changes that were taking place. Was it just coincidence that from the musical hero's of World War II like Glen Millar and Benny Goodman there emerged the anti hero that Parker was, unsociable, aloof, eliteist and decadent. If Jackson Pollock was the original "Rebel without a cause" then it points out one of the main social differences between Pollock and Parker. Pollock was white and Parker black. To many Parker was the first black musician to represent individuality and freedom. For the American black it was almost impossible to be unaware to some extent of the oppression and racism that existed in America then and exists now. Parker having spent some time in the Southern States was only too familiar with

racism but being part of a new breed he was not content to roll his eyes and bow out gracefully but insisted on treating whites on his own terms. The reason I mention this is not to intensify the Parker myth but because I feel it is important when coming to terms with Parker because as a leader in the "Be bop" style it was recognised that be bop (or modern jazz as the musicians liked to call it) was not only a form of music but a way of life and as a member it was important to maintain the image that it demanded.

By the end of the Second World War there was dissatisfaction among a small group of musicians as to the credibility of swing as a form of musical expression. Swing was purely a popular form of dance music and although it offered good financial rewards for musicians, especially black musicians, as a serious form of music it had little to offer. As I mentioned in the first chapter the first main element of jazz was the need for improvisation something that the swing arrangers had ignored almost completely. There was a feeling that the style itself was harmonically empty, chord progressions were limited to triads, seventh chords, and occasional diminished and augmented chords with perhaps an added note; rhythms were too stereotyped and consisted only of formula mixtures of simple syncopations and melodies were too tradition bound to the 4 - and 8 - measure phrase structure of dance music. It was in this climate of dissatisfaction that a new style of jazz was born which was to become popularly known as "Be bop". Although be bop seemed to explode suddenly on an unexpecting public in 1945, the seeds had already been sown by musicians such as Coleman Hawkins as early as 1939. Hawkins was a pivotal

figure in the transition from swing to be bop. He was a tenor saxophone player who although born and educated in Kansas, first made his name as a New York jazz musician. In 1939 he recorded his greatest hit "Body and Soul" which was to establish him as one of the greatest saxplayers of his time. The standard swing treatment of all popular songs, especially ballads, was to place the melody in prominence during the delivery of a solo and to ornament it slightly while making sure not to cloud the main melody. What Hawkins did was to digress entirely from the popular tune during his solo and instead leaned upon the harmonic structure to guide him in an unprecedented creative melodic effort. The result was a logical and beautiful solo in the instrumental jazz idiom. The be bop musicians realized from this that he had constructed his melodic line as if the rhythm section were playing at twice the actual tempo of the original composition (See fig 19) In other words a second level of harmonic motion and rhythmic activity was superimposed, through the addition of passing chords upon the original structure.

Another strong influence on these musicians were the now famous recording sessions from Monroe's Uptown House and Mintons in New York city from 1941. They featured Charlie Christian on guitar, Thelonious Monk on piano, Kenny Clarke on drums, Don Byas on tenor saxophone and Dizzy Gillespie on trumpet.

By assimilating the material from these and other influences, by the early forties a group of jazz musicians started to play a new style of music which came to be called "Be bop". Although the etymology of the

word is obscure despite the fact that it is of recent origin it seems to have come from the jazz musicians practice of vocalizing or singing instrumental lines with nonsense syllables. The purpose of this was that by vaguely singing or humming during a solo the musician could improvise at speed and yet think ahead. This scat singing as it is often called can be heard on many jazz records as a low modulating guttural hum which often seems to bear no relation to the melody. Be bop musical phrasing frequently had abrupt endings with a characteristic long - short pattern on the end ♩ ♪ ♫, this rhythm was often vocalized as be bop. From this its original conception as a means to describe continually shifting accents it soon became a word to describe something harsh, jerky and unattractive which in a way was the ethos of the new music itself. Revolution is never pleasant.

Be bop developed at a time when some musicians were consciously trying to create a new elite and to exclude from their number all persons who were not up to a predetermined artistic standard. Barriers both real and artificial were put up not only to the public but to other practising jazz-men. It has been said of be bop that if jazz musicians were already on an island in society then the bop musicians built a raft and set offshore. Because of the sheer innovation of be bop and its radical sound audiences and critics were totally unprepared and the reaction was predictable, confused and mostly aggravated. If most jazz musicians found difficulty in coming to terms with bop then audiences must have found it incomprehensible. The resultant split in the ranks of jazz seemed inevitable. The reason was that the be bop musician was trying to raise the quality of jazz from the level of utilitarian dance music to that of a chamber art form. At the same time he was trying to raise the status of the jazzman from entertainer to artist. His first attempts were not immediately

successful and because of public scorn it was not uncommon for the be bop soloist to play with his back to the audience or to walk off the stand as soon as he had finished his solo leaving the rest of the band to continue playing. The be bop musicians contempt for the public was only equalled by his disdain for musicians who called themselves jazzmen but who were musically incompetent by his standards. This attitude gave rise to a breed of person who became known as a "hipster". Of this group Charlie Parker was the leader, the model and the ultimate guru.

Charles Parker, Jr, was born on August 29th, 1920 of Afro American parents in Kansas City. His father was Charles Parker, Sr, a native of Memphis who was stranded in Kansas at the end of a Vaudeville tour and settled there, marrying a local girl Addie Boyley who was just seventeen years old. When he was eight or nine years old the family moved into a rented house in the heart of the black ghetto which was within walking distance of the night club area where Parker was to serve his apprenticeship as a master saxophonist. The years 1928 to 1939 are often called the golden years for Kansas City Jazz for it was in those years that Tom Prendergast a gangster cut in the pattern of early Irish-American vote manipulators and ballot box stuffers seized control of the City Hall following a coup involving the City Manager. Then began the dozen odd years of good times, full employment for musicians, and the renaissance of Kansas City jazz. Prendergast continued to run the show until 1939 when he was convicted on a tax fraud involving half a million dollars and sent to a federal prison. His downfall brought an end to prosperity

and good times. At once reform elements took over, closing night clubs, brothels and stemming the flow of narcotics which had been freely available during Prendergast's reign as boss. In 1939 a few weeks after Prendergast's conviction Charlie Parker, Jr, left Kansas City never to return as a permanent resident. He was the leader of the saxophone section of the Jay McShaun orchestra the last of the major Kansas City bands. He was married and divorced, the father of a son, member of the musicians union, an airily self confident and precocious young man of nineteen.

Parker apparently was a bright student in grammar school but Lincoln High where he then went to study was typical of black schools of the day. Ill equipped and poorly staffed. Parker had to walk across town to get to school which necessitated crossing the club district of Kansas. The temptation proved too much for Parker who soon gave up his studies and instead he would loiter outside one of the many basement jazz clubs where live jazz could be heard at most times of the day. Parker's childhood was one of almost extreme matriarchy. His father who worked as a Pullman chef would only come home infrequently and eventually gave up altogether having found another woman. Parker's mother doted on her only son and let him do as he pleased. She even gave him the savings she had earned as a charwoman to buy his first saxophone at the age of thirteen. A big change occurred in Charlie's lifestyle when his mother obtained regular work as a charwoman at the main offices of the Western Union Telegraph Company. It was a late night job from midnight to eight a.m. This suited Charlie well in that he could now slip off to the night clubs when the music was really beginning to warm up. At that time most musicians worked a shift from around nine p.m. until four or five a.m. It was only after midnight that things began to swing.

In 1935 Kansas City saxophone playing had reached its best level. The town had a number of resident master players whom Parker was to emulate and eventually surpass. People like Ben Webster, Herschel Evans and Parker's favourite whom he most revered Lester Young. After a nights gigging it was not uncommon for these three to get together and jam (spontaneous soloing) well into the late hours of the morning. It was here that Parker learned his trade in the gruelling jam sessions where musicians would try to outplay and physically demoralize their opponents. The sense of competition was keen and sometimes with as many as thirty musicians waiting to take a solo, it didn't go down well to fluff while on trial. Parker himself recalls one humiliating experience while still learning to play the saxophone. "I knew a little of "Lazy River" and "Honeysuckle Rose" and played what I could. I was doing all right until I tried doing double tempo on "Body and Soul". Everybody fell out laughing. I went home and cried and didn't play again for three months." One of the main reasons for his foul up on his first major jam session was his naive ignorance of tonality i.e. the fact that songs were played in different keys. Somebody told him that songs had to be played in different keys but never specified which ones. This mis-statement had a beneficial impact on Parker for most jazzmen could only play in the more popular keys for brass instruments like Bb, C.F. and G however, Parker didn't know this and learned his scales in all twelve keys. Having done this he would learn to play the blues in all the keys. Playing the blues in Gb was never called for or used in jazz however, this sound knowledge of harmony in so called 'useless' keys was to help Parker in later years when he invented new modal and tonal relationships in jazz.

Parker died very young but made up for it by starting his mature life at an incredibly early age. At fifteen he was a professional musician a member of the musicians union and married with a pregnant wife. He had also started to dabble in narcotics a habit which he continued until his death. In fact a lot of the myth generated by Parker grows out of his amazing physical strength. The fact that he survived his thirty four years seems extraordinary when one considers that he was a hardened heroin addict for nearly fifteen years before his death. Couple that with his arrogance as a brilliant musician and his 'cool' philosophy on life and one has the making of a myth. One of his biographers writes,

"To the hipster, Bird was living justification of their philosophy. The hipster is an underground man. He is to the Second World War what the dadist was to the first. He is amoral, anarchistic, gentle and over civilised to the point of decadence. He is always ten steps ahead of the game because of his awariness, an example of which would be meeting a girl and rejecting her, because he knows they will date, hold hands, kiss, neck, pet, fornicate, perhaps marry, divorce, so why start the whole thing.? He knows the hypocrisy of bureaucracy, the hatred implicit in religions - so what values are left for him except to go through life avoiding pain, keep his emotions in check, and after that 'be cool' and look for kicks. He is looking for something that transcends all this bullshit and finds it in jazz".²

This was the philosophy of Parker, and most of the be bop musicians, One of total commitment to their music.

Parker was one if not the most important innovators in the new movement. The others included the trumpeter, Dizzy Gillespie, and later Miles Davis. Todd Dameron, Thelonious Sphere Monk and Bud Powell were the three be bop pianists who influenced the development of be bop style piano technique most significantly. In the rhythm section Kenny 'Klook' Clarke is credited as the drummer who first developed the swing drum system into one suitable for be bop. For this he stopped playing the bass drum on every beat, reserving it for special accentuation and rhythmic effects. He took the ride pattern of the hi-hat cymbal and played it on a suspended cymbal so that beats two and four would not be accented; thus he was able to use the top cymbal, later renamed the 'ride cymbal' for steady rhythm. The music itself as a rule was performed by a small jazz combo of three to six players. The standard procedure for performing without written music, and this was the norm for be bop musicians rebelling against the written arrangements of swing, was to play the melody in its entirety once, (twice if a twelve measure blues) follow it with several choruses of improvised solos to the accompaniment of the rhythm section (usually piano, bass and drums) and repeat the melody of the first chorus. Be bop musicians were still using standard tunes but they often altered them beyond recognition. A good example of this is Parkers re-working of the popular song "Cherokee". He totally discarded the old tune and composed his new melody "Koko" over the chord progression of "Cherokee". Parker describes how he composed "Koko" in these words.

"I was working over "Cherokee" and as I did I found that by using the higher intervals of the chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, I could play the things I'd been hearing in my head. I came alive".³

Body and Soul, Second Chorus, Opening of Second Phrase

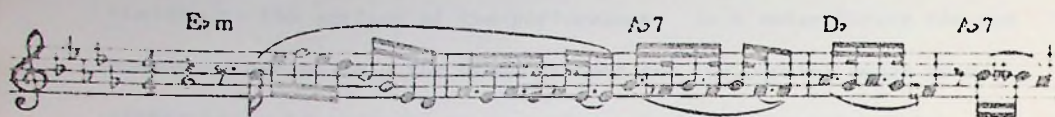
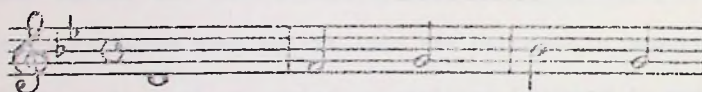
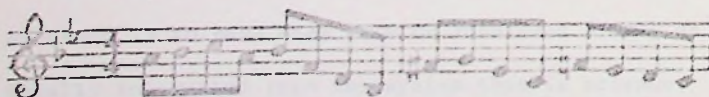


Fig. 19



Opening of Ray Nobles Cherokee

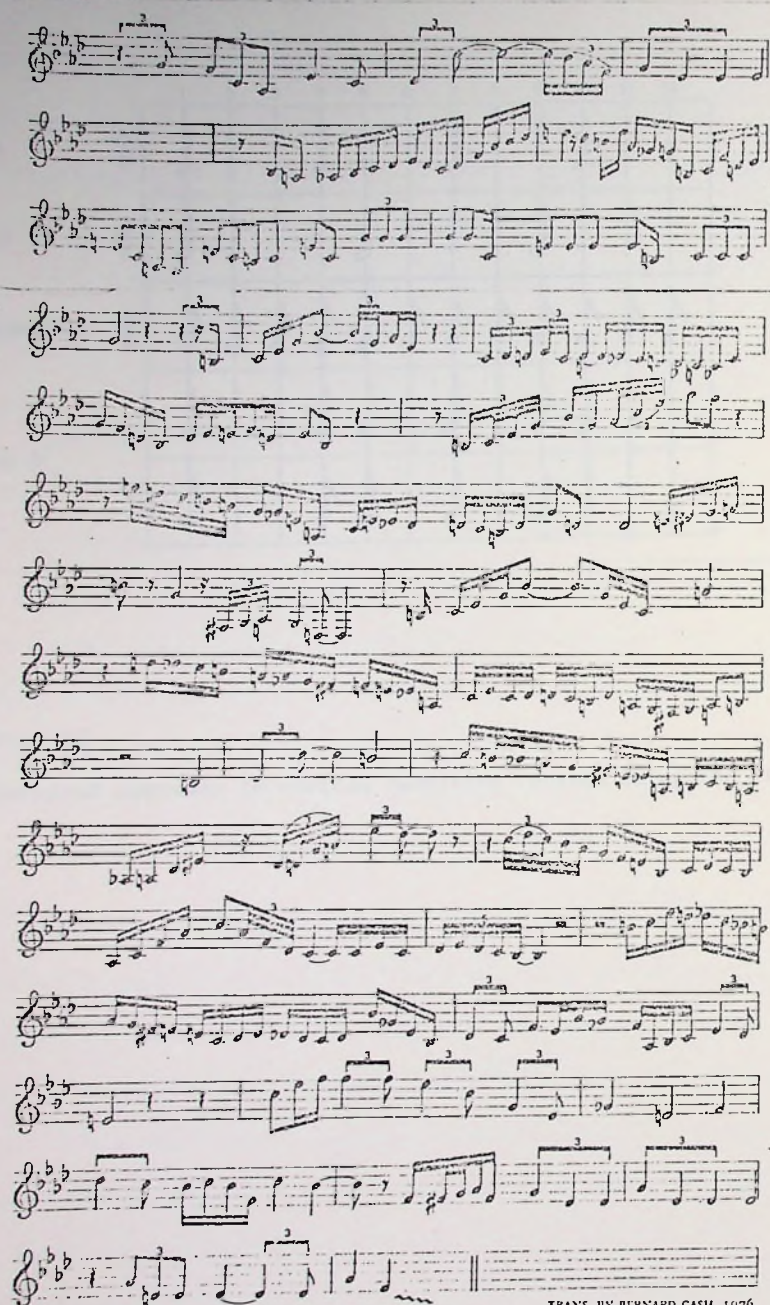


Opening of Charlie Parkers KoKo

Fig. 20

By comparing the opening notes of Parkers "Koko" with the opening of Ray Nobles "Cherokee" (See Fig 20) shows that the transformation is complete. No vestige of the original remains visible on the surface of the performance. In a sense Parker was now composing exclusively for other jazzmen and the popular songs were either being transformed or discarded. Be bop music was complex autonomous and had little popular appeal. Listeners were expected to be sophisticated and dancers had no place in the audience. To the jazz critics this new music was often bewildering for the best work was so complex in harmony and rhythm that it sounded at first incoherent, not only to laymen but also to professionals very close to it. At this early stage it also became difficult to discriminate good work from incompetent work and incompetent workers who often took advantage of the confused situation. As with any radical art form it has taken many years for the ideas to become accepted and integrated into the overall situation. As for Parker the innovations he started in the early forties have since been filtered down to fit into the patterns of modern popular music so much so that if one being uninitiated listened to one of his early recordings it may seem difficult to hear anything different or radical from the multitude of styles and forms that developed out of his ideas. In a way this is probably a compliment to Parker for if one considers the scientific world, for a scientist it would seem that the highest accolade is to have ones name or idea used simply as a matter of course, totally integrated into the system that is science.

It has been said that to become an effective improviser a musician must learn everything about his instrument and then forget the lot. In doing so he can transform the process of playing from one of conscious technique to one of sub-conscious reflex action. Parkers greatest musical attributes were his reflexive technique combined with an extraordinary sense of musical form. His greatest innovations were rhythmic. If one



TRANS. BY BERNARD CASH, 1976.

Fig. 21

"Bird of Paradise" Solo

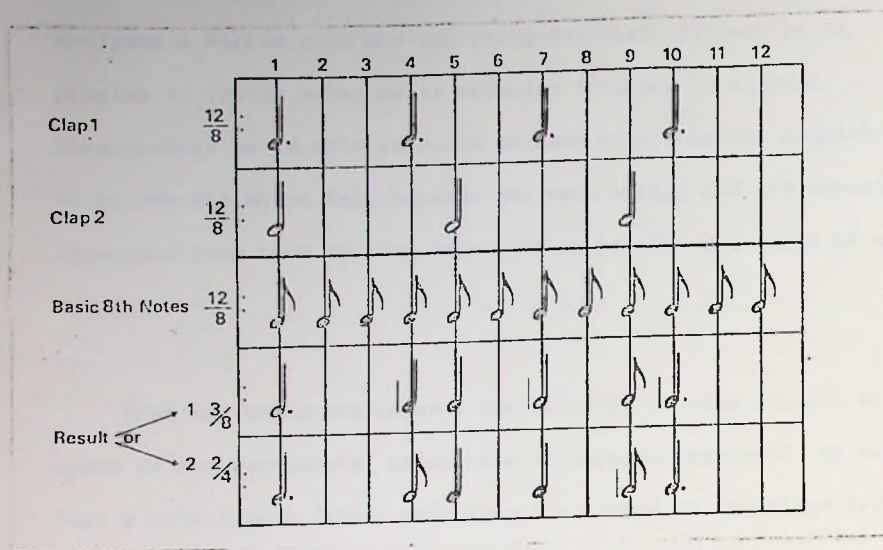


Fig. 22

Metrical approach to African "additive" rhythm using the eight note.

analyses a Parker solo one can recognize that although he is playing in quater notes he is actually thinking in eights. Consequently he is able to build phrases with absolute precision on microbeats which fall between the main beats, and are sometimes separated from them by time lapses of as little as a tenth of a second.

From the swing era onwards the majority of jazz players were aware of the fundamental principles of European harmony. If we take a solo from a Parker recording i.e. "Bird of Paradise" (fig 21) one realizes that although harmonically there are some innovations, they are all still within a classical European tradition. By European standards however, the "Bird of Paradise" solo shows incredible rhythmic subtlety and it is here that one can draw a link between Parker's jazz and African music. The eight-note technique of jazz is only a simplification of the "additive" approach of African music. (See Chapter III)

"Africans do not use this eight-note technique when they drum or clap three against four rhythms. You can work out this procedure on paper using basic eight notes (Fig 22) The four dotted crotchets ought to be four plain crotchets, which is how the African would conceive them. But in that case, insoluble problems result in dealing with the second clap or counter - rhythm - all of which is an excellent example of how writing music down can limit it".⁴

This is the crucial difference between African and European rhythm.

Harmonically jazz is very close to European music and for this reason I think it is important to look more closely at some of Parkers melodic innovations. European harmony is based on the system of the Major Diatonic Scale derived by Pythagorous. This scale was adapted throughout Europe and its intervals are evident in the oldest folk tunes of the continent. The notes of this scale are represented in tonic solfa by

Do, Ray, Me etc.

and in the classical notation by the letters

C,D,E,F,G,A,B,C

Selecting the 1st, 3rd and 5th intervals and playing them simultaneously on a piano gives a musical chord. In this instance the chord sounded will be C major. The relationship between this C major chord and its corresponding scale (C major scale) is of particular interest to the jazz improviser. This relationship allows the musician to play any succession of C major scale intervals eg. the notes D,F,A,C, against a C major chord played on piano. This holds for all the scales and chords used in popular song composition. Listed below are some of the common scales used by jazz musicians and the appropriate chords all in the key of C.

	<u>INTERVALS</u>			
	1st	3rd	5th	7th
C 7th. C,D,E,F,G,A,B ^b ,C	C	E ^b	G	B ^b
C minor 7th. C,D,E ^b ,F,G,A ^b ,B ^b ,C	C	E ^b	G	B ^b
C augmented. C,D,E,F [#] ,G [#] ,A [#] ,B,C	C	E	G [#]	
C diminished 7. C,D,E ^b ,F,G ^b ,A ^b ,B ^b ,C	C	E ^b	G ^b	B ^b

These scales are used extensively in jazz.

Embraceable You, Charlie Parker Solo

Chord symbols present in the score:

- F
- Bdim
- C7
- Gm7
- C7
- D(9)
- Gm7
- B7
- C7
- F
- Edim
- A7
- Dm
- Dm7
- D(9)
- E7
- Am
- A#aug
- C
- D7
- C
- C#dim
- Dm7
- G7
- C
- F
- C7
- F
- Bdim
- C7
- Gm7
- C7
- D(9)
- Gm7

Fig. 24

"Embraceable You" Solo



Fig 24. "Embraceable You" Solo. Cont'd

Lydian Scale

Although the lydian scale^{*} (mode) was given earlier, let's take a closer look at it again.

Below is the C lydian scale. Notice that this scale may be thought of as a major scale with a raised (\sharp) 4th step. More accurately, it is the scale starting from the 4th note of the G major scale. (C lydian mode has the same key signature as the G major scale.)

C Lydian Scale

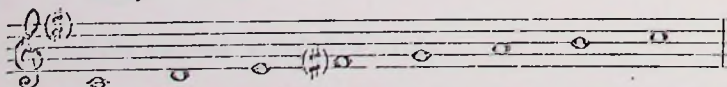


Fig. 23

Analysis shows that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie made extensive use of the raised 4th interval in their improvisations. Music theorists have come to feel that the 4th note of the major scale is a dissonant sound when played against a major chord, and that a more acceptable sound in the raised 4th. In fact this raised 4th or more commonly called the flatted fifth (b5) became the identifying sound of the be bop era. In Classical European terms Parker had actually adopted the "Lydian Mode" or scale to fit into his improvisations. The C Lydian Mode is a G major scale played from the 4th interval C to the eleventh C (Octave). (See Fig 23)

To illustrate this I have scanned a transcribed Parker solo "Embraceable You" (Fig 24) . In it I have picked out certain bars to show common jazz scales and examples of the raised 4th (Lydian Mode).

The numbers relate to intervals above the root note.

Bar No. 3 B.Dim

2,3,4,5,6,5,4,3,4,4,3,

Bar No. 4 C7

1,7,6,5,6,

Bar No.6 G min 7

5,3,2,1,4,3,2,3,5,7,2, (9),4,3,3,

Bar No 8. F Major

5,3,4,5,1,7,6,5,5, raised 4,4,3,5,3^b,7,5,

Bar No 12. A^b aug.

5,3,2, 4,4,3,2,4



Fig. 25

Charlie Parker

While analysing Parkers solo "EmbraceableYou" thus, is perfectly valid, in a sense it misses the central point of Parkers achievement. It must be kept in mind that this solo was an improvisation on a theme, a spontaneous creation and not a laboured recital. It demonstrated Parkers ability to grace the melodic line of a ballad with an airy filigree that floats above the chords. He barely glances at the original Gershwin melody but begins with a prominent six note phrase which he then uses five times in a row, pronouncing it variously and moving it around to fit the harmonic contours of Greshwin's piece. On its fifth appearance the six note motive forms the beginning of a delicate thrust of melody which dances along, pauses momentarily, resumes and finally comes to rest balanced at the end with a variant of that same six-note phrase. From this point on Parkers solo interweaves that opening musical motif in remarkable permutations and in unexpected places. Sometimes he subtracts notes from it, changes notes within it, adds notes to it. It is both florid and rhythmically supple. Throughout just snatches of the motif appear amidst the context of long-flowing melodic lines, but the Gershwin melody is avoided almost entirely.

Parker was the most influential player in jazz during the last ten years of his life. The musicians who imitated aspects of his syncopations, articulations, tone quality and repertory of motives are legion. It was once said of Charlie Parker that he represented individuality and freedom. It is hard to know exactly what this means for surely there was very little true individuality in the life of the man, so constantly was he, it seems the victim of his own passions.

Parker was indeed a complex being, yet his personal life seems to have been a chaos in which moments of perceptive kindness vied with moments of panic and rage, moments of gentleness contrasted with moments of suspicion. The opposites in him were so far apart, tragically far apart. But his music for all its freshness, its expanded emotion and its liberated feeling, its originality its seeming unending invention, at its best presented an image of unexpectedly subtle and complex order and wholeness.

CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Williams Martin. The Jazz Tradition (New York Oxford University Press) 1970 P.120
- ² Reisner Robert George. Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker
(New York. Citadel Press) 1962 P.25
- ³ Tirro Frank. Jazz a History (New York W.W.Norton) 1977 P.275
- ⁴ Jones A.M. Studies in African Music (London Oxford University Press)
1959 P.P. 200 - 1 and 202.



Fig. 26

Jackson Pollock in his studio



Fig. 27

Jackson Pollock in his studio

Summary,.....

In this summary I am not arguing for or against the idea that Pollock and Parker eventually came to the same conclusion in their work. From reading the text I am sure the reader will agree there were many similarities in their lifestyles. A matriarchial background, total dedication to their art, a short and disastrous personal life and their popular image as cult figures. These and other similarities while possibly relevant are equally possible pure coincidence, the reader can only decide for himself on these issues. As for their work, it is pointless for me to even suggest some form of common style or mutual influence, for while it remains possible that Pollock, who was a jazz fan, may have been aware of Parker and his music, I think it unlikely that Parker was ever aware of Pollock or his art. For me the most important analogy is not actually in their work but in the methods they used to achieve that work and the significant effect those methods had on subsequent art in both fields.

The link in their methods was the use of improvisation. Both men used improvisation in a way that it became almost indistinguishable from the work itself. In the case of Pollock we see it in the photographs of Hans Namuth where the act of painting becomes as important as the (Figs.26 & 27) painting itself. With Parker it is the essence of what he is doing. Yet despite their radical approach both men were very much aware of their own separate aesthetic tradition and as such their work was not some irresponsible feat but was more a disciplined spontaneity. I feel this to be the most important link in their work.

In the introduction to the thesis I used a quotation made by Pollock "Modern art to me is nothing more than the expression of contemporary aims of the age that we are living in. In many ways I think both Jackson Pollock and Charles Parker had similar aims. I have discussed how, as for the reasons why, one can only decide from the evidence I have presented in the text. Despite the possibility that all similarities between the two men could be coincidence the fact that there are so many similarities is important and as such I feel has been worthy of serious attention.

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