

Outside on the Inside

Musical improvisation according to contemporary materialist thought

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Declaration of authorship

I, Matthew Lovett, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'M' followed by a long horizontal line that curves slightly upwards at the end.

Date: 6th January 2017

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Abstract

One of the precursors to this PhD project was an awareness that a great deal of writing about music aesthetics, the practice of making music and the nature of listening to music, is often either knowingly or unknowingly grounded in a set of philosophical debates that predate (sometimes quite considerably) the music that is being written about. As such, there is a sense in which critical perspectives on improvised music practice, if they are to be relevant, need to take into account more recent developments in philosophical and theoretical thought, and one of the objectives of this study is to meet that challenge by mapping of some of the key aspects of twentieth and twenty-first century thought that have their roots in what could be described as 'philosophies of immanence' onto various aspects of improvisation.

From the outset, this project is written from a maker's perspective, and takes the form of a piece of extended research that takes as its starting point the idea that musical improvisation is a form of creative thinking in action. From this position, the process of improvising and an improvised piece of music, to some extent bear the traces of the thought that has given rise to both the music and the improvising itself. By grounding the research in a set of the afore-mentioned 'philosophies of immanence', it is therefore my intention to develop new ways of thinking about how improvisation works, new ways to describe what is happening when we hear musicians improvising, and new ways to understand what kinds of changes and innovations are brought to bear on the resources and materials – in other words the musical knowledge, the skills, the instruments, and a wider set of musical contexts and environments – that musicians have at their disposal during an improvisation.

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Introduction: Musical improvisation according to contemporary materialist thought

1. Why improvisation and why philosophy?

In his now classic study, *Improvisation, Its Nature and Practice in Music*, the guitarist Derek Bailey states that, 'improvisation enjoys the curious distinction of being both the most widely practised of all musical activities and the least acknowledged and understood' (Bailey, 1992: ix). Problematic and complex though it may be, musical improvisation nevertheless enjoys a certain distinction over other forms of musical performance and production, in that, at its core, it is a means to manufacture musical structures, in 'real-time'.

From the outset, this project is written from a maker's perspective, and takes the form of a piece of extended research that takes as its starting point the idea that musical improvisation is a form of creative thinking in action. From this position, the process of improvising and an improvised piece of music, to some extent bear the traces of the thought that has given rise to both the music and the improvising itself. But we must be careful: throughout this thesis, there is no sense that either the process of improvised music making, or a piece of improvised music in any way 'represent' a thought process. Indeed, as we shall see throughout the thesis, as we engage with various perspectives relating to contingency, there is clearly a sense that improvisation can be seen to be a 'non-representational' activity.¹ However, despite this caveat, improvisation nonetheless presents us with an opportunity to consider the relationship between the physical and intellectual affordances of the human form, that enable us to either directly create sound or manipulate other sound-producing devices, and our capacity to go beyond these affordances, or limitations in order to create surprising, unintended and unforeseen musical outcomes.

1.1 Improvisation in context

Contemporary improvisation, whether we want to call it 'creative music', 'free music', 'free improvisation', or simply 'improvised music' is a form of musical practice whose ancestry can be clearly traced in jazz and related musics. Whilst the purpose of this thesis is to address and interrogate the creative processes associated with musical improvisation, my interest is in the way that creative choices can be made in relation to a set of given

¹ Whilst there are a number of antecedents to the term 'non-representational', including Simon O'Sullivan's book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* and Nigel Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, this thesis does not specifically draw on these works. Instead, the use of 'non-representational' in the current context signals my intention to respond to some of the philosophical challenges laid down by concepts such as Laruelle's 'unilateral determination' (chapter three), and Meillassoux's 'necessary contingency' (chapter four), both of which actively reject any sense that what is external - but necessary - to human thought, can in any way be represented in human thought or perception.

resources and materials, and therefore in what follows, the focus is on a set of processes are not necessarily associated with jazz, at least in terms of stylistic traits and musical reference points. In his landmark article, 'Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives', the trombonist and member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, George Lewis, uses these terms to attempt 'to historically and philosophical deconstruct aspects of the musical belief systems that ground African-American and European (including European-American) real-time music-making.' (Lewis, 2004: 132). In doing so, Lewis' aim was to both counteract what he identified as an 'exnomination' (Lewis, 2004: 139), or erasure of jazz's role in 'the development of either 'contemporary' improvisation or indeterminacy' (Lewis, 2004: 144).²

Lewis suggests that certain European improvisers such as Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and by association Cornelius Cardew, developed a practice that reflected 'their diverse backgrounds [and blended] personal narrative reminiscent of an Afrological perspective with sonic imagery characteristic of European forms spanning several centuries.' For Lewis, 'the European form places great emphasis on the social necessity for the role of the improviser', and he offers that the term 'improvised music' was adopted, 'not to distinguish it from jazz in the sense of critique but to better reflect the European

² Whilst it is in no way the aim of this thesis to argue against Lewis' position over the heritage and provenance of improvised music, only a brief second glance enables us to question what may well be an overly simplistic distinction between the two poles of musical discourse that Lewis identifies. For while he is right it to take issue with what he saw is the exnomination of African-American culture and perspectives within the ongoing development of improvised music during the latter half of the twentieth century, it is maybe too convenient to lay this at the feet of a Eurological set of histories and trajectories. In the essay '*John Cage's Queer Silence or How to Avoid Making Matters Worse*', Jonathan Katz surmises that John Cage's interest in silence was 'in part an expression of Cage's identity as a closeted homosexual during the Cold War, it was also much more than that. Silence was not only a symptom of oppression, it was also a chosen mode of resistance' (Katz, 2017). Katz's analysis of Cage's interest, not only in silence, but in noise, as well as the uncoded nature of sound itself, suggests that it would be too simple to say that Cage's lack of interest and disavowal of jazz is the result of his intrinsic Eurological perspective. Instead, where for Katz, Cage's interest in 'freedom from meaning [suggests] freedom from domination, definition, and control in a very real world sense' (Katz, 2017), we might be as well to add to Lewis' binary pairing a 'queerological' perspective; one that speaks of another perspective that is all too often occluded in the historical accounts of music's development. Whilst Katz's focus is on Cage's frequent return to silence as a musical medium, stating that 'silence, in short, is not another kind of music, but a challenge to the construction of music itself. Neither musical nor unmusical, Cage's silence was quite precisely "other," escaping the binaries that circumscribed the status quo as the sole arena for contestation (Katz, 2017), we can equally see that Cage's interest in indeterminacy and contingency in music might be a result, not of an exnomination of African-American perspectives, but of a desire to design a different kind of musical narrative for himself, not tethered to any pre-existing cultural context, Afrological or Eurological. As Cage himself tells us, 'Today, we must identify ourselves with noises instead, and not seek laws for the noises, as if we were blacks seeking power! Music demonstrates what an ecologically balanced situation could be--one in which whites would not have more power than blacks, and blacks no more than whites. A situation in which each thing and each sound is in its place, because each one is what it is. Moreover, I'm not the one whose inventing that situation. Music was already carrying it within itself despite everything people forced it to endure' (Katz, 2017).

improvisers' sense of having created a native model of improvisation, however influenced by African forms' (Lewis, 2004: 151).

Thus, we enter into this project with an awareness that even the seemingly neutral phrase 'improvised music' sits within significant cultural and political contexts. Whilst this project's focus will be on music that does not deliberately seek to place itself either within or outside of a jazz or a contemporary classical trajectory, it is clearly not possible to ignore the provenance of these musical approaches and attitudes. Lewis' work reminds us that much has been ignored, achieved, brushed-over and fought for in the development of a so-called 'free music', and this PhD study makes no attempt to ignore the importance of this cultural developments; but there is clearly a need to be wary, particularly of any unwitting Eurological lacunae. So again, whilst the focus is clearly on a less-obviously jazz-inflected approach to improvisation, this project is nevertheless an attempt to generate a set of conclusions about improvisation in relation to the assemble philosophies of immanence that acknowledgedly have the potential – albeit with further research and direct application to jazz-based improvisation – to work within a jazz context as well.

Throughout this project, we shall turn to a number of different musicians and their music to provide perspectives and illustration of the subjects under discussion, and though again, the majority of these exemplars will be drawn from what may appear to be in Derek Bailey's reading 'non-idiomatic' improvisation, or what we could otherwise call contemporary improvised music, there will also be some acknowledgement of and reference to some of the more complex musical developments in the post-1950s musical environment, such as indeterminate music of John Cage, and the free jazz of musicians such as Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, without whom we would doubtless have a very different set of musical practices and documents to be discussing.³

1.2 Points of departure

Theoretical writing about music can sometimes be seen to be making claims about music aesthetics, the practice of making music and the nature of listening to music, that are often either knowingly or unknowingly grounded in older philosophical material. For instance, the percussionist Eddie Prevost, one of the original members of the improvising ensemble AMM, who has made a significant contribution to both the distribution and critical investigation of improvised music through his independent label, Matchless Recordings, and a series of book-length examinations of his own and others' improvised

³ The term 'non-idiomatic' was Bailey's attempt to untether the 'free music' practices that he saw emerging during the 1960s and 1970s from any obvious cultural provenance, in particular, the jazz / contemporary classical music axis that Lewis identifies, instead attempting to root improvisation as an ordinary musical practice that predates any cultural codification or claims to ownership. Whilst Lewis appears to recognise the delicacy and self-awareness of Bailey's approach, it is still worth noting that Bailey's ideas are themselves borne out of a cultural context, and thus the debate continues about the extent to which individuals within a particular cultural perspective can make comments about other cultural perspectives – hence the decision to place the focus of this current project elsewhere.

music making practice, often makes reference to thinkers such as Adorno, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein in his writing. There is clearly nothing wrong with making references to such writers, given that their work continues to provide us with valuable insights and perspectives on contemporary practice. However, philosophical and theoretical enquiry continues to evolve, and thus, it would seem that, if critical perspectives on improvised music practice are to remain relevant, then they must also make some acknowledgement of more recent developments in philosophical thought. Whilst in recent years we have seen the emergence of books that have taken up the challenges laid down by two of the more prominent philosophical thinkers of the late twentieth century, namely Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari,⁴ there is still some way to go before contemporary music theory, in a sense, ‘catches up’ with certain aspects of contemporary thought. One of the objectives of this study is to therefore meet that challenge, and, as part of the process of thinking through various aspects of improvisation, this project also functions as a mapping of some of the key aspects of twentieth and twenty-first century thought that have their roots in what could be thought of as a philosophy of immanence. Paraphrasing the ‘Philosophies of Difference’ of the philosopher Francois Laruelle – who we shall encounter in chapter three – we could well frame this research project as an examination of improvised music practice in terms of ‘Philosophies of Immanence’. All of the thinkers that we engage with during this study have undertaken to explore the way in which human thought and creative practice, in fact, all of life, and even all geological and cosmological movements, interact with an Absolute-Real that is immanent to the movements and changes that we experience in what has been variously called the ‘empirical world’, ‘the world of real causes’ or the world of ‘lived experience’.

If thinking about music can help us to make music, then ‘updating’ our thoughts about music might also have some useful consequences for practice. This PhD study therefore has two central concerns. The first is to use contemporary philosophical thought as a means to expand the vocabulary for thinking about and talking about improvisation. The second is to consider how we might increase our understanding of improvisation itself, by confronting some of the emerging paradigms in contemporary thought.

Thus, in the following chapters, we shall encounter the ‘improvisation-assemblage’, the ‘subject-as-improviser’, the ‘improvisation-stance’, ‘improvisation-in-identity’, ‘music-fiction’, the ‘musician-in-improvisation’, and ‘non-improvisation’; all examples of where there is opportunity to enlarge and modifying the language that we use to discuss improvisation. Similarly, by starting to think through the process of improvising in terms of terms such as these and of the theoretical strategies that underpin them, we can come to as to why improvisation may have the potential to surprise, disrupt, challenge, recalibrate or even completely overturn our understandings of what music is doing and how it is working.

⁴ Notably Edward Campbell’s *Music After Deleuze*, Ian Buchanan and Marcel Swiboda’s edited collection *Deleuze and Music*, Nick Nesbitt and Brian Hulse’s collection *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music* and Ian Biddle & Marie Thompson’s collection *Sound, Music, Affect*.

As someone involved in musical improvisation myself, with a long-standing interest in performance and pedagogical practices relating to improvisation, philosophical theories relating to immanence have increasingly presented themselves as a means to understand and think through the act of improvising. In his review of the record *Explorations* by the improvising group Full Circle, in which I played double bass, the improvising saxophonist Paul Dunmall made an interesting comment.

The genre of music you hear on this CD is the closest you will get to democracy in Western music. No preconceived architecture, no discussing before performance. These four musicians walk on stage and sculpt music from the air. (Dunmall, 2004)

Dunmall's comments about democracy in Western music aside, the suggestion that we had made music from nothing, spoke directly to the way in which an immanent perspective allows us to offset a bounded set of conditions against the production of new thoughts, concepts and experiences, such that, although these thoughts and experiences clearly appear within those limited conditions, they do not appear to be of, or the same as, those conditions. As a result, this research has engaged with a range of philosophical positions that have, for almost half a century interrogated the way in which things may seem to emerge 'from the air', and yet have their roots firmly grounded in a set of physical conditions, practices, environments, thought processes and materials; a compelling analogue to the practice and production of improvised music.

Whilst it starts out from the position of the maker, this is not an *ad hominem* project. Contemporary thought can indeed offer valuable insights and perspectives with which to consider how as musicians we make improvised music, but it can also suggest to the listener new ways of thinking about how an improvisation might come about, and how it evolves. As such, whilst the project does not aim to generate a new set of tools for measuring and quantifying aesthetic or even musicological merit, it does however, seek to offer new positions from which a listener is able to think about what they are listening to.

Cornelius Cardew's 'Towards and Ethic of Improvisation' is a key reference point for this project, and indeed a signal point of departure, and although this thesis is not in any way designed to function as an updating of Cardew's 'ethic', it nonetheless inhabits some of the same territory at various stages; thinking through the relationships between musicians, environment, instruments (or at least musical tools), and audience, in order to further investigate how an improvisation might come about. As noted above, the key insights that arise from this study relate to the way in which recent realist and materialist philosophical discourse triangulates around notions of contingency (particularly the deep-rooted sense of non-conceptualisable contingency that we see in the work of Meillassoux, Land and Brassier), and a nuanced reading of 'superposition' (where Laruelle talks about the radical immanence of the One), and how it is that – again, with the 'non-representational' caveat firmly in our minds – improvisation can be thought of as a

'playing out', or 'performing of' such a contingency / superposition. However, improvisation neither 'shows us', nor 'sounds like' contingency; instead, we might think that it is the 'sound of' contingency, which is no easy answer either, for as we shall see – what is there that is *not* contingent? Improvisation therefore acts as a model, or a vantage point, from which to observe a set of perspectives on human thought in action.⁵

⁵ Whilst it may be the case that some, maybe many, of the conclusions reached in this study could be applied to musical practice more widely, it is not intended for this thesis to function as a universal treatise for a philosophy of musical creativity in all its wider forms. Thus, whilst the reader may observe the potential to apply some of the arguments in this thesis to songwriting, folk music, composition for instruments within a 'classical' idiom, or to music for film, television and other visual media, such a venture goes beyond the scope of what is written here, since each area would need thorough exploration and qualification.

2. Chapter summary

In the first chapter we shall look at the work of Gilles Deleuze, particularly *Difference and Repetition*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, co-written with Felix Guattari. This chapter will establish an approach to embedding improvisation within philosophical contexts, and Deleuze and Guattari will enable us to think about what might be happening when we improvise in terms of, amongst others, their ideas relating to assemblages, territories, becoming-music and the Body without Organs. Clearly Deleuze and Guattari's work has been used as a means to launch a wide range of studies into creative practices, not least because their work explicitly engages with music, art, politics, science and a number of related disciplines. Given that Deleuze and Guattari's work, both their collaborative, along with their individual writing, itself represents a now considerable and meticulously examined body of work, it may be tempting to reflect on the extent to which it can be seen as being 'contemporary', however, within the context of this project, their ideas will be used to ground not only the examination of improvisation in terms of philosophical practice, but also as a means to anchor several of the themes that we shall go on to explore in later chapters. In addition, whilst some their ideas may prove to have been superseded by more recent developments in contemporary thought, much of their work is still a valuable reference point, not least because of their interest in creating new forms of thought as a practice in itself, where philosophy becomes 'the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 2).

In chapter two, we encounter the work of Alain Badiou who established his own very distinct form of philosophical enquiry by harnessing the power of mathematical formulation. In doing so, his work represents a direct challenge to one of Deleuze's key principles, and instead of thinking in terms the production of the new as an interplay between actual and virtual aspects of what is around us in one shape or form, for Badiou, new events must 'irrupt' from outside of our current environment. We can already see a developing framework that relates to Paul Dunmall's suggestion that improvisation is a making of something out of nothing, and in this chapter, we shall also see the way in which Badiou's specific use of the term 'void', introduces the idea that in creating events, we are engaging with something that is radically different to what is already given to us in experience and thought. In referencing Badiou's *Being and Event* therefore, we come to see that the arrival of the event signals an interplay between human thought and that which is not (and by definition, cannot) be given in thought. Improvisation is thus framed as a searching process, looking for a way to open up the possibility of finding, and subsequently forcing the new into existence.⁶

In chapter three, we shall see the way in which Francois Laruelle moves on from both Deleuze and Badiou's positions, as we come into contact with his long-developed ideas relating to non-philosophy. Whilst Laruelle rejects certain of their core principles, in

⁶ As we shall see in chapter two, Badiou makes use of this particular term which is drawn from the mathematician Paul Cohen's set theory.

particular Deleuze's (and Guattari's) exploration of the plane of immanence and Badiou's adherence to the principle of the void, we can see traces of their ideas in his articulation of 'radical immanence'. In terms of Badiou, he very much holds to the non-comprehensibility of what he terms 'the One', whilst at the same time, he configures a relationship between the One and what he refers to as the world of 'lived experience' (Laruelle, 2011: 246), that resembles Deleuze's interest in the way that experience and thought are already given in this radically immanent One, rather than being necessarily separated from it. Laruelle also develops a set of strategies that will enable us to think about improvisation in terms of non-philosophy, and we shall therefore investigate the concepts of 'determination-in-the-last-instance', 'thinking according to identity', 'cloning' and 'heresy' as the means by which Laruelle puts radical immanence to work. His more recent work on photo-fiction, which includes a passing mention of the idea of 'music-fiction', will also enable us to think comprehensively about the creative nature of improvisation, in terms of what is being created and what it is that we are doing when we create something.

Chapter four involves a wider survey of thought and our focus will be on developing a broader perspective, which will enable us to understand that whilst certain areas of contemporary thought still proceed to develop with reference to philosophical immanence, there have been significant developments and departures in recent years. As we continue to expand the language we use to engage with improvisation, and thus investigate the potential to deepen our understanding of it, the chapter will present a series of philosophical models that have particular relevance to improvised music making. Quentin Meillassoux's concept of 'the great outdoors' of thought, is a demonstration of the way in which it must be possible for human thought to think beyond its own limits. Whilst Meillassoux does not necessarily provide us with a set of strategies that can be directly applied to music making, his ideas do provide substantial ground to think, as with Badiou and Laruelle, that it must be possible for human thought to conceive of something that is radically outside of our typical human experience, and thus improvisation as an activity driven by creative thinking comes to be seen as a possible site, not only for the contemplation, but also the production, of that which is beyond human thought. In a not-unrelated way, we shall see that Ray Brassier is interested in exploring how human thought can to some degree exceed its own limits, although his focus is on offsetting a human conception of time against an absolute time in order to show that human thought and experience must always be permeated by something that does not arise in human thought. Reza Negarestani takes a similar focus, and his work will enable us to draw together various aspects of chapter four, by exploring what he calls, 'insider time', or 'Incognitum Hactenus', which is a means to understand the human capacity to engage with a type of time that is beyond human thought and experience. By comparing improvisation to the formation of insider time, we shall therefore be able to conclude that, by creating new experiences and certainly new sensations of time, improvisation can be thought of as a practice that allows us to bring into being something that is beyond comprehension.

Although it is possible to see connections between certain ideas and themes that emerge in chapters three and four, this thesis is not designed to be a scholarly historiography or genealogy of philosophy. Nonetheless, it is possible to detect traces, developments and further interrogations of a range of ideas across each of the philosophical models that are presented in this study. The Speculative Realists' work, for example, does not simply draw on the work of Deleuze, Guattari and Badiou (in other words Deleuze-Guattari + Badiou ≠ Speculative Realism). However, it is possible to discern a context from which their work emerges. Ray Brassier, one of the original Speculative Realists provides this useful commentary on the provenance of the term:

The term 'speculative realism' was only ever a useful umbrella term, chosen precisely because it was vague enough to encompass a variety of fundamentally heterogeneous philosophical research programmes [...] There is no 'speculative realist' doctrine common to the four of us: the only thing that unites us is antipathy to what Quentin Meillassoux calls 'correlationism'—the doctrine, especially prevalent among 'Continental' philosophers, that humans and world cannot be conceived in isolation from one other—a 'correlationist' is any philosopher who insists that the human-world correlate is philosophy's sole legitimate concern. Anti-correlationism is by no means a negligible unifying factor—but our alternatives to correlationism are fundamentally divergent and even incompatible in several regards. (Brassier, 2009)

In terms of Laruelle and the Speculative Realists, the relationship is more complex, for whilst many of his key ideas pre-date the what has been called the 'Speculative Turn' (Bryant, Srnicek and Harman, 2011),⁷ certain aspects of his thought (for example, the application of non-philosophical principles directly to photography), have emerged in parallel to key Speculative texts such as *Nihil Unbound* and *After Finitude*. As such, although we can clearly see Ray Brassier working through and responding to Laruelle's non-philosophy in *Nihil Unbound*, and identify traces of Brassier's thought in later work by Negarestani, it is more productive to think of the range of thought that has emerged since the early 2000s as embodying a diverse set of engagements within a post-Deleuze-Badiouian context. In this regard, whilst chapters one and two of this study do establish a context that in many ways is built on and further explored in chapters three and four, there is not such a strong contextual link between chapters three and four. Instead, whilst we can still recognise themes and trajectories that run from Laruelle's work into Speculative Realist thought, overall, we are better served by seeing this as the contemporaneous production of thought, rather than as a simple precedent to Speculative Realism.

⁷ See *The Speculative Turn*, an edited collection of essays examining and critiquing the key ideas associated with Speculative Realist enquiry.

Our conclusion will turn to two recent philosophical developments in order to take up the challenge of using the consequences of this research project in a more creative context, and developing a sense of improvisation as a 'Promethean practice'. As we saw above, Brassier made it clear that for him, Speculative Realism was not a movement, and nor were the various thinkers associated with this term united in any way beyond their shared refusal to accept a philosophical perspective that placed a limit on human thought's capacity to conceive of an absolute that exists independently of our ability to think it. In the essay 'Prometheanism and its Critics', we see Brassier outlining what he calls a 'Promethean project', whose focus is directed towards understanding the way in which, as human beings, we are not only able to conceive of something that is independent from us, but we are also able to create it. In an extended discussion that lays out what he sees as the traditional objections to Prometheanism, Brassier presents its critics' insistence on maintaining a necessary distinction between what is given and what is made.

The sin of Prometheanism [...] consists in destroying the equilibrium between the made and the given - between what human beings generate through their own resources, both cognitive and practical, and the way the world is, whether characterised cosmologically, biologically, or historically. The Promethean trespass resides in making the given. (Brassier, 2014: 484)

For Brassier, the 'Promethean trespass' is our capacity to produce rational thought as an independent process, and by refusing any sanctity of the given over the made, Brassier asserts that we can make or become anything. Similarly, Negarestani's essay 'The Labor of the Inhuman', focuses on the idea that human reason is intrinsically and necessarily autonomous, and independent of the conditions of its production, and thus both writers enable us to think that improvisation, as the result of human thought, must similarly remain capable of sidestepping any sense of being pre-determined or predictable, once again suggesting that improvisation, as a practice that is formed on the inside of human thought and experience, nevertheless has the capacity to open out onto that which is beyond or outside of human thought.

To speak metaphorically, improvisation becomes a tool for digging – for digging into contemporary thought. And, all being well, philosophy will help us to talk about what we find, and feedback to teach us more about improvisation itself.

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It's All Around You: Improvisation encounters Deleuze and Guattari

In order to begin an investigation into the means by which contemporary thought can offer useful insights and new approaches to thinking about musical improvisation, in this first chapter we shall turn to the work of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst Felix Guattari in order to generate an initial set of observations about improvisation and to establish a theoretical context from which we can broaden our investigations into other areas of contemporary thought. Given that their work engages with creative practice in a number of ways, and that one of their key works, namely *A Thousand Plateaus*, both appropriates ideas from art and music in order to generate philosophical concepts, and at the same time explores creative processes, by drawing on philosophical enquiry, it is unsurprising that their ideas have been widely used by numerous creative practitioners and theorists. As such, this chapter will undertake a similar engagement with their ideas in order to add further depth to existing perspectives relating to improvised music, and to develop new insights into contemporary practices, thus providing the groundwork and the foundations upon which the remainder of the study will be built. We shall begin by establishing two contexts that will underpin the chapter, setting out an approach to thinking about improvisation itself, as well as thinking through Deleuze, and then Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of immanence in terms of the virtual-actual pairing and the plane of immanence, and as we shall see in later chapters, immanence continues to evolve in the hands of the other thinkers. Initially, Deleuze maps our engagement with an immanent Real, firstly by thinking about the way in which the actual and the virtual are two aspects of the Real, where he was careful to distinguish the 'possible' from the 'virtual' in order to clarify that when we actualise the virtual we are not engaging with a metaphysical, transcendental realm, but instead creating experience from a real world that surrounds us and infuses us. In his work with Guattari, we see the modification of this idea and the plane of immanence was a more direct means of addressing the sense in which living, thinking and making is an ongoing process of being infused by, and folding in, these immanent flows and forces.

The chapter will then proceed to work through a series of Deleuze and Guattari's key conceptual innovations, which in themselves will provide us with opportunities to re-think improvisation, and reflect on what it is that an improviser might be doing when they improvise, with the materials that they have to hand. We shall consider an improvisation as an 'assemblage', where a musician creates a 'improvisation-assemblage' using sounds, structures, rules, ideas, players, properties and materials in order to produce music, and go further than this to see a musician themselves as an assemblage; themselves becoming a part of a flow of pure intensities and potentiality. The 'body without organs' and the image of the 'becoming-musician' will also enable us to view the act of improvising as a disruption, where the 'BwO' conveys the sense in which a musician immerses themselves completely in experimentation and exploration; and the idea of 'becoming' indicates the way in which an improvisation is a loosening of our awareness of a point of departure, or a point of arrival: the creation of music as a process of movement and change, potentially in any direction. The 'refrain' will provide us with the means to

apply Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy more directly to practice, and via the three movements of the refrain which progress from the image of a child singing in the dark to comfort itself, to the establishing of home, to the leaving of that home in order to join with chaos, we will be able to consider the way in which an improvisation can be both an intuitive gesture as well as the source of its own frame of reference. In this regard, an improvisation is both an impulsive, unpremeditated burst of sound, but it also creates the conditions for response, where sounds and music have a particular meaning because they have occurred in a particular way. Deleuze and Guattari further this idea with the concept of the territory, perhaps one of their most appealing images in terms of creative practice, not least because they make a direct comparison between art and nature as creative acts where they tell us that,

[T]he brown stagemaker (*Scenopoeetes dentirostris*) lays down landmarks each morning by dropping leaves it picks from its tree, and then turning them upside down so the paler underside stands out against the dirt: inversion produces a matter of expression [...] Can this becoming, this emergence, be called Art? That would make the territory a result of art. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 315)

In this way, we can conceive of improvisation as a deterritorialisation of music and sound, wherein the normal codes for the production of music are suspended, overcome, 'turned upside down', and then repurposed, or reterritorialised: thus an improvisation, as an act of territorialisation, brings into play a new set of structures and affects; and consider the ways in which an improvisation might be connected with the production of something that is inherently new as well as how it is that an improvisation might create an impact on its listeners or audience. For a group of improvisers, a note, a sound or a sequence, becomes part of a chain of impulses that force new decisions and responses. Similarly for an audience, an improvisation can deterritorialise their understanding of music, leading to an expanded conception of music that can consist of an enhanced range of sounds built on radically new structures.

Creative endeavour has long been associated with risk-taking, and thus the chapter will conclude by thinking about the extent to which an improvisation, if it is to be a successful improvisation, does not simply risk being 'good' or 'bad', instead risks being unintelligible, thereby forcing audiences and listeners to create new ways of hearing. Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari's will enable us to think that the capacity of an improvisation to create a disruption, or in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, to 'stand on its own', is its capacity to break with conventional codes and force its listeners and audiences to create new codes and tools with which to comprehend and engage with it. In this way, we saw that what makes an improvisation 'successful' is just this capacity to go beyond conventional music coding, by risking unintelligibility and thus forcing the creation of new codes of listening, new ways of hearing.

1. Searching for sounds, searching for responses

Throughout this study, the term 'improvisation' will be used to refer to the time-based process of creating coherent musical structures, that draws on a musician's knowledge of musical rules and principles alongside their ability to make use a sound-producing device either individually or as part of a group of musicians.¹ Thus, in basic terms, an improvisation is a 'performed composition of music', a definition that is intended to respond to and make meaningful reference to a range of improvised music practices, that could include rock, jazz and the supposedly 'non-idiomatic' style that was initially identified and discussed by Derek Bailey in his landmark book, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*.²

During an improvisation a number of things can happen in order to produce sounds and structures, for example musicians may experiment with new sounds, new playing techniques, or they may employ extreme repetition in order to generate subtle, slowly evolving structures. Musicians may interact with other musicians in various ways, paying close attention to other people's ideas, or ignoring them entirely. Similarly, the physical properties of a performance space may form material for an improvisation, or in the case of musicians such as the saxophonist John Butcher and the trumpet player Peter Evans, the design and acoustic properties of the instrument itself can provide a wealth of sonic resources with which to create musical structures. A number of seminal recordings of free jazz and free improvisation exemplify sonic exploration and investigation in action: records such as Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, Evan Parker, Derek Bailey and Han Bennink's *Topography of the Lungs*, AMM's *AMM Music* and The Music Improvisation Company's self-titled debut are all classic examples of various real-time adventures in sound, where form and content are developed by musicians who are making moment-to-

¹ In the context of this thesis, the word musician is used to denote any individual who is actively engaged in the production of an improvised musical performance and makes no assumptions about an individual's instrumental fluency or technical musical knowledge. Hence, the word 'musician' is intended to indicate a creative process, whereas the word 'player' would tend to suggest that a pre-composed work is being performed.

² Improvised music has also been described as 'free improvisation' by Bailey himself, as 'free music' by the improvising guitarist and educator Joe Morris, and as 'free jazz' by the saxophonist Ornette Coleman among others. George Lewis notes that the word 'free' within free improvisation, became a symbol for 'freedom' that were aligned with the political quests for freedom such as the Paris protests of 1968. Lewis also discusses the way in which freedom, certainly for musicians such as the drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Ron Carter, both of whom played key roles in the development of improvised music during the 1960s, was either meaningless unless it was grounded in some form of structure, or a disingenuous term, since it would forever need to be arrived at through self-discipline and self-control. Lewis also references the drummer Philly Joe Jones' conviction that every musician's playing is already free, 'every time you play a solo you're free to play what you want to play. That's freedom right there' (Lewis, 2004: 154). As with the comments in the Introduction regarding the provenance of improvised music as a practice, it is clear that the word 'free' within the context of improvisation is complex: to some it is a musical statement, whilst to others it is a reflection of cultural politics; and to others still, it is a meaningless notion. Thus we shall use the term 'improvised music', Lewis' concerns about Afrological erasure notwithstanding.

moment choices about what to play. In 'Towards an Ethic of Improvisation', a manifesto statement that was, in many ways, a pivotal and genre-defining treatise for improvised music practice, the musician and composer Cornelius Cardew described the process of improvising in this way:

We are searching for sounds and for the responses that attach to them, rather than thinking them up, preparing them and producing them. The search is conducted in the medium of sound and the musician himself is at the heart of the experiment (Cardew, 1971).

Cardew has come to stand as one of the key figures in contemporary and improvised European music in the second half of the twentieth century, and his influence as a result of his role in AMM, the Scratch Orchestra as well as the composer and performer of a range of experimental and exploratory works continues to be significant. What is interesting about Cardew's statement here is that, in one sense, it has become the standard means by which to theorise improvisation: sound is the medium through which experiments in pitch, timbre, rhythm as well as melodic and harmonic combination can be carried out in order to achieve unforeseen musical results. However, there is a far subtler message here as well, connected to Cardew's sense of 'searching for responses', which suggests that an improvisation is not simply about arranging sounds in a novel way. Instead, Cardew also demonstrates his interest in creating music that does not trigger conditioned reflexes, and as a member of AMM he used improvisation as a means to subvert musical norms in order to provoke new responses for audiences and listeners. Cardew's interest in moving AMM and their audiences away from a standardised conception of music itself reflects the ideas of renowned Frankfurt School critical theorist Theodor Adorno, who claimed that,

Popular music divests the listener of his spontaneity and promotes conditioned reflexes. Not only does it not require his effort to follow its concrete stream; it actually gives him models under which anything concrete still remaining may be subsumed. (Adorno, 1990: 306)

This extract from his classic polemic against the standardisation of popular music composition, 'On Popular Music', argues that a music that simply reproduces a set of pre-ordained codes can only ever instill in audiences a set of pre-ordained responses. Whilst Adorno's work can be problematic for a variety of reasons, not least because of the assumptions he makes about listeners' ability to make discerning judgements about what they are listening to, it is clear that Cardew is interested in talking about and developing a music practice that not only creatively explores the way in which music can be produced, but also investigates the way in which audiences respond to music. Cardew's perspective will remain significant throughout this project, as it establishes a certain posture that improvising musicians can be seen to adopt in relation to their use of musical materials and their intended outcome. As an open-ended approach to creating music, an improvisation would normally come to have musical coherence by virtue of its own

structural and aesthetic details (it should work 'on its own terms'), and therefore could be of any duration and result from any number of musicians working together, using any kind of musical or sonic resource in order to create sounds.

Another key point of reference for this chapter will be a conclusion reached by the saxophonist and ethnomusicologist David Borgo who, in his introduction to the book *Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age*, states that, 'by adopting the present progressive, "improvising", I hope to highlight the fact that [...] creative musicians are working in and around established practices and codes, improvising music' (Borgo, 2005: 9). Borgo's proposal can help us to slightly modify Cardew's proposal by suggesting that the word 'improvising' not only describes the process of making a piece of music up as one goes along, but that it also alludes to a subtler, and (after Deleuze and Guattari) a more radical 'deterritorialisation' of music as an activity or a concept in itself. In this way, Borgo encourages us to think that improvising may not simply be a means to spontaneously create music, but also may well be a means of challenging an audience's (and indeed a musician's) conception of what a piece of music can be.

2. Improvisation and immanence

In one sense improvisation is about creating a set of musical sounds and structures that had not previously existed in that combination, but at the same time, we could also think of an improvisation as a process of transforming something that could potentially happen (for example the notes, sounds and musical structures that we could potentially produce) into something that is happening, in other words the notes, sounds and structures that we actually hear. A key statement from one of Deleuze's central works, *Difference and Repetition*, will enable us to start thinking about improvisation in relation to his thought, and more specifically help us to consider what this sense of production and transformation could be. Here, Deleuze warns us against confusing the virtual with the possible:

The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realisation'. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation. (Deleuze, 2004 DR: 263)

This statement is useful to us in a number of ways, as it introduces certain foundational concepts that are not only important to Deleuze and Guattari's thought, but as we shall see in the following chapters, are also the central focus of a range of contemporary thinkers. Deleuze's philosophy is based on a conception of what he refers to here as the 'real' which affirms that there is nothing that in anyway lies beyond human thought's capacity to access it, and that human experience occurs within a 'real' world. Over the next four chapters, we shall encounter various philosophical positions in respect to the real, and explore a number of perspectives on the relationship between human thought and various versions of the kind of absolute real that Deleuze is here alluding to. For our current purposes, and in simple terms, Deleuze is articulating a philosophy of immanence that is pitched against phenomenological thought that would suggest that a world exists 'for us' by virtue of the fact that we can only ever experience the world in terms of our own capacity to think or experience it. Deleuze's real is a real that exists on its own terms, and it is a real that we are part of; it does not need human activity to 'make' it real. In the above passage, we can see Deleuze referring to this idea in his assertion that there is no 'possible' (which is to say that there is nothing 'unreal') that is waiting to be 'realised', instead he uses the terms 'virtual' and 'actual' to denote what could be thought of as two aspects, or two categories of the real. By informing us that the virtual 'possesses a full reality by itself', and that the 'process [...] it undergoes is that of actualisation', Deleuze shows that the virtual, rather than being a possible state of some-thing from which that thing can emerge, can be thought of instead as a state of potentiality, rather than the precursor to something specific. Actualisation is thus the process of interacting with this virtual potentiality in order to make something or create an event, and it is this dual aspect of the real that can be useful to us in terms of thinking about improvisation as creation-transformation, since Deleuze's statement is asking us to consider what it is that we are doing when we make things like art or music. In this context, we can think of an

improvisation as a process that does not so much make possible sounds 'real', but instead is an actualisation of an immanent and virtual aspect of what is already real.

Although this appears simplistic, the difference between what is possible and what is virtual is of paramount importance not only for Deleuze, but also in relation to Cardew's idea of 'searching for responses', in that what the actualisation of the virtual allows for, unlike the realisation of the possible, is an entirely new set of outcomes and responses. Deleuze goes on to suggest that, 'the possible and the virtual are further distinguished by the fact that one refers to the form of identity in the concept, whereas the other designates a pure multiplicity in the Idea which radically excludes the identical as a prior condition' (Deleuze, 2004 DR: 263), which indicates that by describing something as 'possible', we are already making a number of assumptions about what it will be and what kind of qualities it will have. This sense of 'identity in the concept' suggests that an improvisation somehow represents the conditions of its production and that there is a character or identity that is pre-existent in the possibility of an improvisation that is simply borne out by its performance. Another way of putting this is to say that on the one hand, whilst something that is made from what was possible is 'like' what was possible, on the other hand the actual is not 'like' the virtual, and thus an improvisation, as an actualisation of the virtual, is in no way a 'representation' of the virtual.³ Not only does the use of the virtual and the actual, allow us to think about creativity as a non-linear and exponential process, in that the outcome of engaging with the virtual cannot be expected (this is 'radically excluded'), but it also enables us to affirm Cardew's sense that improvisation really is a search for responses, in that improvised outcomes do not simply re-engage familiar reactions. Deleuze also introduces another term, 'differentiation', to provide a further indication as to how the actual comes to be distinguished from the virtual, stating that it 'expresses the actualisation of this virtual and the constitution of solutions (by local integrations)' (Deleuze, 2004 DR: 261). If differentiation marks and describes the process of transition from the virtual to the actual, then we can think in more detail about how this might map onto the process of improvising. For example, we can think about the moment-to-moment creation of music from which an improvisation is comprised as being a series of decisions that 'constitute solutions' to the basic improviser's question 'what sound do I make next?' In the same way, we could see a completed piece, whether it is two minutes or forty minutes long, as being the constitution of a solution, to the question 'how do I make a coherent piece of music?' In these contexts, we could then view Deleuze's 'local integrations' in a number of ways, such as a musician's engagement with the physical properties of their instrument or the performance space, their application of their skill and knowledge of music, their interaction with other musicians involved in the performance, or their response to audience's attention. As such, although an improvisation may well constitute 'a solution by local integrations', which would suggest that all of the possible contents for an improvisation are already in existence, the

³ A number of studies have explored the concept of non-representation in creative practice, not least Simon O'Sullivan's *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* and Nigel Thrift's *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, both of which, whilst not explicitly referenced, form part of the backdrop to this study.

outcome of an improvisation, if it really is a differentiating process in the Deleuzian sense, can still provoke unexpected responses.

Deleuze's work with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What Is Philosophy?* furthers the potential to explore music and improvisation with in terms of immanence, and they use the concept of the 'plane of immanence' to convey a sense in which human thought is not so much preconditioned or foreshadowed by the virtual, but instead we can imagine that the world that we experience is 'infused' by populations of intensities that make up this plane.

Here, there are no longer any forms or developments of forms [...] There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 266)

This description suggests not only the sense of potential that we encountered as a virtual real, but it broadens out what immanence might mean, not by making any concessions to what the plane might be immanent to, but thinking in terms of 'relations of movement', 'unformed elements', and molecules and particles, which convey an image of an ebb and flow, of cohesion and dissipation, both at the level of the individual (in terms of an individual being a composite of relations of movement), and at the level of activity and movement itself (where an improvisation in process could be understood to be similarly comprised of movements and rests between relatively unformed elements). Also worth noting at this stage, is that Deleuze and Guattari's vision for the plane of immanence as an amorphous non-space that is populated by movements, relations and components that are in a constant state of forming and deforming, in some way reflects Francois Laruelle's interest in the quantum superpositioning of radical immanence that we shall encounter in chapter four. Whilst as we shall see, Laruelle takes radical immanence in a slightly different direction, the comparison is worthy of consideration, as both articulations of immanence enable us to think about the way in which an improviser may to a certain extent engage or interact with a set of forces that are not of human origin, but can nevertheless impact on and give rise to human creative processes.

We can use the material from *A Thousand Plateaus* to construct a set of proposals for thinking about improvising in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's version of immanence, and it is worth quoting them at length as they begin to put some kind of framework around the plane of immanence, and expand its potential for re-use and appropriation:

The tree is given in the seed, but as a function of a plan(e) that is not given. The same applies to music. The development or organisational principle does not appear in itself, in a direct relation with that which develops or is organised: There is a transcendent compositional principle that is not of the nature of sound, that is not 'audible' by itself or for itself. This opens the way for all possible

interpretations. The plan(e) can always be described, but as a part aside, as ungiven in that to which it gives rise... Life plan(e), music plan(e), writing plan(e), it's all the same: a plan(e) that cannot be given as such, that can only be inferred from the forms it develops and the subjects it forms, since it is for these forms and these subjects. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 266)

We are being presented with a plane that is both immanent to actualised entities, and yet at the same time can only be inferred from the existence of the same entities. It does not pre-suppose the form or content of beings, rather it functions as a set of conditions which allows for the production of new things. If we think about sound in this context, then whilst the plane of immanence does not 'cause' sound or music to happen, and neither is sound 'produced from' this plane, nevertheless, if we hear a sound, then Deleuze and Guattari are suggesting that this is because the plane is the context that enables sound to be created. In many ways, it is more productive to think that the plane of immanence surrounds us at all times and that it is an aspect of the things that we experience all the time. Whilst we cannot see or hear the plane, it is nevertheless inherent in what is around us, and in this sense, we can think of it as a means to convey a moment that could lead to a song being produced, or an aspect of unformed sound, that is open-ended and without signification. As a development from the virtual-actual paradigm, there is clearly a focusing taking place, in that Deleuze and Guattari are now beginning to think more particularly about creative contexts (life, writing, music) and the way in which conditions feed into the production of new forms. However, Deleuze's earlier principle of non-identity in the concept is still very much in play here, and the suggestion that there are conditions of production does not mean that new things must exist and will have particular features (for example, a seed will not necessarily grow into a tree), but that the existence of conditions can be inferred retrospectively. Having established an immanent framework within which to discuss improvisation, we can now proceed to add more detail to our investigation.

In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari further elaborate the notion of the plane of immanence with particular reference to art and music, with its companion concept, the plane of composition, a 'world before man yet produced by man' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 187). Clearly, Deleuze is theorising immanence in a number of different ways, both in his own work and in collaboration with Guattari, but what the various concepts have in common is that they simultaneously map out an empirical ontology (in which there is no inaccessible world or reality that is different to the reality that we can and do encounter in our everyday lives), whilst at the same time theorising a movement between two states of existing in these 'real' contexts. Deleuze and Guattari describe this movement as 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 233), which signifies that the movement between two states, such as 'becoming-animal' or 'becoming-musician', involves something of a loss of identity, such that an individual is no longer wholly themselves, but nor are they what they appear to be turning into (an animal or a musician, for instance). Instead this third, becoming identity emerges. However, becoming, as might be expected, is a complex idea, for whilst becoming is itself a recognisable state, it is also defined by the

fact that it is perpetually unfixed, it is in a permanent state of becoming not itself. In a sense, becoming is a modification of Deleuze's earlier concept of actualisation, since it does convey a similar sense of transition, although the later term is designed to show impermanence and transition are permanent conditions.

As Deleuze and Guattari's model evolves, they also develop the concept the 'plane of composition' in order to think more particularly about creative practice.

On this plane of composition, as on 'an abstract vectorial space,' geometrical figures are laid out [...] which are no more than cosmic forces capable of merging, being transformed, confronting each other, and alternating. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 187)

Although Deleuze and Guattari talk of the plane of composition as being populated by cosmic forces, it is important to remember that in terms of thinking about improvisation, every musical idea and component become part of this plane. This is the 'world before man yet produced by man' (another reference to the concept of becoming that is a prominent feature of their later work), which, for an improviser, must come before any action takes place, and yet is populated by the results of previous improvisations and musical-sonic occurrences. Thus the 'abstract vectorial space' consists of 'relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements', which for a musician could be thought of as a set of conditions from which sounds and structures, can emerge that will form the basis of their improvising.

The musician's action consists in deframing, in finding the opening, taking up the plane of composition once more [...] to plot a transversal, irreducible to both the harmonic vertical and melodic horizontal, that involves sonorous blocs of variable individuation but that also opens them up or splits them in a space-time that determines their density and their course over the plane. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 191)

This leaves us with an image of improvising musicians 'deframing' the materials that will constitute music: sounds, structures, techniques, physical environments, instruments and so on, a process which reflects the process of making something using immanent materials. In this way, we uncover a resonance with Borgo's claims about 'improvising' music: the double process of both deframing a set of immanent elements, or even materials, and at the same time creating music. As we shall see later, this process of deframing, or what Deleuze and Guattari also refer to as 'deterritorialisation', in itself has a number of components as does the act of creation, or territorialisation.

3. Re-thinking improvisation

3.1 Bodies, eggs and improvisation

For an improviser, one of the most compelling images in *A Thousand Plateaus* appears in the 'How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?' plateau, when Deleuze and Guattari work through their interpretation of a masochist's search for 'intensities of pain [and] pain waves' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 152). The body without organs (also written 'BwO'),⁴ is a concept that Deleuze and Guattari use to convey a process of shutting-down, or closing-off of the world that a masochist triggers in order to almost 'switch off' a normal set of sensations and responses, and instead open themselves up to a different kind of experience, more akin to the formlessness of the plane of immanence. After instructing us to 'find your body without organs [...] find out how to make it' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 151), Deleuze and Guattari present us with the masochist's own BwO:

What is certain is that the masochist has made himself a BwO under such conditions that the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, pain waves. It is false to say that the masochist is looking for pain but just as false to say that he is looking for pleasure in a particularly suspensive or roundabout way. The masochist is looking for a type of BwO that only pain can fill, or travel over, due to the very conditions under which that BwO was constituted. Pains are populations, packs. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 152)

With their contention that the masochist is using pain as a means to attain a state that goes beyond a normal set of conditioned responses, and instead reaching out for a more immanent and unfixed experience that is populated by intensities, packs and populations, Deleuze and Guattari enable us to imagine what an engagement with the plane of immanence might feel like. As we saw earlier, the plane of immanence in *A Thousand Plateaus* is not a fixed space, and neither is there a coupling between an actual and a virtual in the way that is presented in *Difference and Repetition*. Instead, the plane of immanence comes across as an aspect of what is presented to us in experience, but without a sense of the signified, represented meaning that we would encounter in normal experience, where we might be tempted to connect a sensation to a particular meaning. The plane of immanence and the intensive state of the BwO work to convey the sense that something more amorphous and undetermined is happening: sensations are happening, but we don't know what they are or what they mean. This is a critical point, because it tells us that an opening-out onto the plane of immanence is not the direct result of extreme pain, but instead, for a masochist, the sensation of extreme pain may be a means to trigger the BwO, a state of pure intensity. As such, there may a variety of ways to create a body without organs, to allow oneself to be 'occupied, populated only by intensities' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 153); and as Deleuze and Guattari introduce the

⁴ Throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the Body without organs as the 'BwO'

notion of the masochist making use of some sort of device or prop make a BwO, we can come to see that an improvisation might be a similar opening-out into a state of intensity. 'At night,' the masochist tells us, 'put on the bridle and attach my hands more tightly, either to the bit with the chain, or to the big belt' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 155). Where a masochist might make use of a belt, bridle or bit in order to begin the processes of shutting-out the world, so too could we suggest that a musician picks up an instrument in order to turn themselves into a sound making machine. In the same way that a bridle binds the hands in order to create a BwO, so too might the strings of a guitar or the mouthpiece of a trumpet change the way that we sense and make things.⁵ Whereas a bridle is used to suspend a normal state of being in order to '[bring] forth a plane of consistency' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 155), an instrument similarly takes us out of a normal state of being and makes us into a sound producer, and where intense pain in the masochist's hands may propagate populations of intensities, so too might the focusing of sensation onto the lips, onto the tips of fingers. In the same way, by shutting down a normal process of communication and instead thinking in terms of non-representational sound, a musician also creates a body without organs. Again, this is not to say that creating a body without organs is a literal instruction, instead it is a statement designed to communicate the non-representational, non-signifying state of the BwO. A BwO is created when the lips or the fingers or the hands or indeed the voice stop working in the way that lips, fingers, hands and voices normally work: when a sensation on our lips ceases to be what we expect it to be, and when the familiar is no longer recognised by our fingers, then we have begun to open ourselves out onto a plane of immanence. Thus, when we are presented with the image of 'the eyes, anus, urethra, breasts, and nose [being] sewn shut' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 150), we can further imagine the way in which such a closure or blocking of the physical entrance points of the body, a kind of 'shutting off' of the body's normal functions that enables it to enter an absolute state of intensity, conveys as much of a sense of a body whose organs no longer function in the way that we understand, as it does of a body whose organs are no longer there: the eyes and anus have been sewn shut, and have not been removed, thus they no longer work in a way that we would expect.

The masochist is therefore a visceral allusion to the way in which musicians, particularly improvising musicians, enter into a heightened state of awareness and concentration whilst playing; and their focus is turned towards the moment-to-moment minutiae of musical development, using their instrument in the same way that the bit between the teeth can bring forth an intensive state. This sense of 'sewing shut' an improvisation very much reflects the importance of listening whilst improvising, whereby musicians become 'sewn into' the world of the improvisation, where everything becomes directly relevant to the music that is being produced; nothing else is relevant and is therefore shut out. By listening to what is around them in their environment, by listening to the sounds that they

⁵ It is worth noting that guitar strings create callouses on our fingers, and that using a trumpet mouthpiece can crack our lips. In this sense, the production of sound could be seen as an albeit less severe version of creating damage in order to produce intensive sensation that Deleuze and Guattari recognise in the masochist.

and their fellow musicians are creating, and by listening to the gestalt musical form that is developing around them, the musicians and all of these elements become part of the world of the improvisation, and to extend the sewing analogy, this becomes the 'material' of the improvisation. Sewing shut is thus a switching off of anything that is not relevant to the improvisation, although knowing what to focus on and what to switch off is clearly central to the success of any improvisation.

Elsewhere in the plateau, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that by finding, creating and becoming a BwO we can become, 'the intense egg defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinematic movements' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 153). It is worth noting here that Deleuze and Guattari's use of the egg as an image of intensive immanence grows out of Deleuze's earlier work in *Difference and Repetition*, where he states that, 'the world is an egg [...] We think that difference of intensity, as this is implicated in the egg, expresses first the differential relations or virtual matter to be organised' (Deleuze, 2004 DR: 313). What is interesting here is the way in which Deleuze and Guattari place the virtual, and the process of engaging with the virtual, into a physical context; as an egg that is composed of a myriad of potential conditions from which life develops. Following on from this, we could well think of an improvisation in such an egg-like way, wherein the intensities within an improvisation, as a set of unformed trajectories and conditions that are given form through a series of local integrations such as those we described earlier, in other words, a musician's skill and knowledge, the physical properties of the instruments themselves, and the complex interrelation that occurs between musicians when they set about producing sounds and responding to each-others' musical gestures.

In using Williams Burroughs' image of a heroin addict to further illustrate the body without organs, Deleuze and Guattari also give us another way to picture an improvising musician, and their relationship with a musical instrument and musical processes. Where the image of the masochist having their hands bound with a bridle enabled us to think about reaching a state of pure intensity, now it is an addict injecting junk that allows us to conceive of an individual in a purely intensive state. Burroughs' junky, who 'wants The Cold like he wants His junk - NOT OUTSIDE where it does him no good but INSIDE so he can sit around with a spine like a frozen hydraulic jack [...] his metabolism approaching Absolute ZERO' (Burroughs, 1993: 13), to a certain extent brings to mind a musician, using their instrument to draw their environment into the improvisation, such that everything that is happening around them must exist in terms of the improvisation. If we combine Deleuze and Guattari's sense of zero intensity that characterises 'the egg [as] the milieu of pure intensity [...] zero intensity as principle of production (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 164) with the idea of a junky injecting heroin in order to reach an absolute zero point, then we can imagine that an improvising musician is submerged in a not dissimilar process. By using a guitar, or a flute, or even a set of drums as a 'needle' that can 'inject' a focused awareness of their sonic surroundings into themselves, in the same way that a lightning conductor grounds an electrical current, the 'addict-musician' is

released into a state of pure intensity, where music can be created from a state of total immersion in the process of listening and playing.

Having started the process of thinking about this virtual realm of intensities in terms of musical concepts, we are now able to speculatively map out how the improviser can interact with these unformed substances. Borgo's sense of improvising music again becomes useful in this regard, since his perspective also implies that the improviser suspends a previous sense of music in order to make something new. As with the idea of 'sewing shut', this is not to say that music and sound disappear, instead, via the process of improvising, they cease to mean what they previously meant, and a musician, by suspending a set of normal conditions, thus enters into an egg-like state of differential relations of pure intensity. In his discussion of the improvising pianist Paul Bley, Arrigio Cappelletti discusses the way in which Bley's playing shifted when he began to use electric piano and synthesisers:

[Bley's] effort was to create music appropriate to new instruments, and not just adapt the music he had made before to the new context. Bley's curiosity was not purely 'technological'; it had to do with the transformation of the musical language [...] Paul Bley's involvement with electronics ended, but left a strong impression on his pianism in trying to bring the electronic and the acoustic piano sound closer together (longer held notes, abundant use of harmonics thanks to skillful use of the pedal and chords, compression and expansion of time). (Cappelletti, 2010: 67-68)

It is an arresting thought that a musician, through their interaction with a musical instrument in some way becomes a new kind of body, one that is defined by 'dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation'. In this context, we can think of Paul Bley's encounter with a new type of instrument, his development of a new approach to playing, and his willingness to let a synthesiser shape his musical choices and reorient his future sensibility, whilst not an exact rendering of the BwO in terms of its allusions to 'drug users, masochists, schizophrenics, lovers', as a reflection nonetheless of Deleuze and Guattari's idea. The synthesiser took Bley outside of his normal frame of reference, forcing him to invent a new style of playing that was not based on, and did not represent, his previous approach to playing the piano. Instead, because he was not able to call on, or refer to sounds and techniques that were familiar, his playing was temporarily set adrift and a new type of music emerged, from a position of pure intensity.

3.2 Becoming and forgetting

Along with the body without organs, 'becoming' is another of the conceptual tools that Deleuze and Guattari assemble in *A Thousand Plateaus* to theorise the way in which a loss of form, or a blurring of identity marks an intersection with the plane of immanence. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze borrows the term from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*,

to communicate the sense in which becoming is a process of moving away from a starting point and towards an end point that evades easy identification.

When I say 'Alice becomes larger', I mean that she becomes larger than she was. By the same token, however, she becomes smaller than she is now. Certainly, she is not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. [...] It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once. Alice does not grow without shrinking and vice versa. (Deleuze, 2004 LS: 3)

Deleuze's original idea is to use becoming to suggest a process of transformation that involves a similar kind of deforming and loss of structural coherence that we encountered in the image of 'sewing shut'. By simultaneously becoming larger than she was and smaller than she will be, Alice loses any fixed characteristics and indeed as Deleuze says, she cannot even be observed in the present. Hence, all that we can say about Alice as she grows is that she is in an 'in-between' state, no longer defined by a set of recognisable features, instead she simply is a movement or a trajectory. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari extend this sense of movement between states to think about how creative practice can embody transition and change, stating that 'the painter and the musician do not imitate the animal, they become-animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed [...] becoming is never imitating' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 305). Here, Deleuze and Guattari use 'becoming' to signify that a creative act is non-representational, it does not exist in order to convey a sense of something else, and it can only convey a sense of itself. In this way, were a painting or a piece of music to use paint or sound in order to represent an animal, for Deleuze and Guattari, this would be giving form or giving voice to a 'becoming-animal', and thus a painting or a piece of music, as a reaching towards an animal, is forever in a state of becoming, since it will never arrive. To help us think about becoming in terms of improvised music, and indeed to conceive of improvisation itself as something of a 'becoming-music', we shall now consider a set of musicians' perspectives on what music is and how it is made, which will enable us to generate a conception of improvisation as process of movement and change.

In contending that sound already is music, and that it does not need to be transformed 'into' music by humans, the composer John Cage tells us that sound does need to become anything, it is already a complete music, saying 'in this new music nothing takes place but sounds [...] new music: new listening [...] just an attention to the activity of sounds' (Cage, 1987: 8-10). In his early work, Cage rejected improvisation, particularly when it was likened to his own indeterminate music, and in this spirit, we can therefore take this passage as a challenge to improvisation, as it suggests that instead of being a means to create music, improvisation would simply be a re-arrangement of an already existing music. Cage therefore offers us a way of seeing music as something that is pre-human, and self-defining, such that sound already is music, because it is already doing

what we understand music to be doing, in other words, sound already exists in observable structures, it creates contexts for listening as well as responses in those who hear it. This idea is also reflected in the musician and sound ecologist R. Murray Schafer's reading of Ancient Greek myths relating to the origins of music, where he suggests that music exists in two aspects, the 'Dionysian' and the 'Apollonian'. In the former, 'music arises as subjective emotion'; whereas in the latter, 'it arises with the discovery of sonic properties in the materials of the universe' (Schafer, 1994: 6), which, if we push the point further, would indicate that a human, Dionysian music is only ever an expression that takes an already existing, Apollonian music as its raw material (since even the human voice takes shape as a result of the interacting physical properties of our vocal folds, our breathing, and our mouths acting as resonant chambers). Although Cage's and Schafer's ideas challenge us to think carefully about what music is and where it comes from, their work demonstrates that music always exists in a double aspect, as sound and as non-human phenomenon in its own right, as well as something that humans shape and give form to. In this sense, we might think that an improviser is less a creator of music in a traditional sense, making music out of unformed, unorganised sound, and more a becoming-musician; engaging with a music that is already there in order to make a 'becoming-music'. This is not to detract from the creative and compositional aspects of improvisation, on the contrary, by framing sound as a whole music in itself, it simply provides a broader context within which to think about the production of music, and as a result, instead of simply hearing animal-like sounds and rhythms as becoming-animal, and becoming-music, in the way that Deleuze and Guattari suggest, Cage's ideas enable us to think that any creative act that produces music is a becoming. The act of making music can thus be seen as the creation of a music that is both different to what it was (the music in-itself that Cage alludes to) and to what it will become once the musicians have finished playing and the improvisation is complete, since it is only at this point that all of the movements and changes within and improvisation can come together to be seen as part of a coherent whole.

Having established a way of understanding the act of making music in the context of becoming, the improvising saxophonist Evan Parker can help us to develop a sense of improvisation as a becoming-music in itself. In his description of his influences and musical reference points Parker tells us that,

In the case of Albert it was to do with his access to the altissimo register, control of the overtones, in the case of Pharaoh, it was to do with his articulation, a certain kind of double and triple tonguing. And in Tchicai's case, to do with his way of floating over what was already a non-metric pulse, on those New York Art Quartet records...I thought I could achieve...not exactly a synthesis, but I could work my way through the gaps that were left between what those people were doing.
(Parker, in Borgo, 2005: 37)

By making use of what he sees as gaps between his predecessors' styles and techniques in order to develop his own approach to improvising, we can think of Parker as reaching

towards their playing, in the same way that Cage and Schafer enable us to suggest that composition can be a reaching towards a music that is already there. In this context, we could think of Parker as a 'becoming-musician', and in the same way that a piece of music that harnesses or makes use of animal sounds and rhythms is a becoming-animal, then Parker's improvisations can be thought of as a 'becoming-Pharoah Sanders-John Tchicai-New York Art Quartet'. If we turn again to the body without organs, then we can connect this sense of becoming to the intensity of BwO, and in the same way that this becoming-Pharoah Sanders-John Tchicai-New York Art Quartet, sets Parker adrift in between himself and his adaptations of these other players' techniques and innovations, then a BwO that is formed during improvisation by the musical interlocking (or binding) of Parker-Sanders-Tchicai-NYAQ-improvisation, can provide us with a means to think of improvisation as an unfixing process that takes in a musician's relationship not only with their own technique and historical and harmonic knowledge, but also their relationship to music and improvisation as fixed forms and contexts. This is important, as what is happening during an improvisation must fully unfix and become-music and become-improvisation as well. In his discussion of sonic perception, Steve Goodman makes use of the term 'unsound' to describe sounds that are present, but beyond the scope of human hearing (Goodman, 2010: 183-4). Although Goodman is focusing on a physically already-present phenomenon, we can re-route this term to formulate an image of what Evan Parker might be making use of when he refers to 'the gaps' that are left in between the sounds and techniques performed and developed by his saxophonist predecessors. As virtual intensities that are directly related to the composition and performance of music, the unsound works as a way of describing the becoming-sound and becoming-music that sits in Parker's 'gaps'. In effect, the unsound works to give a more directly musical detail to the contents of the plane of composition; in other words, we could say that Parker is making use of the unsound in order to create music.

For a musician, one of the most appealing aspects of *A Thousand Plateaus* is the way in which Deleuze and Guattari take repeated inspiration from other musicians in order to either frame their ideas or inspire new lines of thought. Taking the work of Boulez, Schumann, Mozart and Berg amongst others as points of reference, they posit music as a 'multilinear' system (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 297), where 'everything happens at once'.⁶ They contrast this to a 'punctual' system, wherein progression and development is anchored between two fixed points: they suggest that these points exist on an x-y axis in order to illustrate the way in which the punctual system is fundamentally constrained in its

⁶ It is important to note that whilst Deleuze and Guattari's work can be extremely useful in terms of providing possible enlarged perspectives for music and improvisation, their discussion of music itself can at times be overly narrow in its focus. For example, when 'Pierre Boulez as musical historian' is used to frame their notion of becoming-music, their use of the melodic-harmonic musical axis is clearly insufficient as a set of variables with which to discuss improvisation or indeed music in general. This suggests that their positioning of music within a particular set of vectors either deliberately or otherwise misses Varese's comprehensive redefinition of music as 'organised sound'. Varese described himself 'not a [as] musician, but "a worker in rhythms, frequencies and intensities"' (Varese, 2004: 20), which clearly problematises a simplistic reduction of music to a relationship between melody and harmony. As such, we must keep in mind that Deleuze and Guattari's musical references may at times require further exploration.

movement and terms of reference. In framing music as a multilinear system, it progresses via a self-sustained, self-defining trajectory; and instead of operating between two already established points (punctual), music 'propels itself by its own non-localisable middle (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 297). This non-localisable middle is no longer attached to any external points of reference, rather it is a way of describing a state of potentiality, again 'where everything happens at once', similar to the way in which the virtual is pure difference, pure multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari go on to say that, 'the sound block is the intermezzo. It is a body without organs, an antimemory pervading musical organisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 297). This conception of multilinear music therefore describes a system, as with becoming-music and the body without organs, that is perpetually in a state of flux between fixed and unfixed definitions and reference points, in which the sound block is itself an unfixed set of potentials that in a similar way to the immanent materials that we discussed earlier, destabilise and deframe an otherwise linear trajectory. Sounds, structures, patterns, techniques and so on, all become freed from a fixed and punctual movement, where outcomes and response can be anticipated and instead have potential to not be music. Again, we have arrived at the plane of composition, even further at the plane of immanence, populated, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'only by intensities' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 153).

The notion of the intermezzo provides a further definition of the kind of un-anchoring that can occur in order to achieve music, both in terms of creating a piece of music from available sounds and concepts as well as creating a broader set of conditions that enable us to apprehend something as music in itself. In a sense, this is the most fundamental aspect of any experimentation, in that it not only produces new musical forms for an audience to consider, but it also enlarges our view of what music can be. Becoming is then to be seen as a radical departure from a fixed point; and more than this, becoming is a deliberate forgetting of the point of origin: a journey with no destination or departure, again, a system beyond fixed and localised points, which conveys a contingency within music, where a multilinear music is not fixed, but instead has both every possible reference point and none at the same time.

Deleuze and Guattari talk about memory in this context, and in fact memory plays an important role throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the BwO plateau, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we, 'substitute forgetting for anamnesis, experimentation for interpretation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 151), and in doing so, emphasise the need once more to disregard familiar habits and fixed reference points, and in fact develop a distrust for things that purport to be fixed, unalterable references. In the Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible plateau, Deleuze and Guattari also tell us that, 'becoming is an antimemory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 294), which reflects a number of the themes that we now have in play; the sense that experimentation is about forgetting pre-given rules and concepts, such that making and improvising could be a letting-go of previously held conceptions about materials and forms, and that even as an audience it is important to be open new experiences that create new and unexpected responses. Again, there is a stronger message here that is about

determinedly establishing that becoming and by association, making a body without organs, which are both an opening-out onto the plane of immanence, does not come about by turning to what is familiar and by relying on habit. This is obviously a fairly strong challenge to improvising musicians, who will often rely on a set of techniques, knowledges and insights in order to launch and support their creative play. In *Aesthetics and Music*, Andy Hamilton highlights the comments that the saxophonists Lee Konitz and Ornette Coleman make about learning and subsequently forgetting musical rules (Hamilton, 2007: 206-7). This idea will be familiar to many musicians, but what makes Hamilton's point so compelling in the light of the idea of becoming as an antimemory, is that this might not necessarily mean forgetting in the sense of abandoning, but rather a forgetting in the sense of no longer needing to maintain awareness of a set of rules. In this sense, we could liken improvising to breathing, or writing with a pen: we breathe regularly by forgetting to breathe; we focus on what we are writing about by forgetting that we are holding a pen. The same could therefore be said about improvising, it is something that we do, without thinking that we are doing it.

Evan Parker's ideas about his practice also reflect a sense of antimemory in action, in that, whilst he has clearly synthesised a set of techniques as well as musical and sonic ideas from his forbears, we cannot simply say that this is what his own style and approach are based on. Although he adapts and makes use of his predecessors' techniques, he must also forget about the boundaries and expectations of the musical form of improvisation. The forgetting of the antimemory is also about an over-proliferation of intensities. This is improvisation as a multilinear system, which is not simply a searching for sounds, but is also a searching for intensities, for opportunities, openings and suggestions for what kind of music could be made. In a practice such as free improvisation, where anything is possible given the creative constraints of the performance (such as the physical properties of a saxophone, a musician's technical skill and musical knowledge), then we could say that the improviser must, lose their normal focus and almost 'hear double', hearing new combinations and new versions of sounds, in order to make use of all of the potentials of music in order to make music. It is not that 'virtual' music is made into 'actual' music, rather, that all the components of music are 'sewn shut' or disrupted by improvising into a zero intensity-virtual before new music can be created. Parker therefore allows us to reframe Deleuze and Guattari's ideas in terms of practice, and to understand that the challenge of improvisation is to be aware of virtual intensities, to understand their specific potentials and yet be prepared and able to both forget them and exceed their existing limits.

An improvisation is therefore an interaction with the plane of immanence, where the production of a music, albeit a potentially surprising or disconcerting version of music, is the actualisation of a virtual immanence. We might now think of this virtual immanence as an unsound, going further than Cage and Schafer's thoughts about the inherently musical properties of sound. Instead, improvisation, as a radical and destabilising force, unfixes any prior sense of what music and musical materials may be, therefore fully disengaging with fixed outcomes and pre-given structures and contexts. In this way, 'becoming' allows

us to see that any established practices, contexts and definitions, as well as prior performances and sounds themselves all aspects of a becoming-music: they are the junky's and the masochist's intensities, and have no characteristics beyond pure intensity and no pre-ordained outcome. As David Borgo suggests, the act of 'improvising' music literally improvises music: it improvises our conception of what music is. This is to say that whilst improvisation is recognisably a means to compose music, we can also begin to see that it is also a breaking down of what music is, or at least what music might have been in terms of it just being sound; which leads to the possibility that improvisation might not only be a means to make music, but more importantly, a means to break with our expectations of what music can be. Therefore, improvising becomes more than just a process of combining and recombining sounds in order create a piece of music, but it is also an act of interference: disrupting our sense of what music can do, and redefining the framework of what music is. This gives us a stronger impression of what improvisation as becoming-music can be, such that an improvisation is an exponential and contingent process that might not necessarily result in a music that is recognisable according to pre-established categories. If music is both a non-human phenomenon as well as a human construction, then a becoming-music is somewhere in between the two and yet it is wholly cut off from both: it is only of itself. Improvisation can thus be seen as a process that brings forth music but at the same time risks unintelligibility: bringing forth a music that is not-music. Although this last point in itself runs the risk of over-inflating improvisation's capacity to generate radical outcomes, nevertheless, this is one of the key messages that we can take from Deleuze and Guattari's conception of becoming: becoming is not necessarily becoming anything, is simply a threshold state, where music does not necessarily sound 'like' music.

3.3 Territories and refrains

One of Deleuze and Guattari's most powerful images, the 'Refrain', can help us to think about how a process of experimenting with the materials that we find at hand (a musical instrument, our own knowledge of music) and then establishing new relations between these materials and our surroundings (other musicians, an audience) can occur. Deleuze and Guattari outline three aspects of the refrain, the first opening with the image of 'a child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 311). The refrain is described as a force or a movement that can be thought of as 'a prism, a crystal of space-time [which] acts upon that which surrounds it, sound or light, extracting from it various vibrations, or decompositions, projections, or transformations' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 348). The refrain is a means of picturing or describing the process of giving shape, definition and qualities to aspects of our environment. Although our current focus is on music and improvisation, Deleuze and Guattari use a range of animal behaviours as examples to illustrate the movement of the refrain, although they do make repeated reference to music throughout the refrain plateau, which gives us a broad perspective to discuss improvisation in terms of the refrain itself. The image of a child singing in the dark is a particularly appropriate one for the improviser, as it strongly suggests the process of experimentation and sense of

seeking with no fixed reference point or outcome that we have so far described in this chapter. If the first aspect of the refrain is an impulsive gesture, an instinctive cry in the dark with no pre-ordained outcome, then the second is a move towards generating order: 'Now we are at home. But home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organise a limited space' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 311).

Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that the three aspects, or movements of the refrain are not 'successive moments in an evolution [but instead are] aspects of a single thing' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 312), which is to say that the way that the movements can occur simultaneously. A song in the dark is a song with no fixed position and no assumed outcome, but at the same time it establishes a means of communication, and a means of apprehension: we can hear a song, and we can sing back. This is a familiar part of improvising, in that one musician will create a musical gesture, which is not only a statement in itself, but it is also a question: what kind of response can another musician make? In the final movement of the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari make reference to improvisation itself, thereby further emphasising, due to the non-sequential nature of the refrain, that improvisation is the heart of this process.

Finally, one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself [...] This time, it is in order to join with the forces of the future, cosmic forces. One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 311)

This sense of using the home we have constructed for ourselves as a base from which to engage with the outside world, and taking a risk, is both an obvious parallel with musical improvisation (it is literally an improvisation with the materials that we have in order to make connections with others), and at the same time it talks about a larger context for what an improvisation is doing. If the first aspect is about impulse and intuition, and the second aspect is about generating consistency, then the third aspect of the refrain describes the way that the things that we make are always in motion, in a process of connecting with their surroundings, being transformed and becoming something else. As an image of constant movement, the refrain is another way of speaking about finding ourselves always in the middle of something, whether that is a milieu, a multilinear system or the process of becoming. The three aspects of the refrain present a compelling image about what a creative process might be, but when Deleuze and Guattari claim that, 'the refrain itself is the content of music' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 300), they also enable us to think about how it is that we are able create something that is recognisably new or original.

We are not at all saying that the refrain is the origin of music, or that music begins with it. It is not really known when music begins. The refrain is rather a means of preventing music, warding it off, or forgoing it. But music exists because the refrain exists also, because music takes up the refrain, lays hold of it as a content to take it somewhere else. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 300)

As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the origins of music itself remain open to debate, given that the history of music goes further back in time than our ability to say anything definite about its evolution and early development. What is useful to us in this passage are the links we can make between the movement of the refrain and the ongoing development and use of music, since the process of making uncontextualised statements (singing in the dark) that then create a set of aesthetic qualities (the home that did not exist) that can be used creatively (the venturing from home), is an inherent feature of improvisation as an attempt, not just to spontaneously create music, but at the same time to establish the terms on which that music is apprehended. In this regard, it is Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the 'territory' that will provide us with one of the most useful tools for thinking about creativity and improvisation.

The T factor, the territorialising factor, must be sought [...] precisely in the becoming-expressive of rhythm or melody, in other words, in the emergence or proper qualities (colour, odour, sound, silhouette...) [...] Can this becoming, this emergence, be called Art? That would make the territory a result of art. The artist: the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 316)

The idea of making a territory and territorialising the materials or the situation at hand is therefore significant in terms of what a musician is doing when they create musical statements and structures. In simple terms we can see that setting a boundary involves placing something that already exists (a stone) on something else that already exists (the ground) in order to create something new (a territory), which would not only countermand Paul Dunmall's intuition for sculpting music from thin air, but would also extend the ideas that we encountered earlier with becoming, which is to say that a territory is not simple a re-arrangement of what already exists, instead it is a disruption of what already exists. However, whilst becoming suggests that an artist or musician may be reaching towards and representing something (such as an animal) in their work, an act of territorialisation takes something that it already there and makes it categorically different to what it previously had been. However, what both concepts share is the sense in which something comes to be produced, and although it is made by making reference to or use of something that already exists, it bears no 'trace' of the thing it corresponds to, it is a wholly new thing with its own characteristics. Deleuze and Guattari give us a number of images about how this territorialisation process can occur, but perhaps most fitting is their description of bird song,: 'the role of the refrain has often been emphasised: it is territorial, a territorial assemblage. Bird songs: the bird sings to mark its territory' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 312). Laying a boundary stone and singing a song are both actions that mark out a territory or a territorial assemblage, but these actions both go beyond

announcing that an area of land is now the domain of a particular individual. Deleuze and Guattari's key argument is that territorialisation creates new qualities and modes of behaviour, and this is the central issue in terms of creating new things and searching for new responses. In the same way that an area of land marked by boundary stones has qualities and functions that differ from unmarked land, then so too do the sounds and notes produced within an improvisation differ from those outside of an improvisation. A musician might practice scales, or other technical exercises and in doing so may well make use of the same notes that would otherwise form part of an improvisation at another time. However, within these two contexts, notes and sounds will have very different functions and associations.

Having established the concept of the territory, we are given one final term that allows us to understand how changes and transformations can occur within established structures and forms: deterritorialisation. This is an essential idea in that it enables us to think about music itself as a territory with established conventions and features, that something like improvisation deterritorialises. Similarly, if we were to think about the various forms of genre-based improvisation, such as jazz or rock, then these approaches themselves can be seen to be territories with recognisable norms and features that the practice of free improvisation deterritorialises. In their unfolding of deterritorialisation, Deleuze and Guattari once again use a range of examples to express their ideas, but the image of the grass stem is one of the most effective, particularly if we think about it as an instrument or a material, in the way that a musician might make use of a saxophone or a musical concept:

[T]he matter of expression, 'grass stem', acts as a component of passage between the territorial assemblage and the courtship assemblage [...] The grass stem is a deterritorialised component, or one en route to deterritorialisation. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 324)

In this example, we learn that Australian grass finches make use of a grass stem in order to attract a mate. Deleuze and Guattari examine the process in detail, and conclude that the male finch uses the stem to refer to or mimic the action of building a nest in order to attract the mate. As such, the stem's function is completely altered and with this new function comes the ability to trigger new responses, it no longer functions as a grass stem, it is now simply a component of a bird's courtship and nest-making activity. Throughout the plateau, Deleuze and Guattari are careful to emphasise that none of the components within a territorial assemblage have their qualities or functions prior to the existence of the assemblage, all component functions are aspects of the assemblage itself. This is the important point about an improvisation: that the qualities and attributes of an improvisation exist by virtue of that particular improvisation-assemblage, and an improviser's ability to create new responses is to do with an individual's or a group's ability to deterritorialise and reterritorialise a set of given materials (sounds, structures, instruments, musicians) into an assemblage with a particular consistency or set of

functions and features. As an example of how music achieves this deterritorialisation, Deleuze and Guattari talk about the human voice:

Music is a deterritorialisation of the voice, which becomes less and less tied to language, just as painting is a deterritorialisation of the face [...] Music seems to have a much stronger deterritorialising force, at once more intense and much more collective, and the voice seems to have a much greater power of deterritorialisation. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 302)

By changing the function of the voice, from speech, where meaning is communicated directly via words and inflection, to song, where we hear a much more complex and indirect set of meanings and associations, we can understand how music alters the way in which others respond to the sounds we make. Similarly, an improvisation itself is a deframing and a deterritorialisation of music and sound: we may well hear notes and sounds that we recognise, but they are now being used for a different purpose, or indeed for a number of different purposes, such as communication between musicians, a deliberate attempt to create new sounds with an instrument, a determined attempt (as with Cardew) to create new kinds of musical structures and forms that would exceed an audience's expectations and so on. The closing statement of the refrain plateau perhaps best sums up the value of Deleuze and Guattari's work on territories in relation to music and improvisation. As such, it is worth quoting them at length:

In Schumann, a whole learned labour, at once rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic, has this sober and simple result: deterritorialise the refrain. Produce a deterritorialised refrain as the final end of music, release it in the Cosmos—that is more important than building a new system. Opening the assemblage onto a cosmic force. In the passage from one to the other, from the assemblage of sounds to the Machine that renders it sonorous, from the becoming-child of the musician to the becoming-cosmic of the child, many dangers crop up: black holes, closures, paralysis of the finger and auditory hallucinations, Schumann's madness, cosmic force gone bad, a note that pursues you, a sound that transfixes you. Yet one was already present in the other; the cosmic force was already present in the material, the great refrain in the little refrains, the great manoeuvre in the little manoeuvre. Except we can never be sure we will be strong enough, for we have no system, only lines and movements. Schumann (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 350).

This passage captures the entirety of their ideas in this plateau, in that we see them referring back to the unfolding of the refrain itself and the opening out onto the cosmos through improvisation, in addition to reminding us that music, as both territorialising and deterritorialising activity, not only creates new territories and responses, but is all the while creating different relationships and iterations of the non-human and cosmic refrain.

3.4 The improviser-probe

In addition to making use of the deterritorialising and territorialising movements of the refrain, we can further investigate this transitional nature of the improvisation process with the aid of another of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual strategies. In 'Pragmatics for the Production of Subjectivity: Time for Probe-Heads', Simon O'Sullivan, following Deleuze and Guattari, puts forward this formulation for the concept of the probe-head, suggesting that probe-heads "'dismantle the strata in their wake...". But they are also, as the name suggests, productive of other, stranger and more fluid modes of organisation' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 312). This sense of production, which is simultaneously a dismantling process, once again frames the moment of improvisation: there are clearly conjunctions between the deframing-deterritorialisation process and dismantling action of the probe-head.

O'Sullivan asks the question, 'what is a probe-head? [...] A probe-head might in fact be any form of practice – any regime – that ruptures the dominant (faciality). An individual 'subject' in his or her life might operate as a probe-head in this sense' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 312-13). We can thus see the figure of the probe-head as a disruptive agent, who short-circuits and ruptures the processes and codes that govern a given situation. Deleuze and Guattari use the term faciality to describe the kind of system where a probe-head might work to rupture a tightly delineated rule set. They liken faciality to a 'black hole / white wall system [that] must already have gridded all of space [...] in fact there must not be any exterior: no intrusion from the outside' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 179). Such a system precludes reference to any alternative schema, and does not acknowledge that anything exists beyond its own tightly controlled boundaries. In doing so, it reinforces and perpetuates its dominance.

Earlier, we saw Deleuze and Guattari suggesting that music has the potential to be a multilinear system. However, it could also be a gridded, punctual system, with a strict set of self-perpetuating codes that must be adhered to in order to produce new music. In this regard, an improvisation has the potential to be an 'intrusion' into music as a dominant faciality machine, and the improviser the probe-head who launches that intrusion. Deleuze and Guattari further describe faciality as a 'despotic [...] landscapification' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 181), which in a musical sense conveys a sense in which boundaries appear and then harden around stylistic approaches, such as Atonalism, Neo-Classicism, New Tonalism or with jazz and improvised musics more specifically, Bebop, Postbop, Free Jazz, The New Thing, Fusion, Free Improvisation, Noise Music and so on. A free improvisation in this sense can often be purposefully targeted towards disrupting dominant regimes of jazz and wider musical conventions, by spontaneously creating and manufacturing new sensations, by cutting across a number of rules that supposedly govern harmony, rhythm and formal structure. The improviser probe-head must therefore work out, 'how [to] get out of the black hole, [h]ow [to] break through the wall, [h]ow [to] dismantle the face' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 186).

The formulation of improvisation as problem-solving activity is a familiar one to many musicians. How do you break through the wall of music as a cultural and technical

structure? How do you dismantle the face of accepted musical codes and practices in order to make new music and a new kind of music? How do you get out of the black hole of starting a piece of music with no pre-arranged plan or musical score? Although obviously not worded in quite that way, these kinds of questions are commonplace amongst improvisers, and in many ways an improvisation can be seen as the successful response to these questions. We see Evan Parker using the full range of his musical knowledge and instrumental capability, whilst at the same time pushing beyond these limits through his exploration of an existing body of musical and instrumental possibility. If Parker is a territorialising musician, or even a probe-head, then this can be discerned in the way that his improvisations go beyond conventions and limits in order to create new musical forms and sound aesthetics. In practical terms, Parker's use of multiphonics⁷ in combination with circular breathing techniques⁸ exemplify the way in which he is able to do this, however it is not simply that Parker makes squealing sounds, or that he is able to create continuous sound over long durations (in themselves these are simply different types of convention). It is the fact that Parker is able to make use of these two techniques, in combination with a variety of other ideas and sound, that allows him to break down a number of faciality traits or conventions that surround solo performance and musical style.

If David Borgo's intuition for improvising music is as much about breaking music, as it is about making music, then the probe-head is certainly relevant:

Dismantling the face is no mean affair. Madness is a definite danger [...] The organisation of the face is a strong one. We could say that the face holds within its rectangle or circle a whole set of traits, faciality traits, which it subsumes and places at the service of significance and subjectification (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 188).

To talk about improvisation in this wider sense is to suggest a complete dismantling of the face of music, of musical-faciality. Improvising is thus the 'definite danger' of 'madness': the risk that the outcome of an improvisation might be non-musical chaos, that has no meaning, because it has no 'significance', and makes no reference to musical-faciality traits. An improviser, operating as a probe-head, breaking free from subjectification, and risking sonic chaos, therefore generates a music that is not recognisable within existing codes because it fundamentally breaks with the conventions of the dominant musical-faciality. This could certainly be said of a number of groundbreaking innovations by jazz and free jazz musicians during the past fifty years, including the music of Ornette Coleman, whose improviser-as-probe-head approach elicited an unusually negative response from critics and peers:

⁷ Multiphonics are sounds that are produced by a saxophonist singing into their instrument whilst blowing through the reed in order to create compound tones, or what are often referred to as 'squeals'.

⁸ Circular breathing is a technique whereby wind instrumentalists use their cheeks as a pump to push air through their instrument at the same time as breathing into their lungs, thus enabling a continuous air flow. Players who have mastered this technique often sustain an unbroken airflow and can produce continuous sound lasting upwards of ten or fifteen minutes, and it is one of the main techniques that has enabled Evan Parker to establish such a distinctive approach and style.

Ornette Coleman's wide open improvisation had placed him at the centre of a fierce controversy over the musical implications of freedom ... [trumpet player] Roy Eldridge dismissed him as a fake. 'I listened to him all kinds of ways,' Eldridge later told an interviewer. 'I listened to him high and I listened to him cold sober. I even played with him. I think he's jiving, baby.' The music infuriated [drummer] Max Roach so much that he assaulted Coleman physically on one occasion and threatened to do so on another (Anderson, 2007: 51) ⁹.

This also reminds us of Adorno's view that music produced according to standardised formulae and methods, creates standardised responses, in other words it could be much easier to 'like' a piece of faciality-music, in that it does not threaten our sense of what constitutes good or bad music. Indeed, as Adorno points out we are often glad that any challenges a piece of music might present us with are neatly obscured: otherwise we might find it disconcerting or upsetting, as evidenced in Max Roach's violent outburst. However, as a probe-head, an improviser may also be acting violently, breaking with and destroying a pre-existing model of musical-faciality in order to construct something new.

⁹ Two of Coleman's landmark recordings – *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959) and *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation by the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet* (1961) – provide direct and visceral evidence of the confusion that Coleman's music may well have caused listeners and audiences at the time. The record opens with the track 'Lonely Woman' which begins with a strummed, drone-like figure on the double bass and proceeds, via a winding unison melody on the alto saxophone and trumpet, into a short solo from 1'48 through to 2'55 where Coleman improvises over the droning ostinato that Charlie Haden's bass provides, intercut with the ascending bass figure from the piece's introduction. As such, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* from the very start avoids a number of standard jazz practices, such as having musicians create improvised solos and basslines over recognisable set of chord changes. Instead Coleman set up a situation wherein the players could begin to co-improvise, following melodic impulses, rather than chordal structures. *Free Jazz* was a fuller development of this idea, and the original liner notes tell us that, 'there were no preconceptions as to themes, chord patterns or chorus lengths', which resulted in 'a kind of polyphonic accompaniment based on pitch, melodic direction, an emotional complement, then' (Williams, in Coleman, 1961). With this description in mind, whilst the music on *Free Jazz* certainly sounds 'like' jazz, in terms of the instrumentation, the swing time produced by the two drummers and the walking basslines deployed by Charlie Haden and, at times, his fellow bass player Scott LaFaro, there is also much on this record in terms of its conceptual design that likens it to much of the later more open-ended improvisation that we discuss elsewhere in this thesis. A good example of this kind of co-improvisation in operation happens early on in the piece, where – from twenty seconds onwards – Eric Dolphy begins to solo on bass clarinet. Coleman begins to punctuate Dolphy's playing from fifty seconds, and from 1'50 Coleman and Dolphy are joined by the twin trumpets of Freddie Hubbard and Don Cherry, who along with the rapid scalar runs played by Scott LaFaro create a mesh and increasingly dense structure which tails off from 3'40, although not before both drummers – Billy Higgins and Ed Blackwell – have also started to add increasingly arrhythmic figures and passages to the soundscape. In this way, these two records provide us with an indication of the way in which Coleman's music was both structurally as well as sonically disruptive, working against a number of deeply embedded and ingrained assumptions about how music – and jazz music in particular – could (or possibly *should*) work.

4. Make something new

Whether we are able to make something that is qualitatively new or not, not only depends on the particularity of an event, but also relates to the created thing's relationship to its context. Throughout this chapter, there has been a recurrent theme that frames recomposition and deframing-deterritorialisation as forming part of, or even standing in for, the process of making something. There are clearly a set of perspectives that surround the creative processes and indeed improvisation itself, that on the one hand would see creativity as a process of bringing into being something that did not previously exist, and on the other, would understand it more as re-arrangement of already existing materials. The tension between these two positions has a long history that goes at least as far back as Ecclesiastes, who tells us 'what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun' (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In terms of thinking about whether it is or is not possible to make something that is qualitatively new, Deleuze and Guattari give us a compelling model to work with, one that enables us to think about the debate in a slightly different way. In simple terms, concepts such as the plane of immanence and the refrain allow us to think about making things that are new 'as such', but are nevertheless made from pre-existing things. In this sense, new things are made out of what has come before, but they are not simply a different version of what has come before; as our discussions of becoming and the refrain have revealed, new things are qualitatively different to what came before, they are different in kind. If we think about improvisation as a process that makes use of past ideas and recognisably possible or potential sounds (for example, all of the notes that a given instrument can produce), then it would be very easy to dismiss improvisation as a mere recycling of sounds and a reworking of familiar mental and physical processes on the part of the musician, rather than the creation of something new. However, the logical end of this position is to say that the creation of a new sound, or indeed the creation of anything new as such, would be impossible. In simple terms, the notes and sounds that are available to the improviser are clearly limited by the physical nature of the instrument that they are playing, and at the same time, the techniques that can be used to create sounds are also logically limited by a musician's physical capabilities. However, although we can be fairly certain that striking, bowing or blowing an instrument in a certain way will produce a certain sound, do these limits prevent the production of something that is in itself new?

For an improvising musician, there is indeed a sense in which the resources available to them would strongly influence and delimit what the musical outcome will be, for example, the note middle C on a piano. We can be fairly certain that when we hit the middle C key on the piano, a middle C will sound, and that it will have certain qualities. Similarly, if we then decide to follow-up the first middle C with another one, and then maybe another, would suggest that the improvisation would have a particular character to it, we might even think that it sounds fairly boring. Thus the fact that our middle C improvisation makes use of a recognised note may initially suggest that nothing new can happen, since the results of this improvisation could be easily imagined (inasmuch as we know that it is only making use of a middle C), which would seemingly indicate that is simply a

recombination of pre-existing materials. By extension, we might also be tempted to think that any creative act is only ever a recombining of available materials, and that all we can ever do is put what we already have into a different order.

However, for Deleuze and Guattari, this would be to misunderstand what the virtual is and how it functions, and rather than thinking that the existence of given materials would automatically preclude the creation of something new, we can instead understand that it is the way a musician sets a multiplicity of virtual intensities in motion that frames the potential for a sound or a group of sounds to create new responses in its listeners.

In this sense, every new middle C that the improviser plays on the piano is an absolutely new one: each one has not been played before, since that each one arises from an interplay of various virtual movements that prefigure the physical instantiation of the note. When we think about a middle C in terms of immanence and the virtual, as one of a number of intensities on the plane of immanence, or as an intermezzo-sound block, there are a number of other issues to be considered as well: the pianist's choice of whether or not to play the C, when to play it, how loud to play it, and how long for? Indeed, how many times should the C be played, and if it is repeated, how fast or slow should the repetitions be? In terms of the theorist Clare Colebrook's view that 'life is a virtual multiplicity, not of things and agents but contemplations and contractions, events and responses' (Colebrook, 2002: 87), all of these questions reflect the idea that an improvisation is based not so much on a set of static materials, but on a set of decisions, movements and operations. Colebrook's assertion that life as virtual can help us to move away from thinking about a middle C on a piano as a 'thing' with fixed features and qualities, and instead as a contemplation, or even a provocation: as something that could engender an outcome. Colebrook's use of the word 'event' can also help us to frame improvisation's bridging of the virtual and actual, in the sense that when a new middle C sounds, this in itself is an event: it is a new occurrence that had not happened before. A note C may well have been sounded any number of times, but not that C, and not at that time, and not in that particular context. In this sense, an improvisation, as with Colebrook's description of life, becomes one of a series of fleeting moments that gathers together and is defined by an available set of impulses and responses. If anything can be understood as being new, then just such a brief confluence of events, happening together for the first time.

5. Affective results

Having explored different approaches to thinking about making an improvisation happen, we are now beginning to think about what kinds of qualities an improvisation might have. As in the case of Ornette Coleman and Max Roach, an improvisation can certainly provoke strong reactions. An improvisation may well consist of one note or a thousand notes, and the sounds in an improvisation may be played on a piano or may be created in real-time with a synthesiser as the piece develops, but what is it that makes one improvisation stand out from another? Are all improvisations doing the same thing given that they deterritorialise available materials and construct bodies without organs, or are some improvisations more or less successful or appealing, or are some simply better than others? Having addressed whether it is possible to make a new piece of music, we can now continue to explore how it is that an improvisation creates aesthetic impact.

If we compare a highly ornate improvisation that makes use of new sounds and new musical structures with the one-note improvisation that we discussed earlier, beyond the obvious differences, how do we start to make judgements about them? Is one a better, more satisfying improvisation than the other? Does one create more impact than the other? If they are both doing the same type of thing, in that they are both taking hold of and deframing given materials and concepts, what is it that distinguishes them, what is that makes one or other of them a more successful piece of spontaneously composed music?

As we saw above, what distinguishes one particular middle C from any other middle C that has been sounded previously, or indeed could be sounded in the future, is that each performance is an utterly unique event, because of the aggregate of immanent intensities, movements and exchanges that feed into it. The particularity that gives an improvisation its uniqueness in time, also means that, although in some ways different improvisations may share common features, each one generates different affective results. In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari configure a conception of a work of art in terms of 'percepts' and 'affects', saying,

Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them [...] The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself [...] The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 164).

We could just as easily apply this description to a piece of music, since Deleuze and Guattari go on to tell us that, 'harmonies are affects', and that 'consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or colour, are affects of music and painting' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 164), and in this sense, if an improvisation does indeed stand up on its own as a bloc of affect, it therefore produces a unique experience for a listener or an

audience, according to the 'law of creation' that Deleuze and Guattari allude to. In *Sound, Music, Affect*, Biddle and Thompson also show that a bloc of affect, or the 'sonorous bloc' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 189), is independent of both the person who makes it and the person who perceives and experiences it. This is an important component of Deleuze and Guattari's model, since the concept of the bloc is an affirmation that art and music do not create responses because of the faculties or dispositions of the view or listener, but because they contain intrinsic and independently existing attributes.

Art, for Deleuze and Guattari, exists as a bloc of sensations, which is to say a compound of affects and percepts that remain independent of both creator and perceiver. Music, for its part, is a compound of sonic affects (Biddle and Thompson, 2013: 10).

In this way, as we saw with the three movements of the refrain and the process of territorialisation, a bloc of affect is therefore understood as being able to create responses on its own terms, and it is in this context that an improvised series of middle Cs on a piano has the potential to be regarded as 'new'. If an improvised performance comes to stand on its own terms and create experiences that are on its own terms (as Deleuze and Guattari say, if 'it exists in itself') then we can understand it to be a new and original creation. We can liken a bloc of affect to the way in which a territory appears within an environment, and has an autonomous set of functions and features, that inform the way in which we interact with that territory (this is the force of de- and reterritorialisation, in that, as we saw, a deterritorialised grass stem becomes a courtship and a nest component, that is distanced from its former existence as a plant component. If the sensations or experiences that we have as a result of each new percept are similarly unique, then we could also think of a piece of improvised music as having a deterritorialising power, in that as listeners, we are reterritorialised within the context of what we are listening to, so that not only does the performance stand on its own but that our listening is disrupted and aligned with the particular features of that performance. Deleuze and Guattari further extend this way of understanding listening as a listening 'according to' the terms of a piece of music when they put forward the notion of a 'Wagner-universe', or a 'Debussy-universe' as part of their conception of the plane of composition.

The work of the plane of composition develops in two directions that involve a disaggregation of the tonal frame: the immense uniform area of continuous variation that couple and combine the forces that have become sonorous in Wagner, or the broken tones that separate and disperse the forces by harmonising their reversible passages in Debussy - Wagner-universe, Debussy-universe [...] each time the musician's action consists in deframing, in finding the opening, taking up the plane of composition once more (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 191).

What these terms suggest is that a composer's stylistic approach, which for an improviser would come through in a piece whilst they are playing it, creates a set of conditions, a

'universe' that establishes a frame for how we hear the musical content. Clearly, it is important that we remember that in an improvisation, as with a Bayreuth performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, or a digital recording of *La Mer*, we are not listening to the musician as such, any more than we are listening to Wagner or Debussy, we are listening to an (albeit improvised) musical work, but nevertheless we could also talk of a 'Parker-universe', or a 'Coleman-universe'. As we can see in the passage above, Deleuze and Guattari identify the plane of composition with a process of going against established sonic universes, meaning that in order to create a bloc of affect, then it must be wrenched from already-existing musical contexts. For Wagner, his experiments with chromaticism led to a new conception of harmonic freedom within music, coupled with a particular vision for combining instrumental and vocal forces both vertically in space, and horizontally in time. For Debussy, the new-found possibilities offered by an expanded harmonic practice, served to disperse and dissipate the centuries-old confines of traditional Western functional harmony. Deleuze and Guattari enable us to see improvising musicians, in a similar way to composers such as Wagner and Debussy, who are their forbears, as being concerned with engaging with and harnessing sonic forces in order to create something that produces affective results for the listener, making use of harmonic relationships, tone and timbre in such a way that a new piece of music creates new responses in its audience.

Deleuze and Guattari's use of the phrase 'finding the opening' takes us directly to what Evan Parker was talking about in terms of his attempts to 'find the gaps' between other saxophonist's stylistic approaches, and we could see this as a short-circuiting process or an interruption of expectation, in that one of the things that might strike us in a piece of music is its ability to confound or exceed our expectations and current understanding of music. So for the improviser, the challenge is to create a piece of music, a time-based composition that is the result of their improvisation, that is a compound of affects and which uniquely stands up on its own. How we measure an improvisation in this regard then becomes as complicated as measuring the difference between Wagner and Debussy: is an improvisation good because it incorporates more new sounds, more new forms? In this sense the more sonically adventurous and multifaceted performance might be the most rewarding, original and creative of our two examples above, the ornate as opposed to the one note improvisation. Here, satisfaction comes with an abundance of ideas and material. However, in practice this is often not the case, and in fact minimalism may prove to be just as compelling and challenging as hyper-abundance.

An improvisation by the musician Mark Wastell using a single Tam Tam (as heard on the recording *Vibra*) may offer a far less sonically intense experience than one of the group ensembles put together by John Zorn (for example for the piece *Cobra*, wherein a number of musicians are generating new sounds and new forms in a densely interconnected and moment-by-moment creative structure), but to say one creates more or less impact due to the density of sounds and structures would be misleading. In fact, one of the greatest challenges to the orthodox approach to improvising that consists of a rapid generation of new sounds in new combinations in recent times has been the development of a number of different scenes within improvised music making circles, that

have all come to have particular features and stylistic approaches, such as the lowercase, Onkyo, and New London Silence scenes.¹⁰ All of these share a predilection for generating meditative, relatively static improvisations, as in the case of Taku Sugimoto, an improvising musician who was originally associated with the Onkyo style, whose music, one reviewer describes as being 'based around silence, not sound, and thus each piece is an incredibly slow and sparse flow of tones' (Scaruffi, 2003). Although this comment refers to one of his composed pieces, it is also a fitting description of his improvising, and Sugimoto is elsewhere depicted as 'simply allow[ing] a note to hang suspended in the air, then repeat[ing] it' (Montgomery, 2000). Throughout the pieces on Sugimoto's 1998 album, *Opposite*, there is an incredibly strong sense of just how deliberate each note or each sound is, it is as if the soundscape is being arranged as Sugimoto goes along, with each note be carefully considered before being introduced as the next element in the evolving music that we hear. This is not to say that Sugimoto's decisions are pre-meditated that this is a composition – albeit an open ended one – that is unfolding before us, but it is almost as if we are able to sense the guitarist thinking about how to respond to each sound that he makes, as if the moment that one sound is made, he is immediately alienated from it, and he must think carefully about what sound to produce next. Thus, each sound is a sonic challenge to respond, almost as if Sugimoto understands that the notes will not just emerge and suggest themselves, but instead that he must concentrate to think carefully about *what will work*, what would be the right note, or at least the most appropriate note, to play in the next moment. It might be that the right thing to do is to repeat a phrase, to attempt to find a way out by extending a phrase rather than making a new sound or paying a completely different note, but what we clearly hear is a painstaking process of improvised choosing and sounding of notes and guitar sounds.

In many of the pieces, it is almost as if Sugimoto is asking questions such as, 'how will this music live? what needs to happen next?' Sometimes the music needs to be extended through repetition and gradual modification. Sometimes the music requires more definite transformation, thus in a very palpable way, Sugimoto's playing gives a clear indication of the way in which improvisation can be thought of as a process of real-time composition. On the track 'Spoon River I', Sugimoto establishes something of a pattern, wherein he plays a two or three note chord and then responds to the sustaining tones with a four-note melodic phrase that gradually evolves over the course of the following two minutes, until this see-sawing is briefly suspended at 2'40 and replaced by what feels at that point like an interlude of single suspended notes, before the two part chord and melodic fragment motif returns at three minutes and continues until the end of the piece.

¹⁰ In terms of recognisable 'scenes', 'schools' or 'styles' within contemporary improvised music practice, Onkyo emerged in Japan in the late 1990s, whilst New London Silence developed in London in the early 2000s in parallel with the lowercase movement that was emerging in both Berlin and London. The musicians associated with the three approaches tended to display an interest in creating low-volume performances, that enabled them to give detailed focus to the quality of the sounds that they were making, often using sustained and gradually-evolving tones, rather than the moment-to-moment interplay that characterised much jazz-based improvisation.

Thinking about Sugimoto's playing allows us to shift the emphasis of improvisation, and think less about the original creation of new forms, and instead about something that in a sense celebrates the (re)combinative potentials of improvisation, wherein the mechanics of the process rely on the musician's ability to make constant reference to a limited number of materials. This approach again allows us to speak of Deleuze and Guattari's sense of deframing, in that rather than deframing and deterritorialising music through radical aesthetics, Sugimoto accomplishes a far subtler deframing of what appear to be more traditional, or at least more familiar musical materials. Sugimoto's musical aesthetic also allows us to think about a zero intensity music, and his work firmly encourages us to take a broad view of what the plane of composition could mean for the improvising musician. In contrast to a highly coloured, aesthetically diverse performance that self-consciously searches for the new in a quest for stark originality, what the studied and suspended improvisation of Sugimoto does is to affirm that affect is not simply generated through the construction of new sounds, or indeed that new aesthetic experiences simply rely on constructing new sounds, as we can hear on another track from *Opposite*, 'A Narrow Path' which consists of a ten-note scale-like melody that is repeated over and over again, with subtle changes to the phrasing and note articulation with each repetition. At times, the notes are played staccato, whilst at other notes are accented and sustained with string bends to create swells. Equally Sugimoto sometimes plays two strings at once to create subtle discords in the repeated but changing melodies. A new, unexpected or disruptive sound can indeed be the instigator of a new aesthetic experience, but equally, what the sustained and extremely minimal improvisations of the Onkyo and lowercase schools show is that the plane of composition signifies the creation of sensations through many different means, including repetition, and slow development, thereby 'disaggregating the tonal frame' of many different sonic universes. Aesthetic impact does not have to come from sonic diversity and abundance, since deframing and deterritorialisation can mean breaking with an equally diverse set of practices, even extreme noise and constant variation, which, following Deleuze and Guattari's commentary on the Wagner- and Debussy-universes, would have their own set of frames and codes.

Lowercase improvisation demonstrates that an improvising musician can make use of a number of different strategies, and harness a variety of forces, and, following Steve Goodman, 'unsound' intensities. Again, it is not the relationship with a radical, visceral aesthetic that allows for the creation of new music, but a much more considered probing, a musical working, and a forgetting of the familiar so as to achieve the unfamiliar, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'it is not memory that is needed but a complex material that is found not in memory but in words and sounds: "Memory, I hate you!"' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 168). Thus an improviser makes use of any number of strategies to create a limitless variety of combinations and compounds of affects in order to progress a performance, which can be a deliberate experimentation, or it may be a suspension of learned technique and knowledge, or indeed a mixture of both, and we have now seen

how these strategies combine in order to create something that has its own consistency, something that will create sensations for an audience.

6. Conclusion: Will it work?

In casting Ornette Coleman as a probe-head creating unintelligible music, we are reminded that making something or as Deleuze says bringing into being 'that which does not exist' (Deleuze, 2004 DR: 185) is a contingent process: it is always possible that music might not happen, that an improvisation might not lead to music. Beyond the rare violent outbursts of outraged musicians and audiences, this contingency usually goes unrecognised, what else would we expect musicians to do but make music?

We have seen the way that an improvising musician engages with the unstable particle flows of the virtual to create order, and we have discussed that through improvising, as with the refrain, it might not only be sounds, but an entire system that is improvised. If we return to our one-note improvisation, we can see the mechanics of the refrain in operation: the single C is simultaneously the stable centre in the heart of chaos, in that it instantly produces a gravitational pull around itself (we must take notice of it), and at the same time the existence of that middle C creates an ordered system of codes: we can now talk about different qualities of a piece of music, such as pitch, rhythm, duration, speed and volume. This nuanced sense that improvisation is not only the manufacture of new sounds, but also the manufacture of music, or at least 'a' music, itself as a coherent system, can be difficult to identify, but perhaps we can detect such a productive process at work. Where Roy Eldridge felt that Ornette Coleman was 'jiving', we could now reframe Coleman as an improvising probe-head who (as exemplified in his early album titles such as *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, *This Is Our Music* and *Free Jazz*) was able to deterritorialise music. Evan Parker's approach to improvising reflects the possibility of thinking about improvisation as something more wide-reaching, that is not purely governed by the context of a punctual-facial music, saying he likes 'to think of solo saxophone as taking a note for a walk' (Parker, cited in Borgo, 2005: 36), which would suggest that Parker sees his playing as an open-ended process, akin to the becoming-music of *A Thousand Plateaus*. An example of this 'taking a note for a walk', can be heard in the final track of the record *Conic Sections*, a set of solo improvisations that Parker performs on soprano saxophone. The entire piece is performed using circular breathing, and is thus a continuous stream of sound. Between 1'30 and 3'30, we hear Parker repeating a short melodic phrase in the middle register, which he begins to counterpoint with a staccato line that comprises of three and four note patterns (concert A, D and Eb, then A, C and Eb, and then with variations) that hint at a stuttering, but loosely rhythmic pulse – almost an ostinato in the way that a 'bassline' would work in jazz, or groove-based music, whilst at the same time he introduces a series of overtones in the instrument's upper register. As such, this relatively small set of notes are being taken for a walk, as Parker uses them to explore different combinations and force new notes to erupt as a result of the rapid inter-register blowing techniques that he uses.

Coleman and Parker thereby enable us to consider a more radical vision of improvisation, wherein an improvisation becomes the point at which a new music is created, where the previous rules of the punctual music faciality are put at stake. In such a formulation, an

improvisation does not happen by understanding music, instead, music, with the double meaning of music as content (the child's song) and music as organisational structure (home), is created by improvising.

Considering improvisation in this way certainly speaks more of the inherent risk-taking that improvised music making involves - not 'If I improvise, will I be able to re-configure these given elements in a satisfactory way?' but rather 'If I improvise, what will happen? Will it work? Will music happen?' This more focused reading of Deleuze and Guattari's challenge to 'make something that stands on its own' reflects Derek Bailey's definition of improvisation, where he writes, 'in all its roles and appearances, improvisation can be considered as the celebration of the moment. And in this the nature of improvisation exactly resembles the nature of music. Essentially music is fleeting; its reality is its moment of performance' (Bailey, 1992: 142). As such, Bailey clearly emphasises the ephemeral nature of music and improvisation, and although he does not problematise the relationship between improvisation and music to the same extent that we have, there is a suggestion that music does not necessarily precede improvisation. Indeed, elsewhere he states that 'mankind's first musical performance couldn't have been anything other than a free improvisation' (Bailey, 1992: 83), thus emphasising the pre-musical power of improvisation, and further supporting the idea that it is through improvising, that music comes into existence. The pianist and composer Frederick Rzewski tells us that,

Because improvisation resembles real life, it can illuminate this real life...Music can expand our awareness of the irrational, dark side of reality. It can make us aware, if only vaguely, of the possibility of other universes right under our noses...Such little universes may appear and disappear at any moment...The improvising musician simply gives them a voice. (Rzewski, 2005: 270)

The idea that improvisation gives voice to little universes is appealing, as it speaks of the potential that improvisation has to go beyond the universe or face of music and enable musicians and audiences to connect with experiences that may not solely relate to musical contexts. In comparing improvisation to 'real life', Rzewski also reminds us of the refrain and its elemental, non-human motion of gathering, binding and compounding. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not consider the refrain to be the origin of music, improvisation is able to encompass both the deterritorialising force of music and the territorialising rhythm of refrain. What Deleuze and Guattari take to be music's capacity to make the refrain a 'deterritorialised content for a deterritorialising form of expression' is also improvisation's capacity to perform exactly that process on music. But as has been shown through reference to the work of improvising musicians such as Cornelius Cardew and Evan Parker, improvising does not simply deterritorialise music, it has the power to deterritorialise sound and at the same time territorialise and create a new understanding of music, as evidenced through musicians' responses to Ornette Coleman. The territorialising power of the refrain is improvisation's power to create music, again Bailey reminds us that improvisation must have preceded music, whilst in order to improvise, the probe-head improviser must dismantle (deterritorialise) the face of music.

We could go further to claim that an improvisation must self-deterritorialise. It would be easy to see improvisation itself as a gridded system, a coded process, an autonomous faciality. Thus, if an improvisation does not also exceed its own limits, if an improviser is unable to operate at the cutting edge of deterritorialisation, then absolute improvisation will remain unattainable. An improviser must therefore themselves be a becoming-improviser, such that an improvisation would have the potential to be a becoming-improvisation, and where an improviser as probe-head would be the instigator and propelling force behind this process. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'beyond the face lies an altogether different humanity... of 'probe-heads'; here cutting edges of deterritorialisation become operative [...] forming strange new becomings' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 191). It is in this sense that we must define both the process and the results of improvisation: they are 'strange new becomings' that simultaneously speak of sonic and systemic upheaval. In simpler terms, the improvising musician Derek Bailey states, 'with every music there is an exciting period when it's coming together and no one has a clue what it's supposed to sound like. That's when it's happening [...] once you've learned everything, it's over' (Bailey, 2004: 47). Although Bailey is talking in more general terms about playing with other musicians and becoming too familiar with each-others' style and approach, in fact the same holds true for the process of improvising itself: it can never be a simple resemblance of what has gone before, since, according to Deleuze and Guattari 'for all of time...music [has had the project] of rendering sonorous, instead of reproducing the sonorous' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 346). Therefore, each improvisation, must continually create and recreate itself until the improvisation is finished, if not, then 'everybody gets to know the music and as soon as that happens and you start playing the music, you stop improvising (Bailey, 2004: 47).

This chapter has explored and created various relationships between musical improvisation and a number of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual strategies, with a view to extending what could be meant by Cornelius Cardew's idea that improvisation is a 'searching for responses' and David Borgo's view that improvisation is a really process of improvising music. To frame a closing set of remarks, we can turn to the 'Treatise on Nomadology', or the 'War Machine' plateau. In this plateau, Deleuze and Guattari present us with the idea that like metal, music is ubiquitous. Music operates in a similar way to metal: not everything is music, but at the same time music is a facet, a perspective, a way of hearing and understanding everything. It is not that music is heard everywhere, but that music is in and part of everything.

If metallurgy has an essential relation with music, it is by virtue not only of the sounds of the forge but also of the tendency within both arts to bring into its own, beyond separate forms, a continuous development of form and beyond variable matters, a continuous variation of matter [...] Not everything is metal, but metal is everywhere. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 411)

If metal is a 'continuous variation of matter' we could say that music is a continuous variation of sound. In his essay 'The Joys of Noise', the composer and theorist Henry Cowell makes a similar claim about music when he states that,

[M]ost shocking of all is the discovery that there is a noise element in the very tone itself of all our musical instruments. Consider the sound of a violin. Part of the vibrations producing the sound are periodic [...] But others are not [...] and consequently they must be considered noise [...] Since the 'disease' of noise permeates all music, the only hopeful course is to consider that the noise-germ [...] is a good microbe. (Cowell, 2004: 22)

Although Cowell, is quite clearly positioning noise within the context of music and music-producing machines, it is a useful way of thinking about sound as a continuum, as something that surrounds us and is available to us at all times. The jazz producer and critic Joachim Berendt puts forward a similarly comprehensive argument that asserts the way in which the physical world is governed by and functions as sound. His book *Nada Brahma: The World Is Sound* encompasses not only music, but spirituality, religion, mathematics and science, and in discussing vibration and oscillation patterns at macro and microscopic scales, he notes that harmonic relationships can be observed between the relative orbits of planets as well as between electrons and protons in atoms. (Berendt, 1987: 68) By stating that these relationships exist as a physical fact, Berendt is introducing the idea that sound, as the physical consequence of harmonic vibration is intrinsic to our experience of the world. This is not to say that everything is music in a Cagean sense, but that harmonic patterns are as much a feature of the physical world as they are of music, which again calls to mind Goodman's 'unsound'. For Berendt therefore, the world is indeed sound, in a very literal sense of the word. Cowell and Berendt's ideas about noise and sound along with Cage's redefinition of sound as music, produce an expansive view not only of the ubiquitous and all-pervasive nature of sound and music, but also music's capacity to be immanent, virtual and intensive. We can thus formulate a concluding statement that likens improvisation to Deleuze and Guattari's 'sound block', the antimemory that pervades 'musical organisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 297). For Deleuze and Guattari, '[the composer Edgard] Varese's procedure, at the dawn of this age, is exemplary: a musical machine of consistency, a sound machine (not a machine for reproducing sounds), which molecularises and atomises, ionises sound matter, and harnesses a cosmic energy' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 343). However, where they conclude that 'if this machine must have an assemblage, it is the synthesiser' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 343), for us it is the improvisation which harnesses cosmic forces and creates compounds of sonorous blocs of affect. If an improvisation comes to stand on its own, then what is unique and radical about an improvisation is that it is not even like itself.

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Into the Void: Improvisation and the Event

In this chapter, we shall turn to the work of Alain Badiou, and in particular, the ideas that he developed in one of his key books, *Being and Event*, in order to continue mapping improvised music practice to aspects of contemporary thought. By working through some of the fine-grained detail in Badiou's work, including a range of terms that he adapts to his purposes, as well as his use of mathematically derived equations that enable him to formulate and validate some of his key perspectives, our aim will be to think about improvisation in terms of Badiou's philosophy of the Event, and to further interrogate how it is that an improvisation has the capacity to create unexpected outcomes, or disrupt conventional musical practices. For the philosopher Christopher Norris,

[T]he central thesis of *Being and Event* [...] concerns the remarkable yet well-documented capacity of reason to transcend the limits of conscious, reflective or epistemically accessible thought while yet remaining subject to the dictates of a truth-procedure that acts as both a stimulus and check to its ventures beyond the confines of received knowledge or accepted method. (Norris, 2009: 280)

This is, indeed, both a central, as well as a challenging and compelling feature of Badiou's work, in that he is able to put forward an ontology that recognises that what he refers to as a 'subject'¹ is both part of a world, and at the same time is able to think beyond that world's limits and thus bring new things into it. If the previous chapter explored the way in which an improvisation is both a reterritorialisation of sound as music and a deterritorialisation of the codes and conventions of music and even of improvisation itself, then our current task is to consider the way in which an improvisation is an attempt to reach beyond the limits of the temporal and physical environment in order to force what Badiou calls an 'irruption' of an 'event' into an improviser-subject's 'situation'. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Badiou is of the opinion that beyond what is presented to us in our environment, in what he refers to as the *situation*, is completely unknowable and inaccessible to us. For him there is no actual-virtual that captures different aspects of the real, and instead, by thinking

¹ The term is open-ended enough to be applicable both within the formal mathematical modelling that Badiou uses, as well as in a more experiential context, where we might think of a 'human subject' which suggests a person with certain characteristics, having real experiences. In addition, the word 'subject' serves another dual purpose for Badiou, in that it can be used to refer to a 'subject under consideration', in terms of such an individual perspective, but at the same time it allows him to make the specific inference that the subject is 'subject to' the event, meaning that the subject is the result of a formal procedure and at the same time remains 'faithful' to a particular experience.

in terms of an unrepresented inconsistent multiplicity, he configures what he refers to as the void of a situation.

The wager of this chapter is that we can use Badiou's 'ontology of the void' to provide an insight into the way in which an improvisation goes beyond our capacity to expect or predict a certain outcome, and is therefore by nature an exponential process.² To achieve this, the chapter will be broadly divided into three sections. The first is an overview of Badiou's approach to thinking that will engage with the principles and processes that underpin the Event, and we shall examine a set of key terms that will provide us with the basic tools for theorising improvisation within this context. The second section will then focus more specifically on the generic procedure and the process of forcing, enabling us to develop an understanding of how Badiou's subject can be seen within a creative context. Finally, the technology of forcing will be applied to the process of improvisation itself, and we shall explore the idea of 'the subject as improviser'. Thus, for our analysis of what we could call the 'improvisation-event', the capacity of the subject-as-improviser to transcend the limits of their 'sonic situation' is the moment of improvisation, the act of grasping at something beyond what is readily available in order to produce a new music.

As we shall see, by using a procedure that he refers to as the 'count-as-one', Badiou demonstrates that the void is an 'inconsistent multiple' that is at the heart of everything and which can cause the 'irruption [...] of an incandescent non-being' (Badiou, 2005: 183) into a situation at any given time. In this way immanence becomes not a matter of exchange between things that are different in degree (where the virtual and actual are two sides of the same real), but of a passage between things that are different *in kind*; the void is not 'of' a presented situation and can in no way be registered or understood from that position. Thus, although Badiou and Deleuze's approaches are significantly different, they nonetheless allow us to see that what makes an improvisation striking and in many ways marks it out as being successful, where musicians can be heard to bring something new into musical discourse (which is different to the novelty value of regurgitating shock or

² In Badiou's reading, it is the void, or what he also terms as the 'generic', that is immanent to all things, rather than the plane of immanence that we see in Deleuze and Guattari's work. Where the latter's version of immanence allows for an emergent movement of matter and energy across regions of virtuality and actuality, Badiou insists that the void is just that: an absolute nothing, that is in no way 'like' anything that we can experience. Although Badiou absolutely proscribes any possible knowledge of the void, his ontological model does allow us to at least name it. By using the symbol ' \emptyset ' to refer the void, and a mathematical formula known as the 'power set axiom', he is able to generate the symbol ' $\{\emptyset\}$ ', or what he calls the empty set, which allows us to 'name' the void, which lies at the heart of what is a palpably constructive philosophical model. In simple terms, Badiou shows us how things are made; the exponential or at least non-linear and unpredictable nature of the creative process, and how our relationship to these things in itself creates further effects within our environment.

surprise), is that they are able to destabilise the familiar codes that listeners might have for appreciating and engaging with a musical performance. For Deleuze and Guattari, de- and re-territorialisation remakes the familiar as unfamiliar, whereas for Badiou, being faithful to a truth sets up an artist-creator, or subject-as-improviser, as someone who forces into hearing, something that categorically had not previously been present.

In using the void, the event and the truth procedure as a means to think about the emergence of an immanent unknown, Badiou will enable us to see improvisation as a searching process, where the concepts of 'faith' and 'fidelity' will underline the importance of an improviser believing in their ability to create musical outcomes that are unpredictable, unforeseen and at the same time compelling; not only for themselves, but for other musicians and listeners. In addition, because of Badiou's use of mathematical procedures, we can think about a 'groundlessness' in regard to improvisation; the sense that improvised music comes from nothing and from nowhere. At the same time, we can also consider the way in which improvisation as a process can force a connection between a strictly limited and finite set of resources – in other words, the tools, knowledge, skills and experiences that we have to hand - and an infinitely recurring expanse of possibilities for making something new. For Badiou, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, the creation of the new, such as the improvisation of new music in performance, is not the emergence of something out of an already-existing set of conditions; instead, the new is produced by the arrival of an unnamed and previously non-existent element, via an 'event'. An event is something that logically cannot be said to have had any kind of prior existence in a given situation, and can only be recognised, and responded to, retrospectively. The musician must have faith in the fact that something new *will have happened*, and by coupling this sense of fidelity with the process of 'forcing' – which can be likened to a sense of recognising that something has been made, that we have made a breakthrough – improvisation becomes a search for a future possibility, and a dynamic process of creative involvement. As a 'subject-as-improviser', although we don't yet know what kind of music *will* happen, we believe that something *can* happen, and when it has happened – in other words, when we have made it happen and we recognise its arrival – this music will have a certain set of identifiable, and unique, characteristics.³

³ Where Deleuze and Guattari informed us that a bloc of affect must 'stand on its own', within a Badiouian context, we could say that we remain 'faithful' to the characteristics of an event, such that we have a fidelity to the truth of an improvisation-as-event.

1. Developing a language: Badiou's mathematical ontology

Badiou's work in *Being and Event* is underpinned by a number of key principles that are designed not only to facilitate his particular philosophical project, but also to enable him to create a distinction between his own work, and a range of other philosophical practices and perspectives, most notably his contemporary, Deleuze. One of Badiou's most important, and at the same time contentious, assertions is that 'mathematics is ontology' (Badiou, 2005: xiii & 3).⁴ Badiou calls this an 'axiomatic decision' (Badiou, 2005: 31), and it is intended to demonstrate his conviction that in order to arrive at a particular set of conclusions, we must make a decision to think in a certain way. With this claim, Badiou is not simply suggesting that ontology can be better described by using mathematical formulae, instead, he is wanting to establish that at a fundamental, and thus axiomatic, level that ontology and mathematics are the same thing, and that ontology only makes sense in terms of mathematical operations. Badiou's main point of reference is set theory, an area of mathematics that studies the properties of sets that was originally developed by the mathematicians Georg Cantor and Richard Dedekind in the nineteenth century, and later modified by Paul Cohen among others.⁵ For Badiou's purposes, the rules and procedures surrounding the construction of sets, what counts as being included in or belonging to a set, the necessary existence of infinity, along with the critical question of how to make a new set and discern the existence of a new component within a set, comprise the foundations of his mathematical ontology. Badiou's claim about the mathematical nature of ontology is itself the subject of broader philosophical debate that sits outside the remit of this research, but it is worth noting that some of the most focused criticism that has been levelled at Badiou, has come from his contemporary, Francois Laruelle, whose work we shall engage with later in this study.⁶

⁴ Badiou discusses this point in the preface to *Being and Event*, where he claims that 'insofar as being, qua being, is nothing other than pure multiplicity, it is legitimate to say that ontology, the science of being qua being, is nothing other than mathematics itself.' Badiou, 2005: xiii) In the introduction to the book itself, Badiou goes on to elaborate the point, stating that 'the science of being qua being has existed since the Greeks - such is the sense and status of mathematics. However, it is only today that we have the means to know this. It follows from this thesis that philosophy is not centred on ontology - which exists as a separate and exact discipline - rather, it circulates between this ontology (thus, mathematics), the modern theories of the subject and its own history' (Badiou, 2005: 3)

⁵ As we shall see, Cohen's concept of 'forcing' becomes one of the central components of Badiou's truth procedure.

⁶ In *Anti-Badiou*, Francois Laruelle discusses at length Badiou's assertion that 'mathematics=ontology' (Laruelle, 2013: 81), which Laruelle himself regards as generating two outcomes: the reduction of philosophy, 'in its relation to mathematics, to a meta-ontology' and a similar reconfiguration of philosophy as a 'weakly encyclopaedic system' (Laruelle, 2013: 14), which is to say that for Badiou, philosophy's role becomes merely descriptive of the ontological modelling

In terms of the breadth and scale of *Being and Event* and its relation to Badiou's wider philosophical project, it is clear that his philosophical interests go further than simply developing a mathematical model for ontological enquiry. Thus, with his other principle axiomatic claim that 'the one is not' (Badiou, 2005: 23), we can also discern Badiou's ambition to go beyond a tradition in philosophical thought that can be traced back to pre-Socratic thinkers, thereby laying down a challenge to various philosophical practices, as we see with this critique of Deleuze's concept of the 'univocity of Being'.⁷ As such, Badiou's claim that 'the one is not', is both a reference to an axiom of set theory, and at the same time a direct challenge to

that mathematics is able to carry out. In effect, what Badiou is arguing for is that philosophy take on a much more secondary role to mathematics, in other words we would have more specific philosophies 'of' certain practices in the same way that we already have a philosophy 'of religion' and a philosophy 'of science'. However, as Laruelle points out, the statement 'mathematics=ontology', is not itself a mathematical derived axiom, rather it is merely a philosophical claim. For Laruelle, this means that in fact, not only is Badiou's philosophical model a logical impossibility ('a thesis or an axiom cannot stand alone, or claim to found itself' (Laruelle, 2013: 81)), but it is also emphatically in need of philosophy to support it ('above all OV [Badiou's ontology of the void] that poses the problem of conserving philosophy' (Laruelle, 2013: 16)). Ultimately, for Laruelle, it would not matter what philosophy or ontology was reduced to, since neither would have any more or less purchase on the Real, and thus, Badiou's axiom is not only wrong, but it is also irrelevant.

⁷ In *Difference and Repetition*, we see Deleuze describing 'the essence of univocal being' as, 'a single "voice" of Being which includes all its modes, including the most diverse, the most varied, the most differentiated' (Deleuze, 2004: 45). However, Badiou's book, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, is a direct challenge to this idea, and draws on a similar set of strategies that we say he develops in *Being and Event*, in order to completely invalidate the concepts of the 'One-All' (Badiou, 1999: 10), and the 'Univocity of Being' (Badiou, 1999: 23), since for Badiou, 'the world's confusion undoubtedly means first of all that it can be explained neither by the One nor by the Multiple' (Badiou, 1999: 9). For Badiou, 'Deleuze's fundamental problem is most certainly not to liberate the multiple, but to submit thinking to a renewed concept of the One (Badiou, 1999: 10), which for Badiou is a fundamental de-radicalisation of thought, and a limiting of what the world really is: for him, the world in absolute, or real terms is neither a 'one' nor a 'multiple', it must by definition exceed any human attempts to categorise it. As a result, we can also see that a major aspect of Badiou's own philosophical project is concerned with overturning Deleuze (and Guattari's) approach to thinking about the univocity of being and replacing it with his own set-theory derived mathematical ontology. In both Deleuze's own work, and in his collaborations with Guattari, we are presented with a view of *difference* that meshes the relation between human experience and an impersonal difference-in-itself, where virtual intensities intersect with a world of conscious action, even if this is at the pre-conscious, non-intentional level of becoming. Badiou allowed for no such continuity in his explication of the subject in relation to the void and the event, defining his ideas in opposition to what he sees as the weakness and self-contradictory nature of Deleuze's philosophy of the one-all. For Badiou, there can be no conscious action, even if this is at the pre-conscious, non-intentional level of becoming. Badiou allowed for no such continuity in his explication constructed, which enables him to deny that there can be any form of finitude. Similarly, his steadfast commitment to the non-conceptualisable nature of the void, is a refusal to permit any sort of relation existing between the void and anything that is given in experience.

Deleuze's philosophical project, laying out the terms of engagement for *Being and Event*. He subsequently goes on to use a number of concepts to build on this idea, and for our current purposes, there are three that have particular relevance: the 'Void', the 'Subject', and the 'Truth Procedure'.

In many ways, the Void is the all-important conceptual component in Badiou's model. If his 'entire discourse originates in [...] the non-being of the one' (Badiou 2005: 31), then the image of the Void is the philosophical application of this axiom. The Void is the absolute no-thing that underpins everything that we can conceive of and think about, and clearly represents the most significant assault on one of the central components of what Badiou sees as Deleuze's philosophy of the One-All. The roots and reference points for Badiou's work are distinct and often draw on the work of Lacan, particularly the latter's use of the *matheme* and his ideas surrounding lack. As with the previous chapter on Deleuze and Guattari's own philosophy of immanence, there are clearly influences and precursors that inform any philosopher's work, and therefore whilst it is important to acknowledge the context surrounding a thinker's work, the current study is not intended as a piece of philosophical scholarship, but, rather, an attempt to bring certain conceptual resources to bear on improvisation. As such, we shall take Badiou's work as it is presented and use his ideas about the Void and the non-being of the One as a means to think about creative processes.

Within the context of a study that is principally focused on establishing a new way of understanding improvisation and thinking through the various processes that it entails, in the figure of the 'subject', Badiou provides us with a compelling means to approach the improviser themselves, and to think about how the act of making new music might work. In his preface to *Being and Event*, Badiou informs us that,

A subject is nothing other than an active fidelity to the event of truth. This means that a subject is a militant of truth [...] The militant of a truth is not only the political militant working for the emancipation of humanity in its entirety. He or she is also the artist-creator, the scientist who opens up a new theoretical field, or the lover whose world is enchanted. (Badiou, 2005: xiii)

Thus, Badiou's subject is not a subject of 'experience' in a conventional sense, and Badiou sets the idea up so as to avoid any possible confusion with notions of perception or intuition. Instead, he positions a mathematically - rather than anthropomorphically - derived subject as a point of determination in relation to a particular occurrence, or event. It is an 'operation', or a way of thinking about a process of bringing something into existence that goes beyond the concerns of an individual. Badiou conceives of the occurrence of the new in terms of what he calls a 'generic' structure, and as we shall see, Badiou's particular reading of the word

'generic' will also play a key role in our analysis of improvisation. We can thus see that Badiou's subject, if nothing else, is some kind of agent of change, an orientation towards an event that creates a 'truth', and whilst Badiou describes the subject simply as an 'active fidelity', his assertion that 'he or she is also the artist-creator' provides us with a clear indication that this configuration of a subject can allow us to think about improvisation in terms of the framework that Badiou sets up.

If a subject is faithful to a truth, then within Badiou's conception, the word 'truth' also has a very particular meaning:

The being of a truth, proving itself an exception to any pre-constituted predicate of the situation in which that truth is deployed, is to be called 'generic'. In other words, although it is situated in a world, a truth does not retain anything expressible from that situation. A truth concerns everyone inasmuch as it is a multiplicity that no particular predicate can circumscribe. The infinite work of a truth is thus that of a 'generic procedure'. And to be a Subject (and not a simple individual animal) is to be a local active dimension of such a procedure. (Badiou, 2005: xiii)

Here, Badiou is indicating that a truth, by definition is something that does not come from within a situation that exists in a world that we experience; it is 'generic' because it arises within a situation, and yet it is not 'of' that situation. In this regard, Badiou is careful to differentiate between a mathematical modelling of fidelity, which asserts that it is possible to develop a commitment to a generic truth that is not 'in' a situation, but which nevertheless will arrive in that situation, and a more conventional understanding of experience. The sense in which a subject is a 'local active dimension' of a generic procedure, or what Badiou elsewhere refers to as a 'truth procedure' provides us with a useful opportunity to draw a parallel between an improvising musician and the kind of artist-creator that Badiou is alluding to, in that we could imagine that an improviser might also need to make some kind of commitment to an event whilst improvising, and indeed may be the agent of change that precipitates such a creative event whilst improvising.⁸

⁸ Whilst Badiou makes consistent use of practical examples throughout *Being and Event*, in order to illustrate his mathematical proofs, it is not always clear how far we should consider these examples as practical evidence of the truth procedure in operation, or whether they are simply metaphorical images that are being used to convey a sense of what the mathematical ontology means. It is therefore worth acknowledging at this stage that there are certain difficulties that arise from Badiou's approach, in particular his articulation and application of his ideas.

As has been noted by Daniel Smith, Badiou 'grants an ontological status to axiomatics alone' (Smith, 2003: 5), and as a consequence, Badiou's attention throughout *Being and Event*, is focused on

In a sense, what Badiou's work shows is that music, art, or indeed any creative process, does not have any kind of representational function – which connects us directly to one of the underlying principle of this study, which is that an improvisation is not simply a 'playing out' of a given philosophical model – and in no way does it communicate an inherent meaning, or some sort of ineffable, metaphysical truth. For Badiou, a truth is grounded by that which is fundamentally unknowable, it is not predicated on any pre-given aspect of a given situation, and it does not in any way 'represent' any aspect of that situation, a truth is simply the emergence, within a situation, of something that had previously not been present, and which in no way results from the elements of that situation. As such, when he states that the subject is a 'local active dimension' of a truth procedure, Badiou is telling us that a creative process comes about because of the artist-creator's, or for our purposes the 'subject-as-improviser's', ability to identify and facilitate the arrival of a truth, via an event, into a situation. If we accept that a situation can be said to exist as part of a world that we can normally experience, and that it is a way of

providing a set of proofs for his theoretical model, and thereby formalising the concept of Being within a mathematical context. Peter Hallward problematises Badiou's work in a similar way by claiming that *Being and Event* emphasises, 'the ontological primacy of mathematical over physical reality' (Hallward, 2003: 53), which implies that whilst the mathematical modelling of ontology is compelling, it may not be up to the task of describing the physical world that we inhabit and experience. Thus we should be mindful of the risks associated with trying to create practical applications for Badiou's theoretical expositions: in short, it might not work, and we must construct a framework that takes into consideration the potential disjuncture between theory and practice. The philosopher Ray Brassier in the book *Nihil Unbound*, undertakes an extensive analysis of Badiou's work, and puts forward a number of his own thoughts on how to approach Badiou's ontological framework (Brassier, 2007: passim, 113-114). What is interesting is that for Brassier, Badiou has constructed an ontology and a means of thinking about Being (and therefore the Event) that precludes any other approaches to thinking about Being, since Badiou has tightly delimited not only the means themselves, but also what it means to think about Being. In doing so, Brassier seems to be suggesting that Badiou has trapped himself in something of an echo chamber, which is to say that his ideas would seem to serve no other purpose than to perpetuate their own existence, which echoes Laruelle's objections that were noted earlier. However, as Badiou suggests in the Introduction to *Being and Event*, 'A subject is manifested locally [...] Therefore, stricto sensu, there is no subject save the artistic, amorous, scientific, or political.' (Badiou, 2005: 17). Hence, we must be aware of the need to treat the ideas that Badiou generates in *Being and Event* carefully, and Brassier's work very much highlights the dangers of operating in such a potentially self-re-enforcing framework. However, this brief passage presents us with a clear indication that Badiou certainly intends that his work on the subject and the subject's relationship to a situation can have a practical focus, to the extent that his model of the subject can only work within the practical and creative contexts that he lists here. Although there may be pitfalls associated with applying Badiou's work to practical contexts, Brassier nevertheless acknowledges that there are a number of valuable consequences to Badiou's work, not least that 'Badiou's inestimable merit is to have disenchanting ontology: 'being' is insignificant, it means, quite literally, nothing, [t]he question of the meaning of being must be abandoned as an antiquated superstition' (Brassier, 2007: 116).

describing the boundaries of our current knowledge, then Badiou's point is that it is impossible that a truth can arise from within our current knowledge. Making something like music therefore draws on a fundamental lack of meaning, and that in order to understand, we must retrospectively confer meaning on the things that we have made; we must remain 'faithful' to them. We don't make things that mean anything, on the contrary, the things we make, are themselves the makers of meaning, which suggests that music can be disruptive precisely because it does not draw on any inherent meaning in the situation that it finds itself in, it forces us to understand it on its own terms. Badiou's subject is therefore not a figure of first-person subjective experience, but instead a means to understand that a creative process is fundamentally about facilitating and creating radical change. In this way, although caution is advised, it is clear that there is much that we can take from Badiou's work, and his ideas have the potential to open up new routes to challenging and developing our thinking in regard to improvisation and creative music practice.

1.1 Making something from nothing

Since the central project of *Being and Event* is the axiomatisation of ontology through a series of logical demonstrations in set theory, early on Badiou establishes the procedure whereby the void, as the underlying principle of being, becomes a working part of a constructive ontology. Badiou uses the symbol ' \emptyset ' to denote the void and in combination with a key axiom of set theory, namely the power-set axiom, he begins the process of creating a structure that underpins his notion of Being and in Meditation Seven, Badiou lays out the process by which we move from the nothing of the void to the something of Being.⁹ In its most basic formation, Badiou describes the way in which \emptyset , as a result of what is known as the power set operation, an operation whereby the set (or total number) of subsets of \emptyset (which Badiou terms $p(\emptyset)$, comes to have an identity written as $\{\emptyset\}$. Badiou calls this the 'singleton' of the void, or the null set, and although the void is the only thing that is contained within this set, (in other words, to all intents and purposes, it looks as though it is a set that is made out of nothing), the power set operation enables us to say that whilst the void in itself it is a 'no-thing', when we count it as part of its own

⁹ One of the more significant implications of Badiou's idea of the void is that it is not only a nothing that is the absence of anything, but it also denotes the impossibility of describing or comprehending what kind of thing that absence-nothing might be. In itself, this double implication relates to a history of philosophical and religious thought that has configured that which is beyond human understanding in a number of ways, most obviously Platonic idealism and Kant's concept of the noumenon. As we shall see in chapter three, in particular when we turn to the work of Quentin Meillassoux and Ray Brassier, our ability to either think of what lies beyond normal experience (which Badiou allows for through the process of 'naming' the void), as opposed to our ability to think about what lies beyond normal experience (which Badiou explicitly does not allow for), has been one of the key issues driving forward recent philosophical enquiry.

power set (the power set of the void), it suddenly becomes a 'some-thing'. Thus in a strangely tautological way, the void becomes a member of its own power set, and thus becomes something that we can recognise and refer to without causing ourselves any problems; in other words, whilst the void itself must remain strictly incomprehensible and non-conceptualisable (since by definition it is meaningless and beyond comprehension), the power set of the void is eminently recognisable and useable. As with any other set, the power set of the void can be thought of as a set just like any other, and can thus be used non-problematically within Badiou's mathematically driven ontological framework. Badiou refers to this process as the 'count-as-one' (Badiou, 2005: 24), and although he uses it in slightly different variations throughout the book, in Meditation Seven, we are given a clear example of the way in which the void as a no-thing, or non-entity, comes to operate as a foundational unit of being. The void is counted-as-one element within a set, which allows us to literally create 'something' from 'nothing'. Having demonstrated and given proof of this operation, Badiou then demonstrates how it is possible to continue this building process, thus generating infinite multiplicities.

Because forming-into-one is a law applicable to any existing multiple, and the singleton $\{\emptyset\}$ exists, the latter's forming-into-one, which is to say the forming-into-one of the forming-into-one of \emptyset also exists: $\{\emptyset\} \rightarrow \{\{\emptyset\}\}$ [...] This is where the unlimited production of new multiples commences, each drawn from the void by the combined effect of the power-set axiom. (Badiou, 2005: 92)

This unfolding of the creative potential of the void as basic building block is a good example of the tension that we identified earlier between the mathematically-driven processes that Badiou develops and his interest in talking about artistic and political processes. However, although there are clearly difficulties, and clearly for some thinkers, a number of basic incompatibilities between mathematical and the practical contexts, Badiou nevertheless provides a stimulating framework within which we can consider the way that creative processes can disrupt and reconfigure a given context by introducing a hitherto unrecognisable or unforeseen element into that context, which for an improviser might be a new approach to organising sonic and musical structures, a new way of using or playing a musical instrument, a new way of setting up interactions with other musicians, or even something as simple as discovering a new sound.

1.2 Situation and presentation

Having discussed some of the underlying themes of *Being and Event*, and acknowledged some of the issues that surround Badiou's work in the book, we can now turn our attention to what, in terms of improvisation, may be one of the most

important components of Badiou's philosophical model, namely the 'situation'. What follows is a detailed exploration of the workings of this idea, which will lead into the particularities of what Badiou refers to as the 'historical situation', a concept that has particular relevance to creative practice, and thus improvisation. In simple terms, we could describe a situation as a context, or a set of conditions that the subject finds themselves in.

Take any situation in particular [...] In general, a situation is not such that the thesis 'the one is not' can be presented therein. On the contrary, because the law is the count-as-one, nothing is presented in a situation which is not counted: the situation envelops existence with the one. (Badiou, 2005: 52)

In this passage, Badiou shows the count-as-one that we worked through earlier, in operation, whereby any given situation results from the forming-into-one of the void. As a subject, we cannot and do not register the non-being of the one that we saw in the forming-into-one / power set procedure, which means that anything within a given situation must function as an unproblematic part of what is given as part of that situation. Badiou uses the term 'consistent multiplicity' to give further clarity to the way in which such a situation can come to have meaning or consistency for a subject within that situation.

Nothing is presentable in a situation otherwise than under the effect of structure, that is, under the form of the one and its composition in consistent multiplicities. (Badiou, 2005: 52)

What is 'presentable' is that which we are able to identify, and therefore if something is presentable within a situation, following Badiou's suggestion that the subject is comparable to an artist-creator, we could therefore imagine that it would be possible to interact with and experience this presented something. 'Consistent multiplicity' refers to the way in which the count-as-one / forming-into-one procedure becomes part of the structure of a situation, and is simply taken to be a normal state-of-affairs within that situation, however, 'inconsistent multiplicity' is only ever, 'retroactively apprehended as non-one as soon as being-one is a result' (Badiou, 2005: 25). An inconsistent multiplicity is therefore a paradoxical feature within a situation, where, although something may purport to be one of its normal components, such that it is presented as part of the count, it is in fact retrospectively revealed to have been an irregularity, a multiple founded on the forming-into-one of the void, which as we shall see, becomes an essential part of the truth procedure.

For an improviser, one of the more relevant aspects of Badiou's conception of the event is the way in which its arrival and occurrence can in some ways be described

as the result of a subject's investigations within their situation. This sense of enquiry will have great relevance to the discussion of improvisation as event later in the chapter, but for now some further close reading of *Being and Event* will provide further insights into how such an investigative process can firstly, produce an event, and secondly, produce the subject itself. Although this latter proposition might appear curious, in that it suggests that a subject's investigations produce an event which produces the subject, in fact, the entire formulation of the arrival of an event is somewhat paradoxical. Again, to help us understand the process, we need to work through more of Badiou's terminology.

Any ordinary situation [...] contains a structure, both secondary and supreme, by means of which the count-as-one that structures the situation is in turn counted-as-one. The guarantee that the one is thus completed by the following: that from which its being proceeds - the count - is. 'Is' means 'is-one' [...] I will hereafter term state of the situation that by means of which the structure of a situation - of any structured presentation whatsoever - is counted as one, which is to say the one of the one-effect itself. (Badiou, 2005: 95)

The idea of the 'state' of the situation is a means of understanding how a situation comes to have consistency as a structure in itself, and the 'second count' allows us to think about the way that the inhabitants of a situation begin to engage with and even alter the contents of that situation; in other words how they begin to interact with and potentially develop their environment. In the above passage, Badiou describes the state as a 'metastructure' which serves as the presenting of what is included in the situation. Thus, 'what is included in a situation, belongs to its state' (Badiou, 2005: 97). This is a vital distinction to make, for although it may appear to be a semantic difference, in fact as we shall see, this process of the second count, or the count of the count-as-one, is fundamental to the summoning of an event. To briefly recap, Badiou sets out a theory of the situation, the elements of which are 'formed-into-one' as a result of the power-set axiom. These elements can therefore be 'counted-as-one' within the situation, and are thus 'included' in the situation, but it is only through a second count, that these elements become 'presented' in the 'state' of the situation. This second count also becomes an included part of the situation, although for Badiou this count is not itself presented in the state.

As we approach the formation of an event, the distinctions between a situation and the state of a situation are of critical importance. In addition, the state of a situation also enables us to think more fully about what an individual's relationship to the situation or context that he or she finds themselves in might mean in practice. Having established the terminology, Badiou frequently makes the shift from the state of the situation as mathematically-derived concept, to state as nation state or

physical state. In Meditation Eight, Badiou tells us that, 'the State is simply the necessary metastructure of every historico-social situation which is to say the law that guarantees that there is Oneness [...] amongst the set of its subsets' (Badiou, 2005: 105). Here we see the direct application of the structuring principle of the state of the situation applied to Badiou's notion of 'historico-social situations', which are situations that do occur in practice and whose inhabitants are people and cultures. Later in the book, Badiou gives the example of 'a family of people [which] is a presented multiple of the social situation and [...] is also a represented multiple, a part, in the sense that each of its members is registered by the registry office, possesses French nationality, and so on' (Badiou, 2005: 174). This more comprehensive application of the state-situation model shows the family unit (or set) as a presented state of a situation, which is itself made up of a number of subsets, that are included in that situation, and that are in themselves situations in other presentations. We can therefore think of the second count as an acknowledgement of the characteristics and function of a situation, seeing something as something, rather than just as a disconnected set of things, similar to understanding a set of people as a family, as in Badiou's example above. If we take this idea of 'seeing something for what it is', then we could think about the way in which a set of sounds, materials and strategies comes to have a consistency as a musical situation, and following this, that an improvisation can also have a particular consistency, which would mean that the elements within a given situation are counted as part of an improvisation. As musicians, we would therefore have a certain relationship with the elements that are presented within a situation, which could influence the way that we engage with those components or influence the kind of outcome that we might expect to create or arrive at.

What is interesting about the concepts of inclusion and presentation is that they enable us to think about and understand that in a given situation (or in a more practical sense, a given environment) there can be different registers of the same thing; which is to say that the things that we relate to and respond to can have different kinds of qualities. Knowing that a group of people are a family, rather than an unconnected collection of adults and children, means that we will have a relationship with that group that is informed by a certain set of knowledges and expectations. In the same way, understanding a musical situation as an improvisation will give us a particular way of engaging with the materials and resources at hand, and give us a certain expectation of the type of outcomes that can be achieved. This provides us with a further indication of the way in which Badiou's project differs from that of Deleuze, and as we begin to engage with the theory of the event in itself, we shall increasingly see Badiou's axiomatic decision to

make use of a mathematically-driven ontology standing in stark contrast to what has been described as Deleuze's more 'problematically' informed approach.¹⁰

Having established a framework that enables us to think about contexts and environments, and the way in which individuals act in relation to those contexts, Badiou moves on to outline the more specific details of the truth procedure. The event is a key component in that procedure, as is what Badiou calls the 'evental site'.

I will term evental site an entirely abnormal multiple; that is, a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation. The site, itself, is presented, but 'beneath' it nothing from which it is composed is presented. As such, the site is not a part of the situation. I will also say of such a multiple that it is on the edge of the void, or foundational. (Badiou, 2005: 175)

The evental site is something of a paradoxical concept that manages to be both a part of a situation and yet at the same time it remains apart from that situation. In setting up the evental site as something that is 'sutured to the void', Badiou is creating a mechanism that enables an event to transform a situation, and he states that, 'every radical transformational action originates in a point, which, inside a situation, is an evental site' (Badiou, 2005: 176). Here, Badiou is emphasising that although an evental site may be identified, this does not mean that an event will necessarily happen. However, without an evental site, an event cannot happen, and therefore the evental site is simply the point at which, if an event is to occur, it will occur there. Positioned as it is simultaneously within a situation and at the edge of the void, the evental site is a specifically located phenomenon and for Badiou, situations that contain at least one evental site are the key mechanisms through which history develops. Indeed as we saw above, Badiou calls such situations 'historical situations', and suggests that they allow us to think about history and development as a contingent 'historicity of certain multiples' (Badiou, 2005: 176).

¹⁰ In his extensive analysis of the way in which work of Deleuze and Badiou is derived from and makes use of mathematical principles, Daniel Smith states that 'for Deleuze, the ontology of mathematics is not reducible to axiomatics, but must be understood much more broadly in terms of the complex tension between axiomatics and what he calls "problematics" [...] For this reason [...] the concept of multiplicity, even within mathematics itself, cannot simply be identified with the concept of a set; rather, mathematics is marked by a tension between extensive multiplicities or sets (the axiomatic pole) and virtual or differential multiplicities (the problematic pole), and the incessant translation of the latter into the former' (Smith, 2003: 2-3). Consequently, we can understand Deleuze's ontology to be informed by a relationship between axiomatics and 'extensive multiplicities' (Smith, 2003: 3), whilst Badiou's work can be regarded as being more fully concerned with axiomatics 'internal to mathematics' (Smith, 2003: 3).

This characterisation of history as the result of a set of shifting and dynamic relationships with the void, via an unfolding of historical situations and evental sites is central to expanding a conception of improvisation, since the various determinations within Badiou's model all relate to the way in which an improviser operates in a context and with a given set of materials in order to produce something that was unexpected, or at least undetermined (and undeterminable) prior to their actions. As such, we could very well describe an improvisation itself as an historical situation, in which the improviser identifies and explores the evental site that lies within it. For example, a musical instrument may allow for the production of certain sounds that have not yet been played, or a group of musicians may have the capacity to interact with each other, but this has not yet happened. New sounds and new structures have the potential to happen, but they might not happen and within a situation, they are not as yet counted-as-one. So how does a subject engage with the evental site in order to catalyse or facilitate the event? How are these new things created?

In Meditation Seventeen, 'The Matheme of the Event', Badiou deepens his exposition of the event and the evental site, and presents us with a question that, not unlike the axiomatic decision that informs the mathematical ontology, forces a decision about the way in which an event appears in a situation. Badiou asks, 'is the event or is it not a term of the situation in which it has its site?' (Badiou, 2005: 181), to which his complex response is that the event is both on the edge of the void, and at the same part of the situation. What this means is that the event has something of a double aspect, one that features as a normal component of a given situation, and a more problematic one that has a similarly more complicated composition that relates to the no-thingness of the void. The reason that this second aspect is problematic is that as we saw earlier, Badiou will not allow for anything of the void to be either included or presented within a situation, save for power set of \emptyset (or $\{\emptyset\}$), which can be counted-as-one. Badiou facilitates the paradoxical relationship between the void, the event and the situation by telling us that the event interposes 'itself between the void and itself' (Badiou, 2005: 182). Although this is a complex procedure, it is at-root driven by the same logic of inclusion and presentation that allows for the forming-into-one of the void, and Badiou informs us that 'this interposition, tied to self-belonging, is the ultra-one, because it counts the same thing as one twice: once as a presented multiple, and once as a multiple presented in its own presentation' (Badiou, 2005: 182). Thus the event comes to have a consistency in the same way that $\{\emptyset\}$ makes the uncountable void a countable subset, meaning that the event is both a product of the situation, but also derived from the presence of the void within that situation. As we shall see, this double aspect of the event is a compelling way to think about an improvisation's capacity to produce unexpected and disruptive results whilst using familiar and recognisable tools. In other words an improvisation, whilst being firmly embedded within a

conventional musical situation (such as a live performance where musicians are using musical instruments to create musical structures) has the potential to give rise to a radical event that might change the way that the musicians make music, or alter the audience's understanding of music. That an event is a legal part of a situation is critical to Badiou's enterprise, for if an event were to solely emanate from the void, then all that could be achieved through the passing of an event would be a naming of the elements involved in its passing: literally, nothing would happen. In simple terms, for an event to happen, it must already be a term, and thus part of the situation that it is in. If the event only presents the elements of its own site, which themselves are outside of the current situation, then nothing is presented and nothing takes place.

To conclude this brief discussion of some of the underlying principles of Badiou's set-theoretical ontology, based as it is on the non-being of the void, we can say that of primary importance is the axiom of decision that runs throughout this model: the decision that the one is not; the decision that the subject takes to discern in the evental site the trace or seed of the event-to-come; and indeed, the decision to accept that the mathematics of set theory is a means by which philosophy can be rejuvenated and directed towards a new theory of the subject.

2. Forcing

Having established this general framework, we can now proceed to look more carefully at the way in which the event occurs, a process that Badiou variously describes as the 'truth procedure', the 'generic procedure' or the 'faithful procedure'. By stepping through the technical details of another of Badiou's mathematical terms, 'forcing', we shall be able to construct a cohesive framework in which to discuss an improviser in relation to Badiou's configuration of the subject in addition to three specific views of improvisation.

Badiou presents us with a conundrum: from within a given situation, wherein everything that is presentable is already counted-as-one, and thus ascertainable, how do we either perceive or manufacture something new? Unlike Deleuze, who as we have seen, looks at the problem from a different perspective, and whose ontological model would not recognise the distinction of being inside or outside a situation in the manner discussed in *Being and Event* (talking instead of the virtual, and populations of intensities); for Badiou, it is essential that a mechanism is constructed that will fully realise the way in which a situation can be changed to include new elements. To achieve this, Badiou asserts that the subject becomes a subject through a process of recognising something beyond, or outside of, the situation that they find themselves in, and adopts another of Cohen's set-theory terms, forcing, to illustrate this process. We have seen how Badiou worked through the mathematical relationship between the void and consistent multiples of the presented situation in order to provide us with an ontological framework, and now we shall see him turn to the relationship between the finite and the infinite (or what Badiou describes as the discernible and the indiscernible) in order to go beyond the confines of a given situation.

Because the subject is a local configuration of the [truth] procedure, it is clear that the truth is indiscernible "for him" - the truth is global [...] a subject which realises a truth, is nevertheless incommensurable with the latter, because the subject is finite, and the truth is infinite. (Badiou, 2005: 396)

Here then is the conundrum: how do we move from the limits of a finite situation, to engage with an infinite that is not presented, or indeed presentable within that situation? This process relies on a further distinction, between knowledge and truth, in order to demarcate what is knowable within a situation (or in Badiou's terms, that which is 'discernible' for the subject) and what can be described as truth, defined by its relationship with the infinite. In this regard, Badiou presents us with the following distinction: 'the subject, being internal to the situation, can only know, or rather encounter, terms or multiples presented (counted as one) in that situation' and 'a truth is an un-presented part of the situation' (Badiou, 2005: 396). The idea that

knowledge is a circumstantial operation, and that it is based on a relationship to things that are given in experience is a central feature of Badiou's work in *Being and Event*, and in many ways pre-figures the work of Quentin Meillassoux that we shall consider in chapter four. Meillassoux uses the term the 'correlation' (Meillassoux, 2008: 5) to describe the way in which certain philosophical traditions have set limits around what is knowable and what is thinkable, and which he sees as leading to a situation wherein nothing can exist that cannot potentially be conceived or thought about. As we shall see, Meillassoux fundamentally disagrees with the so-called 'correlationist' perspectives, and tackles the issue by affirming that it must always be possible to think the unthinkable. Clearly, Badiou uses the void as a means to picture the way in which humans are able to engage with something that is beyond comprehension, and in the truth procedure we see him emphasising the difference between knowledge and truth as a means of balancing our engagement with what is presented to us and that which goes beyond normal conception. Initially, Badiou demonstrates that knowledge itself is made up of two operations: 'discernment (such a presented or thinkable multiple possesses such and such a quality) and classification (I can group together, and designate by their common property, those multiples that I discern as having nameable characteristics in common)' (Badiou, 2005: 328). Knowledge is therefore tightly bound within a set of conditions that are at the very least already definable for the individual subject and unproblematically presented in experience. The important point within Badiou's conception of a situation is that this knowledge alone is not sufficient to move us beyond the current state of the situation: the count-as-one and re-count processes simply confirm what it is that we are able to experience and re-affirms that this experience has taken place. As Badiou states, 'knowledge [of and within a situation] is realised as an encyclopaedia' (Badiou, 2005: 328) which, as suggested above, can be seen to be a correlative assignation of qualities: the encyclopaedia is the subject's knowledge of a situation. That which can be demonstrated or qualified by knowledge, is therefore seen as being veridical and is thus an operator within the encyclopaedia, since knowledge is based on discernment and classification within the situation.

A brief discussion of the importance of infinity within Badiou's ontology will be useful to clarify the importance of the relationship of truth with infinity, which will allow us to go on to work through the generic procedure. Early on in *Being and Event*, Badiou distinguishes the inconsistent nature of being from the consistency of presentation within a situation. At the root of this inconsistency is the unrepresentable void, which is Badiou's means of affirming that, as with Meillassoux, not everything simply exists for the subject. As we have seen, Badiou will only allow us to name the void, ' \emptyset ', but we can come no closer to conceptualising what it actually is. However, the formulation that allows us to use the void as a building block for the consistent multiplicity of a situation, is also the process that allows us to approach the infinite. The forming-into-one procedure that generates the power set of the void (written

$p(\emptyset)$ or $\{\emptyset\}$), is the first stage of a demonstration in set theory that shows that for any set, what is included in that set, in other words, the total of all of the various subsets of that set, will always be in excess of what belongs to the original set.

For example, if a set were to consist of 'all even numbers between 0 and 10', then 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 would belong to this set. However we could very well say that 'the set of numbers that are also multiples of 4' (being 4 and 8), is a subset of the original set, and is therefore included in the set. We could work through this set of even numbers between 0 and 10 to generate a number of subsets, and what would quickly become apparent is that there are more subsets than there are original elements that belong to the set. Badiou calls this the power-set axiom, saying, 'if a set a exists (is presented) then there also exists the set of all its subsets' (Badiou, 2005: 82). The power-set axiom demonstrates that the multiple generated by the count of a set's (or situation's) subsets, is always greater than the original multiple of the set itself. If we follow this principle to its logical conclusion, then we find that 'the presentation of an infinity of multiples structures itself' (Badiou, 2005: 92), which suggests that no matter how large a set is, its existence will always mean that an infinity of larger sets can always be produced.¹¹ Thus we arrive at the boundaries of Badiou's thought: at one end where we see that the foundation of Being is the void, and at the other, that there can be no all-encompassing summation of what is presented and presentable in being: Badiou's mathematical ontology thus challenges us to simultaneously think in terms of the nothingness and limitlessness of being.

Turning our attention once again to the truth procedure, and Badiou's distinction between knowledge and truth, he separates the idea of a 'veridical' statement based on knowledge, from what he sees as a 'true' statement that is based on something is not part of the situation, or more specifically what is not counted-as-one and presented within the situation. Knowledge and truth therefore stand in opposition to each other; the former can be observed within a given situation, whilst the latter is beyond knowledge and can only come into being as a result of an event. For Badiou, truth is the result of 'fidelity', it is constructed via a faithful procedure, one that affirms the subject's connection to both the void and the infinite, although it is also important to bear in mind that at no time does Badiou suggest that the subject comes into direct contact with the void: the faithful relationship is simply the result of the subject's engagement with what is outside of,

¹¹ The self-structuring or self-generating of this 'infinity of multiples' provides us with a key insight into Badiou's disagreement with Deleuze's concept of the one-all, since the power set axiom demonstrates that there is no such thing as 'all', only infinity. For Badiou, mathematics proves that there can be no such thing as 'everything', because there can be no set that includes everything, and therefore, even the thought that there could be anything like a totality of being is completely unsupportable.

and what is temporarily not counted as part of the situation. This faithful procedure, otherwise called the truth procedure, or generic procedure, is the means by which the subject comes to be defined (and to define themselves) in relation to an event; and Badiou offers a number of illustrations of this process in action.

One example that is particularly relevant to our investigation is what Badiou calls 'the Schönberg-event' (Badiou, 2009: 80), appears in *Logics of Worlds*, described as the 'sequel' to *Being and Event* (also subtitled *Being and Event II*).¹² We shall discuss some of the intricacies of this idea later in the chapter, but for now, to give an impression of what Badiou means by the word 'truth' in the context of the truth procedure, it will be helpful to mention his use of the Schönberg-event to describe the transition from the functional diatonic harmony that underpinned Western classical music up until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the Atonalism and Serialism of the early-to-mid 20th century. This is not a verifiable truth as such, in that Schönberg was certainly not the only composer to have been making use of chromatic and non-standard harmonic arrangements and structures in his work, however, the 'truth' of the Schönberg-event describes and alludes to a set of faithful connections that retrospectively shaped a revolution in the language of Western music. This a greatly simplified version of Badiou's account of the development of Serialist music, but at this stage Badiou's description of the Schönberg-event as a twenty year process helps us to understand that his version of what constitutes a truth is not one that relies on verifiable evidence: knowledge is based on evidence; truth is the result of fidelity. How, then, did we move from tonal music to Serialism? How do we pass from knowledge to truth? How to become, as Peter Hallward suggests, a subject to truth? To move beyond the conundrum of the evental site, the subject must embark on a series of enquiries. At this stage, it is important to note that the focus of these enquiries is not a truth, or an event, instead the subject is simply trying to identify the name of the event. Although this seems to be a slightly curious line of enquiry, it is in fact a critical part of the process, for identifying the name of the event rather than the event itself allows for a non-contradiction within the mathematical model of the generic procedure, that is similar to using \emptyset to refer to the 'name' of the void, rather than the void itself. The event, as with the void, cannot be encountered from within a situation, and so instead Badiou uses this process of naming as a means of building a connection to that which formally sits outside of a situation.

¹² Throughout *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou makes use of the original spelling of Arnold Schönberg's surname. The composer changed the more commonly used spelling to 'Schoenberg' in 1933 or 1934 after his move to the United States of America.

We need to further clarify what we mean by truth, and identify exactly what criteria exist that can verify its truth. We know that a truth cannot exist within a situation, that it cannot be the result of finite knowledge. This is another way of saying that, unless the subject's enquiries within a situation result in the uncovering of a truth that is outside of the finite presentation of the situation (what Badiou refers to as a 'finite set of [...] minimal reports [...] a "finite state" of the process of fidelity' (Badiou, 2005: 330)), then it is not a truth, it is knowledge.¹³ But at the same time, the enquiries are only able to access what is within a situation, therefore a truth must in some way be a part of the situation. Thus we come to the interplay between finite and infinite multiples within a situation, making reference to the earlier discussion of the void as founding principle within any multiple. Again, if we follow Badiou's line of reasoning, we can see that the truth enters the subject's field of perception not as an object of understanding (which would require a connection to something outside of the situation), but as an object of knowledge (and therefore something that exists non-problematically within the situation). But if truth is infinite, then how do we recognise it and how can we have any kind of engagement with it?

¹³ The finitude of this process is important, as it does not contradict the count-as-one process: what the subject is looking for, and what they are able to find, are all perfectly 'legal' and presentable elements within the situation, thus the target of these finite enquiries can be recognised without transgressing any of the principles of set-theory that we have so far seen Badiou invoke. In other words, the subject is looking for knowledge and not truth, and Badiou makes it clear that during their enquiries, the subject is able to non-problematically observe the elements of their finite situation: anything beyond this, as discussed in terms of our knowledge of the void, is inconceivable, as we can literally have no knowledge of anything outside of the situation. In a practical sense, these finite reports about the presence of the 'name of the event', are an attempt to identify fluctuations, anomalies, possibilities or even gaps in our immediate environment or creative context and Badiou uses the algebraic functions $x(+)$ and $x(-)$ to denote whether or not the enquiries identify a connection to the name of the event. Practical or mathematical, the driving force behind this enquiry is a decision: we must decide to commit ourselves to a future that may or may not unfold, and thus make a decision about whether certain elements are part of the event or not.

Badiou uses the event-site (or what he also terms the 'evental site') as part of a set of non-contradictory conditions that are within the framework that he has assembled for himself, where $x(+)$ and $x(-)$ denote connection or non-connection of the results of the subject's enquiries to the name of the event. This relation or non-relation is central to the way in which truth can be validated within what Badiou described above as the 'truth procedure', and he states: 'if a truth exists - the multiple-referent of [...] fidelity (the one-truth) is a part of the situation: the part which groups together all of the terms positively connected to the name of the event [all the $x(=)$'s]' (Badiou, 2005: 338). Hence a truth exists only if the results of the finite enquiry are positive $x(+)$.

In order for the model to work, Badiou must create the conditions that will allow the finite situation of knowledge and discernment, and the infinite truth that is indiscernible and generic, to co-exist.¹⁴ As a result, what is included in the situation as an indiscernible inconsistent multiplicity, can become presented in the situation as a discernible consistent multiple. Badiou achieves this by providing the necessary means of determining the truthfulness of the subject's enquiries, which will catalyse the event:

[I]f an infinite faithful procedure contains at least one finite enquiry which avoids an encyclopaedic determinant, then the infinite positive result of that procedure (the class of $x(+)$'s) will not coincide with that part of the situation whose knowledge is designated by this determinant [...] We have thus clearly formulated a condition for the infinite and positive result of a faithful procedure avoiding - not coinciding with - a determinant of the encyclopaedia. (Badiou, 2005: 337)

Whilst it is important for us to grasp the underlying mechanics of Badiou's mathematical modelling, Christopher Norris captures this sense of non-coincidence in a way that is perhaps more tangible:

What most often brings this about is the act or process of 'indiscernment' whereby thought is enabled ... to exceed the present-best capacities of knowledge or formal-demonstrative proof and to do so, moreover, through a grasp (albeit a not fully conscious or deliberative grasp) of the particular gap, deficiency, lack, conceptual shortfall or other such impediment that has hitherto stood in the way of any such advance. (Norris, 2009: 240)

Here, Norris is suggesting that Badiou does not argue for the subject's full recognition of the potential with a given situation to create an event, with a

¹⁴ Badiou's modelling of the event involves the interaction of a number of concepts that to some degree are interchangeable, or at least serve to describe the behaviour of a similar function within the set-theory model. For example, what Badiou puts forward as 'knowledge' is another way of describing that which is discernible within a situation. Similarly, 'an indiscernible inclusion [in a situation], in short, is a truth' (Badiou, 2005: 338). So knowledge is 'discernible', whilst truth is 'indiscernible'. But the indiscernible is also another way to speak of what Badiou calls the 'generic'. Although to a large extent, these two terms are interchangeable, the indiscernible suggests that something is undetectable or even indiscernible in a conventional and non-Badiouian sense, whereas the generic alludes to that which 'does not allow itself to be discerned [and which] is in reality the general truth of a situation' (Badiou, 2005: 327). However, both the indiscernible and the generic attest to the fact that fundamentally, what a situation is grounded on is a truth; a truth that, as detailed above, is both infinite and the formed-into-one of the void.

particular set of characteristics, rather that the subject recognises the shortcomings of the situation, and thus the potential for change or modification. In a way, Norris is suggesting that we would recognise the possibility of making something new, not because we had spotted an opportunity to develop something, but because we had identified an irregularity in the situation, which suggests that something new is made, not by building on what was already present, but by filling a gap where something was missing.¹⁵ There is also a strong practical sense here of recognising that we have made something, which in itself echoes Badiou's own comments about 'being quite aware of having written a 'great' book of philosophy' (Badiou, 2005: xi). Forcing is therefore not only about searching out and identifying a gap, but it is also knowing that something has been made, something new has occurred: this is the 'militancy' that Badiou speaks of, in that the affirmation of the new must be a disruptive act, but it has no prior point of reference.¹⁶ Badiou himself states that, 'art, science and politics do change the world, not by what they discern, but by what they indiscern therein' (Badiou, 2005: 343), which is to say, it is not that a subject necessarily grasps what is missing, but is able however to grasp that something is missing, that the current situation is incomplete. In effect, this process of indiscernment, the ability to detect incompleteness within a situation, is an intuitive understanding that the situation we find ourselves in is ultimately founded on, contaminated with, or at least permeated, by the void, which Badiou confirms by stating that 'what qualifies the name of the event is that it is drawn from the void' (Badiou, 2005: 329). Therefore, although the event is not part of the encyclopaedia,

¹⁵ As we shall see in chapter four, Reza Negarestani develops Deleuze and Guattari's image of 'holey space' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 413) when he lays out his vision of the '()hole complex', (Negarestani, 2008: 42), in order to convey the sense that, whilst a 'solid body' can be corrupted or undermined by a 'vermiculation of holes', it is in fact 'irreducible to nothingness'. What is interesting in this regard, is that whilst, for Badiou, a consistency would result from the count-as-one, and that the subject's finite enquiries into the name of the event could be seen as a search for what Norris is referring to as 'gaps' or 'shortfalls', in Negarestani's reading, such a consistency would continuously being permeated by holes, whether a subject was making enquiries or not. Whilst this demonstrates that there are significant differences in the way that various philosophers are conceiving of the relationship between a normal, or 'presentable' situation and an unknowable absolute or void that underpins that situation, Negarestani's ()hole complex provides a useful illustration of the way in which Badiou's thought is part of a wider contemporary philosophical enterprise that is working to demonstrate that, whilst the radically new arises within a recognisable context, what makes it new is that it is fundamentally outside of any given context or knowledge.

¹⁶ In the Preface to *Being and Event*, Badiou informs us that, 'A subject is nothing other than an active delity to the event of truth. This means that a subject is a militant of truth. I philosophically founded the notion of 'militant' at a time when the consensus was that any engagement of this type was archaic. Not only did I found this notion, but I considerably enlarged it. The militant of a truth is not only the political militant working for the emancipation of humanity in its entirety. He or she is also the artist-creator, the scientist who opens up a new theoretical eld, or the lover whose world is enchanted.' (Badiou, 2005: xiii)

we have reached the point at which we can at least conceptualise a move from the finite confines of the situation, to a faithful engagement with the infinite. In practical terms, the result will be a recount of the situation, one that will include the event as the result of the truth procedure as part of a new encyclopaedia.

In its most basic formulation, forcing in set-theory ontology enables us to establish, or at least decide, that it is possible for an inhabitant of a given situation to believe that there can be a relation between what belongs to the generic situation and what is presented in the original situation.^{17 18} As we saw with the principle of indiscernibility and the generic, it is strictly impossible that this inhabitant is able to have any knowledge of something that is outside of their situation. However, Badiou allows that the inhabitant can believe that something outside of their situation is possible, and that a relation between what is inside and outside of the situation can be generated.

Badiou lays out forcing in such a way so as to demonstrate that it allows an inhabitant of a situation to imagine and then generate the necessary non-paradoxical relation between what is given, or at least what can be given, in experience and that which is inaccessible to experience.

Any veracity on the extension will allow itself to be conditioned in the situation. The result, and this is absolutely capital, will be the following: although an inhabitant of the situation does not know anything of the indiscernible, and so of the extension, she is capable of thinking that the belonging of such a condition to a generic description is equivalent to the veracity of such a statement within that extension. She does so with the nominal resources of the situation alone, without having to represent that

¹⁷ Badiou tells us that he adapts the term 'forcing' from Cohen's mathematical formulation whereby a relationship, or correspondence, between certain variables within a situation and its generic extension are forcibly generated, or simply forced.

¹⁸ The generic extension, or generic situation, contains both the original situation and the evental site, and it is through the event that the generic extension becomes the new situation. If the evental site is the set of conditions within which a change to a situation can be constructed, such as the example of the Schönberg-event wherein all the elements of atonalism were already available (namely diatonic harmonic theory - the inverse of atonality - and the physical capabilities of instruments to achieve the unregulated, chromaticised harmonic language of atonalism), then the generic extension is the zone in which the subject has discerned the potential to bring about change. The generic extension contains the current situation as well as the situation-to-come. At the same time, in order for the subject to become aware of the evental site as an unproblematic element within the current situation, the generic extension must also be part of that situation. The underlying message here is that the subject is 'self-making', suggesting that in a very real sense, we are the masters of our own destiny.

truth (without having to know of the existence of the generic extension.
(Badiou, 2005: 411)

This is the central component of forcing that again pre-empts Meillassoux's correlation, in that forcing is a procedure that allows for what is not allowed or possible in a situation to become possible. It makes the unthinkable, thinkable. Or in the technical terminology of *Being and Event*, the 'veracity in a generic extension is controllable within the situation by the relation of forcing' (Badiou, 2005: 428), where veracity is a property that is observable by the inhabitant of a situation, and the situation-to-come of the generic extension (including as it does the current situation) is therefore potentially discernible for the inhabitant. This is a fascinating process, in that it involves a high degree of speculation on the part of the inhabitant or inhabitants of the situation, and the conditioning of the indiscernible parts of the generic extension into the discernible elements of the situation seem to come about entirely through the activities of those inhabitants. This in itself is a powerful affirmation of creative agency, that puts thought and action at the heart of a productive process. If as Badiou suggests, a truth is something that results from a series of enquiries, beliefs and procedures, then we can apply this sense of truth to the creation of music in a number of ways. If we once more consider Badiou's distinction between veracity and truth, he tells us that,

The discernible is veridical. But the indiscernible alone is true. There is no truth apart from the generic, because only a faithful procedure aims at the one of situational being. A faithful procedure has as its infinite horizon being-in-truth. (Badiou, 2005: 339)

The faithful procedure is thus the activation of unknowns in the generation of becoming, and the final section of this chapter will thus foreground this ideas in order to offer a possible account of improvisation as music-yet-to-come, of improvisation as forcing.

3. Three views of the subject as improviser

3.1 The AMM event

Having established a working model of Badiou's set theory ontology, we shall now turn to three examples of thinking about improvisation put forward by musicians. The aim here is to use the truth procedure and forcing in order to explore these practitioner perspectives, thereby generating a new means to articulate and interpret what improvisation is and what it can do.

Our first example is from the improvising percussionist Eddie Prevost, who, alongside Cornelius Cardew, was a founder member of the improvising ensemble AMM in the 1960s. AMM, emerged at a pivotal point in the development of free improvisation, where a number of different musical and conceptual themes were beginning to form into a recognisable approach to the production of music. The members of AMM, whose interests and experience combined contemporary European electronic and classical music, jazz and fine art, built on the processes and aesthetics of these musics and practices to assemble an approach to music making that was self-consciously exploratory and open-ended. As Prevost describes, AMM was an 'improvisatory project - not without its difficulties - [which] involved creating music as if it was being made for the first time' (Prevost, 2004: 357). Such a description suggests something of a willful naivety on the part of the musicians, a deliberate divorcing of themselves from the accepted codes of musical composition within their own culturally and historically located situation. The AMM project was thus a deliberate rejection of conventional compositional methodologies and of fixed and pre-anticipated musical outcomes. Indeed, such was their determination to make a radical break with a range of classically and jazz-influenced styles that their performances and recordings were themselves a process of asking questions about the nature of 'music' itself. The AMM musicians' objective to create music 'as if for the first time', suggests a desire to make something out of nothing, a music without precursor, an image that resonates powerfully with the sense in which Badiou describes the forming-into-one of the void. As such, we can imagine AMM music as an 'evental music', that is, a music that in some way reflects the truth procedure.

Prevost's own admission that, 'the form AMM music subsequently took followed practice [...] The resultant music (if "music" is an acceptable term in this context) very quickly became self-referential and was called AMM music' (Prevost, 2004: 357), draws a number of parallels with Badiou's use of the term fidelity. We could very well understand the coming into being or forming-into-one of AMM music to be the result of a commitment that was made to the existence of the evental site within the generic extension of music, and that the subsequent 'following of

practice' that characterised AMM's approach to music making is an example of Badiou's sense of the future anterior. It is worth pausing briefly to reflect on what the future anterior is, as it will inform a number of our discussions from this point on. In his unfolding of forcing, Badiou tells us that,

A subject always declares meaning in the future anterior. What is present are terms of the situation on the one hand, and names of the subject language on the other. Yet this distinction is artificial because the names, being themselves presented (despite being empty), are terms of the situation. What exceeds the situation is the referential meaning of the names; such meaning exists solely within the retroaction of the existence (thus of the presentation) of an indiscernible part of the situation. (Badiou, 2005: 400)

The future anterior is therefore something of an attempt to see into the future, of having the confidence to think that not only will something happen, but that something will have happened, and that we can imagine ourselves looking back as a future-subject at an event that will have by then happened in the past. The future anterior is a practical visioning of the indiscernible generic: we cannot see into the future, but we can have faith that a future will arrive, we can imagine what it will be like, and we can even imagine a future self, looking back and seeing how the future was created. Following this, we could say that AMM music was formed by the musicians' suspension of adherence to the given codes of musical practice within the situation presented to them, believing instead in a possible music that might come to exist in a future, generic extension of their situation. Retrospectively, we can say that this music did come into being, it is what AMM music was. The AMM music-event, which was borne out by the musicians' anterior fidelity to the practice of AMM music, subsequently became the 'self-referential' phenomenon AMM music.

It is useful to consider the creation of music in this way, as it offers a valuable insight into what a musician might otherwise describe as musical intuition or insight. Certainly, the time-based, ineffable qualities of music (especially improvised music) are redolent of the truth procedure, in the way that the evolution of musical aesthetics and compositional processes bears some relation to the process of making a conscious decision to grasp at something that we cannot quite perceive, of having faith that the process of mutating and modifying current conventions will result in something. This sense of going beyond the confines of what is given in knowledge, of reaching for that which is beyond current understanding or comprehension, is picked up by Prevost later in his career as he continues to map the improvisatory process. In *The First Concert, An Adaptive Appraisal of a Meta Music*, Prevost discusses the way in which the practice of improvising music, draws certain parallels with the notion of ecstasy. Following his own interpretation of the notion of 'ecstasy', Prevost states that, whilst improvising, musicians, 'loosen [their]

own boundaries [and] exist within another dimension [...] I recall my own playing with early AMM. There was a common experience of being lost within the music' (Prevost, 2011: 87). It is certainly tempting to speculate that this enraptured state of 'being lost within the music' could in some way be identified with becoming aware of a generic extension, where the familiar confines of the current situation no longer serve to work as a satisfying structure that contains the everything that might be possible on experience. Whilst Badiou is very much against any sense of mysticism, and his mathematised subject is pitched against any kind of affective experience, this losing of one's self in music conveys a similar sentiment to Norris' reading of Badiou, whereby we become lost in the familiarity of the situation because of the gaps and fissures that the search for the generic extension uncovers. Prevost's description of a musician's experience of disorientation or 'lost-ness' follows from his conviction that, 'we know we are listening [...] we stand, as it were, outside of ourselves and see ourselves as observant beings' (Prevost, 2011: 86), which not only conveys a sense of searching and anticipating, but also describes the way in which a musician pays close attention to their own performance as part of a larger network of activity. During an improvisation, we listen to the sounds around us: sounds made by other musicians, by the environment, the sounds we make ourselves, as well as the whole sound that is being created moment-by-moment by all of these elements, and we use a musical instrument or our voice to respond in some way. If we were to call this a sonic situation, then we could count as elements within that situation all of the sounds that are occurring. In addition we can add the musician's instrumental technique, alongside the range of musical variables such as structures, combinations of sound and harmonic theory. This process of standing outside of ourselves, is analogous to the second count of the situation, which generates the state of the situation. Prevost's musician, lost in the music and 'outside' of themselves, is momentarily detached from the normal count of the situation, and recounts themselves as part of an improvisation-situation. As such, the musician, through an act of forcing-as-improvisation, themselves becomes one of the set of variables among all those that are presented in the situation, thus enabling him or her to continue to improvise, with a fidelity to the sounds, ideas and materials that are available to them within the 'situation' of the improvised performance.

In the track 'Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset' (from the record *AMMMUSIC 1966*), a two-part document of a performance that features violin, cello, transistor radio, electric guitar, percussive, prepared piano and saxophone, we hear an improvisation that might help to illustrate some of Prevost's thoughts, and to give a sense of the AMM event. In terms of the sonic details, there are audible references to the music of composer Morton Feldman in the way that the pianist, Cornelius Cardew, makes intermittent use of chordal clusters and sparse runs of notes

throughout the two parts of the track.¹⁹ The piano is played using traditional technique, but some preparations are also audible (adaptations on the strings to create more percussive and less conventionally tuned sounds), and it also sounds as if Cardew is also directly manipulating the piano's strings. So the overall effect is of a 'detuned' piano – an approach that had provenance at least as far back as Henry Cowell and possibly Charles Ives, but was brought into wider awareness by John Cage's work, perhaps most famously in the *Sonatas and Interludes*, for prepared piano (1946-48). From approximately 3 minutes into part one until the start of part two, the two string instruments (violin and cello) sustain a drone whilst these interjections from the piano, along with percussion, continue, although there is no obvious interplay between any of these instruments, which certainly suggests that the music has not been designed to convey a feeling of moving away from, or towards, a particular point.

The use of 'found sound' that results from the use of radio broadcasts that appear throughout the track sets add to the idea that the musicians are not following, or responding to what is happening around them. Instead the broadcasts act as a widening of the sound field, functioning as an acknowledgement that what we are hearing is only a small part of a much wider set of sonic possibilities. The radio broadcasts are both a part of the sound that we are listening to, but they also serve as a reminder that there is a certain indifference present in the way that all of the sounds are working (or not working) together. The radio broadcasts do not reflect or respond to the rest of the sounds that the AMM musicians are making, and the musicians are not obviously responding to what they are hearing around them. Again the fact that there is a fade-out at the end of the track, suggests that the music that AMM were making, was intended to convey the idea that it was only ever partially involved in or related to other sound and music that was happening around it, that *AMMMusic* was a music that could start and stop at any point, and that it did not adhere to conventional notions for structuring music.

Clearly, there is also a reflection of John Cage's use of radios (the piece *Imaginary Landscape IV* for twelve radios being the most obvious example), which further enhances the feeling of indeterminacy and indifference that is present in the music, not only the the indeterminacy of the decisions being made within the performance, but also the indeterminacy of the sound sources themselves. Along with this, it could be said that Cage's experiments with location, which he formally explored as part of the *Variations* series of compositions (*Variations IV* being a good example of

¹⁹ By the mid-1960s, a number of Feldman's key contributions to the development of 20th century music had already been made, most notably his approach to using graphic notation, which established a particular approach to working with duration that we can hear Cardew emulating to a degree. In a piece such as *Projections II*, within a specified set of timeframes, Feldman allowed performers to select their own note pitches, number of notes and note durations, which conveyed a sense in the music that sounds were ebbing in and out of existence, rather than working to achieve a defined outcome.

his interests in multi-location and multiple sound sources pieces), are also a backdrop for AMM's approach on this record.

There's certainly a fidelity here, a 'response' of sorts to the musical and sonic contexts of the time; Feldman, Cage, possibly even La Monte Young in the sense that the piece's extended duration and fade out (suggesting that quite literally the piece could conceivably go on forever). This music is thus a playing-out of a mid-1960s musical situation; there is without doubt a history and a context that the music is embedded within. Droning strings, atonal piano clusters, prepared piano sounds, abstract percussion, towards the end of the second segment (19 minutes onwards) a reference to the free jazz of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Prevost much more kinetic use of the snare drum – rolls, patterns on the drum's rim – combined with a saxophone performance that clearly bears the mark of someone who had listened to the playing of Eric Dolphy, with overblown notes, arrhythmic phrasing and irregular intervallic leaps. These genre references suggest that style can become content, where the cultures and histories all become a part of a musical decision making process, that goes beyond making choices about how to move the fingers, hands or mouth to adjust how an instrument is making sounds.

As a result, what remains as an abiding response to listening to these early AMM recordings is that musical technique, whilst it is clearly a fundamental part of what is happening, in that it enables the musicians to play their instruments, is somewhat offset. A piece such as 'Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset' is not an exploration of sound or of musical possibilities via instrumental technique, instead it is an opening out to a wider set of both sonic, and to an extent, conceptual resources. Thus, we have a music that both draws on what we can hear – layered drones, piano and percussion interjections, free jazz-style saxophone, random radio sounds – but also on the idea of bringing these elements into the context of an improvised performance. This is not the sound of a pre-structured performance, of a calculated and timed set of occurrences in the vein of a Cage, or even a Feldman-style indeterminate composition. Instead this is an intuitive 'letting-in' of sound, a decision to let things happen and to work through a set of variables with perseverance and patience.

One of the most striking aspects of these early recordings is the sense in which the AMM musicians – unlike their jazz, free jazz and soon-to-be free improvisation contemporaries – are not playing 'with' each other. They are not playing along, they are mutually playing and composing. This could very well be summed up within the context of the 'AMM event', but what is important is that this is not manifested in the sounds that we hear – it would be possible to make a music that sounded 'like' the tracks on *AMMMUSIC* – but that this idea can be inferred from what we are hearing. That seems to sit at the heart of the way in which we might want to talk

about an AMM event, which does not mean that the music has certain characteristics, but that there is an approach in action that could lead to any number of outcomes. A later AMM record, *It Had Been An Ordinary Enough Day In Pueblo, Colorado*, context is less satisfying in this context, since we can hear more of a dynamic interplay between the two musicians – for example from 9'50 to 11'25 on the track 'Radio Activity' – where there is a more dynamic drumming style from Eddie Prevost that counterpoints the busier, and distorted, guitar playing of Keith Rowe. On this later recording, whilst the use of a radio still brings with it a sense of a sonic continuum that the AMM musicians are only part of, there is much more a sense of Prevost and Rowe trying to create something, rather than acknowledging that their musical activity is part of a greater whole.

All the way through the twenty seven minutes and fifty three seconds of 'Later During a Flaming Riviera Sunset', the various sounds 'sound' disconnected, as if each instrument is in its own world, and that each musician is less concerned with playing along with the other instruments, than being part of a field of sound. We could call this 'parallel' play rather than 'interactive' play, where the guiding principle seems to be one of patience, of having the confidence and forbearance to persist in laying out and exploring a particular set of sounds, techniques, ideas. Overall, the music communicates a feeling that each musician is embedded within their own field of ideas, whilst recognising that there is a larger field of sound that they are part of. Thus, what seems to be critical to an understanding of an AMM event is the idea that the musicians are part of something that goes beyond their particular actions and intentions.

Clearly, a musician improvising in the present day would be informed by a different set of variables than the AMM musicians, or others who would have been improvising in the 1960s. Badiou's discussion of historical situations is again useful here, where he writes, 'In *Theorie du sujet*, I introduced the thesis that History does not exist [...] We can think the historicity of certain multiples, but we cannot think a History' (Badiou, 2005: 176). Badiou's disavowal of history is relevant since, in the context of music, the relationship between, for example, a musical improvisation in the 1940s and one in the twenty-first century operates via a series of historical situations. Each of these historical situations that has led to a future anterior fidelity, that, within the compass of improvised music, could be seen by the casual observer as constituting the post-war history of improvised music, from the proto-free improvisational experiments of Lennie Tristano,²⁰ through to the contemporary

²⁰ In 1949, the pianist Lennie Tristano organised and directed what are widely recognised as being the first two recorded examples of 'free' improvisation, the tracks 'Intuition' and 'Digression'. For David Toop, the recordings represent, 'the most audacious experiment [that had] yet [been] attempted in jazz', where, using only their skill and intuition, Tristano and five other musicians

approaches of musicians such as Rhodri Davies, Peter Evans, Mark Wastell and John Butcher.²¹ However, from a Badiouian perspective, there is no chain of events as such, only a historicity; in other words, we have constructed a historical narrative retrospectively. As such, we would have to think of each development in improvised music as a distinct entity, a rupture that is arrived at through a faithful procedure. Later in the chapter, we shall look at how Badiou's work might be contextualised within the idea of a continuum, but in this instance, if we think of all the various improvisations that have occurred since Tristano's improvised music experiments in the late 1940s, then we can say that these make up something of a universal improvisation situation. In other words, although there cannot be a single individual who can have knowledge (both in the traditional as well as the Badiouian sense of the word) of all of the improvisations that have taken place since the 1940s, they are potentially available to an improviser as a set of reference points, either as audio visual documents, or as written or verbal accounts. Badiou's rejection of history is a rejection of what he sees as a conventional version of 'historical progress' (Badiou, 2005: xxiv) as proposed by Hegel, where an 'absolute knowledge' of history, can be arrived at that proposes history as an evolutionary process. Badiou is much more interested in looking at the way in which events are always contingent: something else could happen, or maybe nothing could happen, hence his use of the generic set as a way of presenting the potential occurrence of an outcome, rather than a definite outcome with a given set of features. Hence the term historicity: the gathering together of a set of events and faithful subjects into a context, rather than the presentation of an inexorable chain of development.

Even now, contemporary experiments in noise, chance, musical naivety or even incompetency, experiments in genre and other attempts at going beyond an accepted approach to spontaneous musical composition, are all strategies that affirm an initial fidelity to a set of events that have structured our current knowledge about improvised music making. Prevost describes the music of AMM as 'laminal' to convey the sense in which during an AMM performance, layers of sound were built up over each other, often making it difficult for an audience, (and often the players themselves) to identify a point of origin for many, if not all, of the sounds that were

created 'a spontaneous music that would at once be atonal, contrapuntal, and improvised on a jazz base' (Toop, 2016: 102). Tristano's recordings are therefore a useful point from which to plot a 'historicity' of freely improvised music.

²¹ Davies' *Wound Response* (2012), Evans' *Nature / Culture* (2009), Wastell's *Vibra* (2005) and Butcher's *Invisible Ear* (2003) are all examples of the way in which musical improvisation is an increasingly divergent and specialised practice, and in this selection alone, we can hear musicians using musical technique, instrument modification, electronic treatment of sound as well as interaction with the acoustic properties of the performance environment as a means to trigger the spontaneous creation of music.

being created.²² This laminal approach could very much be described as the AMM-event, or the laminal-improvisation-event, since the way in which both Prevost and Cornelius Cardew (another founder member of AMM) discuss the amorphous music of AMM are retrospective and anterior descriptions of their improvising process. As with the truth procedure, if the AMM musicians came to have faith in a possible outcome (an outcome that they could not discern from their position within the situation of an improvisation), then the process of making music, alongside the retrospective understanding that a music had been made 'as if for the first time' that is captured in the concept of 'laminal' improvisation, is an example of an event and a subject-to-truth being created.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Prevost's musical contemporary Evan Parker, along with Derek Bailey, was also experimenting with musical and sonic form and developed a much more jarring, 'pointillist' and dynamic style of playing with ensembles such as the Music Improvisation Company (MIC).²³ MIC's self-titled debut album showcased a style of playing that Prevost has described as 'atomistic', where the musicians created short sonic statements, often sparking off each other in an antiphonal way, or building up explosive sound masses that gave the music a very forward-driven momentum.²⁴ We could very well describe Parker's work at this time as the 'atomistic-improvisation-event', since this moment-to-moment, intensely dynamic and florid style was developed through performance practice and experimentation, in the spirit of musical (and Badiouian) enquiry, in a similar way to the laminal approach of AMM. Although both atomistic and laminal playing are very much part of a contemporary vocabulary for discussing and making improvised music, in terms of Badiouian historicity, whilst this might be normally regarded as a history of improvised music, we can now think about improvisation as encompassing a more dynamic set of historical events.

We can thus summarise Prevost's idea of an improvising musician standing outside of themselves, as a casting about for a trace of something beyond or in addition to

²² In the essay entitled 'The Discourse of a Dysfunctional Drummer', Prevost describes the "'laminal" effect' of AMM's approach to improvisation that resulted from the layering together of 'individual contributions' (Prevost, 2004: 357). Prevost goes on to contrast this laminal effect with an 'atomistic' approach to 'combining' individual contributions, wherein particular sounds, phrases and gestures can more readily be associated with a particular musician.

²³ In painting, pointillism is a technique whereby points or dots of colour are used to form an image, in much the same way as pixels make up contemporary digital images. The term has been adopted by a number of writers and musicians to describe a particular approach to playing that consists of making short musical gestures, often just a single note or chord, as opposed to longer, more developed phrases. David Toop quotes the saxophonist Trevor Watts' description of the evolution of this particular style, 'I think that trying to sound like [drum] stick patterns, or play rhythmically in the gaps, was the beginning of Evan Parker's staccato style and Derek Bailey's more pointillistic side' (Watts, in Toop, 2016: 263).

²⁴ See note 13

what is given in experience. This exercise is located in the fissure between the finitude of the situation and the infinity of truth. Badiou uses the concept of the local and the global in order to frame this difference:

Because the subject is a local configuration of the procedure, it is clear that the truth is indiscernible 'for him' - the truth is global [...] a subject which realises a truth, is nevertheless incommensurable with the latter, because the subject is finite, and the truth is infinite. (Badiou, 2005: 396)

The situation in this sense is a correlation: we can only know what there is to know and we can only think the thinkable. Badiou tells us here that it is impossible for a subject to engage with a truth, because a subject and a truth are incommensurable: they are different types of thing and truth remains 'indiscernible' for the subject. However, the generic can be 'indiscerned' and if we think of our subject-as-improviser, then it is through their indiscernment of the generic within music, their enquiry into the presence of the evental site, that an improvisation-event can occur. As such, an improvisation is a recognising of the generic and then a resulting decision to bring into play what was indiscerned, as Prevost suggests, this may well be the result of musicians 'stepping outside' of themselves. Thus, the importance of faith within Badiou's conception of the event alongside the question of the inhabitant's ability to think, suppose or otherwise imagine that there exists something beyond the scope of their immediate situation is not only central to Badiou's mathematical ontology, but in an albeit modified fashion, is also fundamental to the process of improvising.²⁵

²⁵ Whilst for our current purposes, we have designated the musician's situation as their immediate musical environment or context, with reference to George Lewis' work on Afrological and Eurological trajectories, we could also consider the way in which cultural and racial histories can make up an equally significant situation-as-point-of-reference for musicians, and we could even talk of musicians being subject (either intentionally or unknowingly) to the truth of Afrological and / or Eurological perspectives. Similarly, in regard to the British improvisers that are discussed here, we might also wish to speculate on the way in which class and socio-economic background can also play a key role in determining the parameters of a musician's situation, and the kinds of truth that they might be subject to, as suggested by Ben Watson in his discussions of both Derek Bailey himself, and the drummer Tony Oxley, in *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation*, where suggests that both Bailey's and Oxley's attitudes and approach towards music draw on their working-class backgrounds, relaying Oxley's view that 'My music is basically political by its existence, because it can't deny the background. If you come from such a place as we come from, you do understand the functions and the different strata of society. We know where we were – down there – doing more or less what we were told, or starve. We chose to – not starve – but put that in a very prominent position in our development, the thing that we thought was important.' (Oxley, in Watson, 2013: 220).

3.2 The future anterior: improvisation as time-travel

In the essay 'Little Bangs: A Nihilist Theory of Improvisation', the pianist Frederick Rzewski, offers another insight into the nature of improvising, that in some ways extends Prevo's intuition of stepping outside of oneself whilst playing. Rzewski's text serves to offer a way of conceptualising the contingent nature of that which is beyond intention and knowledge, and the way in which this non-understandable material may well impact on and form part of our improvising. In his discussion of what he suggests could be the 'basic propositions of free improvisation' (Rzewski, 2004: 268), Rzewski puts forward the idea that in improvised music,

A circular causality may exist between present and future, so that not only does the present influence the future, but the future influences the present [...] In music, it is possible to express experiences convincingly, which, if expressed in words, appear meaningless. An example would be time flowing backwards. An event, the end of a melody, is perceived before the event that preceded it. We know what is coming, and time is reversed. In this respect again, music resembles dream. (Rzewski, 2004: 269).

In this passage, Rzewski's use of the term event, whilst it does not express a strict sense of Badiou's future anterior, it nevertheless alludes to a time in the future when a musician's improvised material has developed enough of a consistency to render it recognisable by the musician and others who are either involved in making, or are simply watching, the improvisation. Rzewski suggests that it is this future consistency that can provide a means of understanding or rationalising the exploratory playing that is going on in the present, in an even closer approximation of the future anterior than the AMM event. In this configuration, improvisation again comes across as a continuum or a series, but is now more akin to Badiou's historicity: a stream of possible pasts, presents and futures that are at once generated through the act of improvising.

Rzewski is describing a music that arrives spontaneously, with no forbears, a music that has no History. Improvisation creates a music that makes its own history, a music that explains itself through the formation of its own set of precursors. Similarly, when Rzewski talks of time travelling via improvising, he is suggesting that the sonic density, or even apparent chaos, of any present-time improvising will only make sense once we have heard it in the context of the music that is to come. Here, Rzewski presents us with a direct musical manifestation of Badiou's logic of the inhabitant of *S*'s fidelity to the future anterior of the event, in that the improviser through 'forgetting - momentarily at least - everything that is not relevant to the objective of expressing an idea immediately in sound' (Rzewski, 2004: 267), re-engineers the present via a faith in an unknown future to come, in which possible

future conditions reshape our understanding of the present. Through improvising, a musician instantly destabilises the security of the past (suddenly the past may not have influenced the present) and simultaneously offers a way of understanding the present by affirming the necessity of a faith in the future: the past will only make sense because of our actions now, whilst what we are doing now will largely only be understandable because of what is yet to come.

This linking of the present to the future, and the simultaneous tethering of the future subject to the specific conditions of the present is, as we have seen, a vision of forcing in operation. The inhabitant of *S* is able to reach beyond the confines of the present in order to name a possible future; the inhabitant, as improviser, becomes faithful to a future music that could potentially exist, called forth by the improvisation itself, but which remains unknowable in the present. An improvisation as the playing out of the unstable relationship between the musician and the generic extension may be one way to describe what is happening during play, such that an improvisation becomes a set of finite enquiries into the presence of the event. Whilst improvising, we may run through a variety of options that are available to us as regards what sound to make next. This note? That note? This combination of sounds? A sound produced in a certain way? It is a set of sonic possibilities that is certainly large enough so as to appear infinite in the context of improvisation.

In the moment-to-moment interplay of performance, the choice of what notes to play, or what sounds to make, whilst appearing to be limitless, takes on an urgent character. However, even in the context of so called free improvisation, certain conditions apply that may well influence players to use particular types of sound in a particular way, and we may well find that there are limits on what would or would not be appropriate to play. As with Badiou's discussion of history versus historicity, improvisation is as much an affirmation of certain musical pasts in order to construct a particular context within which a given performance might exist and be measured, as it is a discipline with a fixed and shared set of rules and procedures. In other words, a musician who is playing freely, may well in fact go to great lengths to avoid creating music that could be said to be making reference to other styles or pieces of music. Derek Bailey, as we saw in the previous chapter, was the first musician to identify, or rather invent, the notion of 'non-idiomatic' playing (Bailey, 1992: xi): an approach to playing that is (at least superficially) free of any reference to a previous piece of music or existing style of music, and to some degree, musicians will often commit themselves (or be 'faithful') to the limits of their instrument or technique so as to avoid obvious connections to historical precedents (again, an example of what Rzewski describes as 'forgetting'). By imposing a limit factor such as noise, or extremely low volume, or incredibly sparse playing, or only using a sine wave, what is generated is a way of bracketing out certain reference points and narrowing down the focus of what is appropriate to play within a given performance. In a situation *S*,

then, the improvisation is therefore the result of a set of choices made from a particular set of variables. The encyclopaedia of a given improvisation is as much a negation of possibility, as it is an acknowledgement of the wide variety of sounds that can be made. In this way, an improvisation is genuinely based on all of the elements that are the results of previous generic enquiries, whether these are choices to generate sound in a certain way, or not to generate sound in a certain way.

With this sense of boundless and bounded choice in mind, we can imagine an improvisation as a constant running and re-running through of the options that an improviser finds themselves presented with within a situation, whilst simultaneously giving form to those possibilities in real time performance. This is the process that Rzewski describes as 'little bangs' (Rzewski, 2005: 266): an ongoing series of little universes exploding into and out of existence. These little bangs are therefore the enquiries into the future event, some of which are developed, others of which are forgotten, but it is this faith-based process, that is to say, that somewhere inside these little bangs there may be the seed of a future music, which allows us to intuit a musical forcing in action. To the listener, or even to the musician who is improvising, an improvisation may not always make sense, and players can often ask themselves what is happening in a piece of music, in terms of their own or the other players' contributions or they may question the direction that an improvisation is taking. Often, musicians may find themselves casting around for a new idea that will help move the music onwards, and this can take the form of some form of holding behaviour. For example, the repetition of a musical figure, a more and more sparse approach to playing (literally bringing a performance down to as close to silence as possible to give each other the chance to think more carefully about what to play, what ideas to develop). Similarly, a group of musicians may keep building to a maximum volume and sustain that volume in order to generate some kind of exit strategy to allow them to develop away from a noise-as-stasis point within the improvisation. This is a frequent occurrence within improvised performance; creating time to reflect without actually stopping the performance. It is within these moments that the casting about for new ideas becomes most obvious, although it would be true to say that within any improvised performance where an improvisational process is in operation from beginning to end, that this practice of generating of sound whilst reflecting on future possibilities is happening at any given moment; it is simply easier to identify this process at certain, more reflective points within a performance. During these moments of simultaneous creation and reflection, a number of ideas, a number of little bangs may be generated and added to the sound mass that is being created. Each one of these contributions may contain the future direction of the performance, but there may be sounds, phrases, rhythms that are more compelling, more arresting that capture the musicians' attention and ultimately drive the development of a piece. It is this

commitment to work with a particular idea that is very much analogous to the idea of forcing, such that an intuitive rummaging through of various sound ideas eventually produces an idea that is heard to contain the possible future of the improvisation and as a result, that idea is taken up and developed. As mentioned earlier, what is critical for what we might call a Badiouian view of improvisation is that, in many cases, to musicians and listeners alike, it may be far from clear what this particular musical idea is. In fact, it is only possible to discern the starting point for an idea 'after the event', which, in Badiouian terms would suggest that a group of improvisers, as set of 'musical subjects', remain faithful to a particular musical outcome that resulted from a set of finite musical enquiries. The musicians were not able to know what the ultimate end of their improvisations would be, but after the fact, it was apparent where and how a particular musical occurrence was arrived at, all of the preceding elements that led to a final outcome can be retrospectively identified. An improvisation comes to have aesthetic appeal and integrity due to the future anterior fidelity to a set of musical choices that were made within the finite situation that preceded it.

3.3 The continuous discontinuity of improvisation

In their 2005 survey of the state of then-contemporary improvised music-making, *Blocks of Consciousness and the Unbroken Continuum*, Brian Marley and Mark Wastell explain the second half of the book's title by making reference to guitarist Derek Bailey's description of his own playing, saying that, '[Bailey] felt that his improvising was continuous, broken only by the moments when he set down his guitar. Music as a continuum which musicians dip in and out of was simply too good an idea to pass up' (Marley and Wastell, 2005: 6). To suggest that an individual's approach to improvising is the sonic realisation of sustained enquiry and experimentation is indeed a compelling idea, and can work very simply to provide an intuitive and attractive means of understanding a musician's ongoing improvisations. Although it might seem that by using the word 'continuum', Marley and Wastell are making reference to a way of thinking that Badiou fundamentally disagrees with, theirs and Derek Bailey's idea nevertheless provides us with another opportunity to think about improvisation in terms of *Being and Event*. As we have seen, Badiou wants us to consider a contingent, ruptured state of Being, and set theory presents us with a void-ridden schema of creativity, wherein the new is unaccountable (and literally uncountable): we cannot make any kind of provision for it, and neither can we properly include a conception of what may be to come within the given confines of experience. Badiou's is a philosophy in which the new cannot be discerned, or captured within a conception of becoming, instead, the new is something that breaks with what already surrounds us. As an inhabitant of a situation, our memories of the past are elements that are included in that situation, as counted-as-one presentations, memories are present for us, and therefore a

remembered improvisation, along with our other knowledge of music, all combine to produce the finitude of that which is included and counted in experience. The indiscernible generic, as uncountable, but nameable feature of the situation cannot be said to cohere within any formulation of a continuum, which would seem to completely contradict Bailey's view of a continuous sameness that gives rise to a connected chain of improvisations. This would also be slightly unfortunate, given that Derek Bailey is recognised as one of the key figures in post-war British experimental and improvised music, to the extent that we could even think of 'non-idiomatic' improvisation as the Derek Bailey-event.

We can, however, use Badiou's ideas about the void to think about Bailey's intuition for a continuum of improvisation from a different perspective. The logic of Badiou's ontology is that Being is founded on the void. Multiplicities are the result of the forming-into-one of the void, where the void can be counted as one in the empty set, or the singleton of the void, $\{\emptyset\}$. The void is therefore an element that is all-pervasive within a situation, similar to the generic indiscernible, it is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. As previously mentioned, it is only through the event's autonomous forming of its own ultra-one, which interposes itself between itself and the void, that we are able to conceive of the new coming into being. Thus, an event must always be defined and articulated by its relation to the void, to something that is utterly outside of the situation and that is not part of 'the count'. If both the situation and the event are indeed the results of the void, that they are made from and proceed to change and be changed because of their albeit tangential engagement with this nothingness, then, in simple terms, and following Badiou's dictum that 'the one is not', we could very easily conclude that what a series of improvisations have in common is in fact nothing. But not the familiar nothing of zero, but instead a Badiouian nothing or inconsistent multiplicity. This is a complex nothing, that is non-conceptualisable, but if we are to adhere to Badiou's model, then it is a nothing that requires proper acknowledgement.

What each of Derek Bailey's, or indeed any musician's, improvisations have in common is that-which-cannot-be thought. It can only be named: the void. For our current intents and purposes we can call it nothing, but we must remember that it is an all-important and foundational nothing, and so for two improvisations to have nothing in common, rather than this working as a statement of non-connection, on the contrary we can now see this as an entirely affirmative relation. In his introduction to *Deleuze's Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, John Rajchman offers us another way of thinking about this sense of commonality. In discussing the relationship between Deleuze's and Spinoza's philosophies, Rajchman, asserts that 'we need a new conception of society in which what we have in common is our singularities and not our individualities - where what is common is "impersonal" and what is "impersonal" is common' (Rajchman, 2001: 14). This intuition for the

'impersonal' being that which we all have in common, can be seen to work in a similar way to Badiou's conception of the generic or indiscernible multiplicity. As we have seen, the latter are derived from the void and are unknowable: we are literally unable to discern the generic or the indiscernible from within the situation due to the fact that they are distinguished by the mark of the void ' \emptyset '. However, as Badiou demonstrates, it is the void that underpins everything, it is the 'not' in the 'one' that 'is not'. This foundational aspect of the void can thus be configured in such a way as to demonstrate that what we have in common 'is nothing'. In fact, as Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens show in *An Introduction to Alain Badiou's Philosophy*, the void-as-nothing is what is common in all sets, in fact, it is the only thing that is common to every multiplicity, and thus to everything. In the following passage, we see them discussing this in terms of the uncountable nature of the inconsistent multiple, along with the count-as-one process that generates the consistent multiple of a situation.

In every situation, there is a being of the 'nothing' [...] what is nothing in a situation must go uncounted [...] So for Badiou, every situation is ultimately founded on a void [...] The void of a situation is simply what is not there, but what is necessary for anything to be there. (Clemens and Feltham, 2003: 15-16)

This necessary nothing that founds and thereby connects everything in a situation is that which all improvisations have in common, and in terms of Derek Bailey's intuition for a continuum of improvisation, we could therefore think of this impersonal commonality as being the 'void of improvisation', as something which cannot be known, but nonetheless permeates the process of improvising. Although Badiou works to assemble a convincing formulation of the non-possibility of continuity in Being, and axiomatises the ontology of the event in terms of the non-continuous nothingness of the void, Bailey certainly offers us an engaging point of departure from which we can think through some potential consequences of Badiou's thought in relation to a musician's feeling for a continuity or at the very least, a 'continuous discontinuity', between two or more improvisations.

4. Conclusion: Bring the noise

In *Noise: A Political Economy of Music*, economist Jacques Attali states that,

With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamour, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man's time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power, of the dream - Music [...] All music, any organisation of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. (Attali, 1985: 6)

Whilst Attali's book in many ways a polemic about the way in which the noise of un-ordered sound can work as an analogy for the clamour of an un-ordered, pre-societal assemblage of people – and therefore not a work of musicology in the strict sense – for all of the void's inconceivable nature, there is a certain resonance here between the way Attali describes noise and Badiou's conception of the void: noise that gives birth to disorder and the world, noise that exists before the count-as-one, noise as inconsistent multiplicity. Similarly, when noise is indiscerned, as the generic that infuses the situation from within the generic extension, we can produce knowable outcomes such as new melodies, dissonance note groupings, surprising rhythms and unexpected sounds. Attali expands his vision of the structuring (consistency-giving) power of music to create communities and integrated systems. Music is therefore a counting process in and of itself: a musician who plays is a musician who counts, and in this regard, an improvisation can be seen as both the act of counting-as-one the elements of a situation; the making of a second count that 'represents' the state of the situation as an improvisation (following Badiou's statement that the second count 'represent[s] the presented' (Badiou, 2005: 99)); as well as a means to generate the conditions within which an evental site can be affirmed within the situation's generic extension, ultimately naming the event and retrospectively being seen as the cause of the event. An improvisation is thus an enacting of all of the phases of Badiou's truth procedure: it is a naming of the indiscernible-as-noise for the subject to truth, and with a second count that represents what is available to the inhabitant of S in the encyclopaedia of the situation, it gives it gives particular form to a musical situation.

Although Badiou presents the Schönberg-event as an epoch-defining shift that 'breaks the history of music in two' over a period of 'nearly twenty years' (Badiou, 2009: 80), thinking the event at such a grand scale is not necessarily the only, or indeed the most productive, approach, at least for a musician or improviser operating within a much more localised and closely contained set of parameters. We may wish to consider the Perotin-event of the Ars Nova in 12th Century Paris,

wherein the composer Perotin, drawing on Pythagorean principles of mathematical ratios in order to generate the musical intervals of the octave, perfect fourth and perfect fifth (based on the ratios of 2:1, 3:4 and 3:2 respectively) began to develop an entirely new set of rules for the composition and arrangement of music. This resulted, for the first time in at least forty thousand years of musical history, in a practical formalisation of the use of harmony: this was the first time that musicians had been instructed to sing simultaneously using notes that were in a specific relation to each other, namely notes that harmonised with each other in fourths or fifths. From the earliest discovered instrument (a flute made of vulture bone dating from approximately 42 000 BCE), through to the French choirs of the late 1190s, there is no evidence to suggest that a systematic approach to composing for multiple voices singing in harmony had been devised or considered, and thus we may speak of the Perotin-event as an event that was at least 40 000 years in the making. However, Perotin was not the first musician-subject-to-truth, a number of similarly seismic music-events would have occurred before then, including the aforementioned discovery of the mathematical relationship between musical intervals (attributed to Pythagoras as a result of his experience of hearing the varied but harmonically related sounds of different sized hammers beating metal in a blacksmith's shop (Ashton, 2005: 4), and indeed, no doubt the spacing of the holes along the body of the vulture bone flute was the result of a series of finite enquiries into the sounds that could be produced by modifying a found physical object. A bone flute-event, a Pythagoras-event, a Perotin-event: a set of contingent events that have been historicised into a history of music, events at the level of millennia.

Although we made reference in the previous chapter to Derek Bailey's comment that, 'mankind's first musical performance couldn't have been anything other than a free improvisation' (Bailey, 1992: 83), a compelling, but entirely unverifiable statement, it is once again useful here to focus our attention to the subject of noise. Improvisation as the counting of noise, of the re-presentation of noise as music. What we can take from Bailey's claim is the idea that the first musicians would not necessarily have recognised what they were doing as 'music', a naivety of the type that AMM were striving for. Where Bailey makes claims for music's origins, Attali maps a history of music across centuries, possibly millennia, of cultural, religious and latterly political and economic practices that contends music's gradual transformation from an early role as part of ritual sacrifice, to its current existence as an autonomous commodity with market value, as Attali says, music is now 'an immaterial pleasure turned commodity' (Attali, 1985: 3-4). However, at the heart of both Bailey's and Attali's discussions of the development of music is the sense in which improvisation is a means by which musicians can harness and shape noise into music, where even the manufacture of music is an event in itself.

If an improviser counts and re-presents noise, then he or she is also subject to a range of truths. If we consider the types of truths that may shape a musician's decisions, then even at a glance, we quickly realise that musicians are potentially subjects to an incredible range of truths that combine to form the situation that an improviser finds themselves in. In simple terms, a musician is aware of certain musical and sonic materials because they are faithful to their truths. A 21st century musician is someone who is faithful to the truth of extended instrumental technique, the truth of Serialism, of Atonalism, John Cage's investigations into silence, the truth of Pierre Schaeffer's invention of the 'sound object', the truth of indeterminacy, of aleatory practices, of Onkyo, of lower case, of New London Silence, of Noise Music, of microtonal tuning systems to name but a few, and the musician is subject to their truths because they are all events. The reductionist, minimalist practices of musicians such as Mark Wastell, Rhodri Davies, Toshimaru Nakamura and Taku Sugimoto that resulted in the New London Silence and Onkyo scenes that were described in the previous chapter are examples of this in recent times: the New London Silence-event and the Japanese Onkyo-event; and the fashion for musicians to play at low volumes and with a restricted amount of sounds in the early years of the 21st Century, reflects the way in which a number of musicians were still subjects remaining faithful to the truth of these two events. Similarly, if we think about musical instruments themselves, we could say that the truth of a violin, for example, may be that it is built, played and used in a certain way. A violin-event may well consist of a new, previously unknown or unconsidered technique being adopted, as for instance in George Brecht's Solo for Violin, in which the 'performer comes onto the stage, dressed for the occasion, holding his instrument and [...] proceeds to polish the instrument' (Nyman, 1999: 78). One musician may well remain faithful to the physical form of a violin, whilst another may see fit to alter it in some way, such as by adding or subtracting strings and thus interrupting or diverting its historical development. Again, we see here that even the physical form of an instrument is a matter of historicity rather than simply history: a violin looks and sounds a certain way, but there is no permanent history behind these manifestations, rather there is a set of contingent histories that are brought into play through the present action of a musician's faith in the truth of these histories. The musician, by affirming his or her faith in a certain way of using and contextualising the use of an instrument activates a particular set of histories of that instrument, this is the process of musical historicisation.

The moment that we begin to play is the moment that we activate our faith in these musical truths and simultaneously begin our finite enquiry into the indiscernible generic, which in itself is a faith that a future music can happen. Therefore, as much as it is a performance of music, an improvisation is an act of faith in, and a search for, an event. We can only believe that at some point the search will have come to an end, at least, temporarily, and it is only once the performance is complete that

the event can be known. Thus the musician is always suspended in a matrix of faiths in both the past and the future, where the present is an historicising present that is destined to arrive at a future that is already the past. As a matter of faith, improvisation is a belief that another state of affairs is possible and it is the creation, or forcing, of a possible future. We return time and time again to this notion in Badiou's work: his insistence that the now is not the only possible world, other futures are always possible.

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Parallel Lines: Improvisation and Non-Philosophy

In this chapter we shall think about improvisation in relation to the work of François Laruelle, and an approach to thinking that he has called both 'non-philosophy', and 'non-standard philosophy'.¹ Laruelle offers us a valuable opportunity to extend the lines of enquiry that we have already established in relation to the work of Deleuze and Badiou, but his non-philosophical practice is also a palpable break with a number of the theoretical positions that we have so far encountered. Laruelle gathers Deleuze up with Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, to question and overturn their various 'philosophies of difference', replacing them instead with his non-philosophy of the One, undermining their attempts to show that the Real could in anyway be described in terms of 'differentiation' or 'drives' (although at the same time, Laruelle's commitment to showing that everything is given 'in-One' very much extends the idea that the Real does not exist 'outside' of, or as an alternative to normal experience). At the same time, we shall see that Laruelle's approach is comprehensively different to Deleuze (and Guattari's), for where a Deleuze-Guattarian immanence spoke of intensities, drives, multiplicities and populations, Laruelle's non-philosophy of the One, does not allow for any such conceptualising of the One. So rather than thinking about the One, Laruelle thinks *from* the One, and his work enabled us to start thinking of a relationship between the One and that which is given in the One, via what he terms 'determination-in-the-last-instance', wherein the world proceeds from the One, but can have no retrospective effect on the One. The One is 'indifferent' to the world that it gives rise to. Thus, the figure of the man-in-person, which is a thinking according to identity and a cloning of the One (a concept that we could reconfigure as 'the musician-in-improvisation'), is the way in which Laruelle understands how ruptures and experiences are created in the world. For Laruelle, this thinking according to identity is a *radical* immanence, a different approach to thinking immanence than either Deleuze, Guattari or Badiou, such that a virtual is not actualised, and a truth does not arrive in the shape of an event, instead for Laruelle, the One is simply performed. In this regard, Ray Brassier provides a useful perspective on what non-philosophy can be said to be doing, such that radical immanence is the pre-condition that underpins anything that we might do or think.

Non-philosophy is at once a theoretical practice and a performative theory. Moreover, it is precisely in so far as the non-philosopher is already operating according to

¹ Laruelle modified the description of his method so as to counter misunderstandings and claims that his work had supposedly been set up, rather hubristically, as an alternative to philosophy. Instead, the addition of the word 'standard', was for Laruelle a means by which to clarify both his interest in evolving our understanding of philosophy itself, and of its point of focus. As he informs us, the shift to the term clarify both his interest was an attempt to escape the assertion that his work was a 'mass negation of philosophy' (Laruelle, 2013 P&NP: 16). In other words, non-philosophy and non-standard philosophy are both intended to suggest that philosophy as it is understood can no longer be seen to hold any privilege as regards enabling human knowledge and understanding of the world and our experience of that world; it is simply one attempt amongst many to apprehend and comprehend the world that we experience.

immanence as 'already-performed' that he or she cannot help but say what he / she does and do as he / she says'. (Brassier, 2003: 31)

We shall see that the 'heretical decision' is just such a performing of the One, which is to say that heresy, as a cloning of the One, is a 'rigorously unilateral process' (Laruelle, 2010: 50); it is radical immanence in action. Therefore, an immanent, or radically immanent Real is not made visible or knowable, or brought into awareness and then faithfully adhered to via the process of improvisation (or indeed any process at all): the Real is simply performed, rather than achieved.

In what follows, we shall explore a number of key concepts that Laruelle has used in order to create his non-philosophical project before proceeding to think about the way in which improvisation can again be re-evaluated in terms of Laruelle's assertions. Given the complexity of Laruelle's terminology, the first part of the chapter will step through a sequence of terms, what could even be thought of as some of the core 'rules' of non-philosophy, in order to understand how the model works, looking at the core principles of the Real, the One, the vision-in-One, determination-in-the-last-instance, non-thetic transcendence and cloning, as well as looking at the way in which Laruelle applies his non-philosophical principles to practice by considering aspects of his work on 'non-photography'. We shall then proceed to consider the way in which non-philosophical enquiry can be applied to improvisation by working through a number of Laruelle's key conceptual innovations, in particular, Laruelle's notion of the heretic, and the idea of thinking in-identity. Finally, the chapter will conclude with an extended exploration of the ideas and music of the improvising trumpet player Peter Evans, using the material generated in the chapter to help us consider the extent to which Evans can be thought of as a 'non-improviser'.

1. Mapping non-philosophy

Via a sustained exploration and dismantling of key aspects of 20th century philosophical thought, the afore-mentioned 'Philosophies of Difference' of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze (Laruelle, 2010 PD), Laruelle developed the concept of non-philosophy as a means to rethink our understanding of what philosophy is and what it can achieve. In the book *A Non-Philosophical Theory of Nature*, the theorist and Laruelle translator Anthony Paul Smith provides us with an overview of Laruelle's decades-long non-philosophical project and enables us to understand the way in which, for Laruelle, the practice of philosophy has no greater claim than science, art, or indeed music, as a means to engage with what Laruelle defines as 'the Real' (Smith, 2013). In the context of non-philosophy, the Real (with a notably capital 'R') is the term that Laruelle uses to describe that which lies beyond human categorisation and differentiation (hence his sustained dismantling of the above mentioned 'philosophies of difference'), but which nevertheless gives rise to everything that we experience.² One of Laruelle's key ideas and claims is that conventional philosophical thought to a certain extent places itself above other modes of human enquiry and thought, via what he calls the 'Principle of Sufficient Philosophy' (Laruelle, 2013 AB: xxvi), and in doing so, suggests either explicitly or implicitly that disciplines such as science and mathematics are following synthetic rules and after-the-fact observations about what we call a given world of experience.

By sufficiency, Principle of Sufficient Existence, or objective philosophical appearance, I understand that which, existing in itself and being conceived by itself, claims to be real and concludes from its existence to its reality. In other words that whose existence claims to suffice to be real and not to have need of the real to be determined. (Laruelle, 2012 FDH: 394)

In this context, philosophy is seen to have grounded itself (or at least has been grounded by generations of philosophical practitioners who have repeatedly affirmed and revalidated the claim for philosophy's unique and privileged access to the Real) as a self-sufficient and contained means of furthering human knowledge about the Real, whereas mathematics, science, even art and music are only a constructed means of apprehending the world as given, and are not able to really describe or engage with the world as it is in itself, or with the Real.³ However, Laruelle contends that standard philosophy and scientific thought are in fact doing the same kind of thing, they are

² Throughout this chapter, we can make a distinction between the Real with a capital 'R' as an interchangeable form of the One, whereas the real with a lowercase 'r' – as the real which is given in the One – denotes the real experiences and thoughts of Laruelle's 'lived' world. The real is 'real' by virtue of the fact that it is given in the Real / the One; since anything that is given in the One is real (because it is of the Real).

³ A position that even Deleuze and Guattari could be said to perpetuate to a certain extent, given that in *What Is Philosophy*, they suggest that, 'sciences, arts, and philosophies are all equally creative, although only philosophy creates concepts in the strict sense' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 5)

both practices that are given within the Real and are therefore both equally of the Real; neither has any more or less privileged access to the Real. This is the real thrust of the 'non' in Laruelle's non-philosophy and non-standard philosophy, it is a 'non' that tells us that we need to reconsider what we think philosophy is doing and what it (and by extension what any other form of human thought and practice) is able to do. Thus, whichever term we use, it is important to understand that Laruelle's project is a reading, or perhaps more accurately an attempt at something of a 'science' of philosophy whose intended purpose is to radicalise the way in which philosophy works, and subsequently can itself be used.

Although the aim of this project is not to critique philosophy itself, but to simply use the results of contemporary thought as a means to broaden our understanding of improvised music practice, Laruelle's reconfiguration of philosophy as merely one attempt amongst many to interpret and construct a human understanding of the world, does serve to remind us that our reflections on improvisation are based on a set of philosophical models that are by no means stable. However, his democratisation of practice does suggest that a reconsideration of philosophy's reach may also provide us with the grounds to similarly reconsider what improvisation can do, and indeed, will enable us to think about what a 'non-improvisation' might mean for standard improvisational practices.

1.1 The One

As we have seen, Laruelle uses the term 'the Real' to denote a ground for experience which in itself defies experience, which is to suggest that we can know that a ground for everything that we experience exists, but we cannot know anything about it. In the book *Cartographies of the Absolute*, Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle put forward a conception of the 'absolute' which is analogous to this position:

The 'absolute' is a theological and then a philosophical category, gesturing towards that which defies representation, which, contrasted to our mortal perception, is infinite and unencompassed. (Toscano and Kinkle, 2014: 23)

Whilst Laruelle's Real similarly refuses representation and exceeds human perception, one of the more remarkable things about his approach is that he sets out to design a method for thinking 'from' this Real, instead of simply thinking *about* it. Similarly, although his project is not entirely dissimilar in its theorising of immanence to some of the ideas that we have encountered in the work Deleuze and Badiou, Laruelle introduces a significant step-change to the way that we might think about our relationship with an immanent absolute, using non-philosophy to think outwards from an immanent absolute, rather than thinking about how such an absolute might interface with the world of 'mortal perception' mentioned above. Laruelle uses the figure of 'the One' to denote the Real, and it is this key concept that not only separates Laruelle's work from that of Deleuze and clearly Badiou, but also from the

established mainstream within Western philosophical thought (another facet of his aim to construct a 'non-standard' philosophy) that thinks in terms of a 'representation' of the Real, such as those that Toscano and Kinkle allude to.⁴ In *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, Laruelle puts forward the following conception of the One:

The One [...] is what must be called the real or the Absolute: the only ultimate experience that we can have of the Absolute. It is indeed here a case of saying that the Absolute is 'alongside us.' Truly speaking [...] it is not 'alongside us', simultaneously near and far, [...] it is instead an 'immediate given' in the definitive sense of the term - we prefer to say: a 'postural' given, what we are intrinsically in our essence. (Laruelle, 2013 P&NP: 44-45)

In this way, Laruelle enables us to understand that the One is a Real that does not need to be accessed via a truth procedure or a body without organs, instead it is immanent to everything that is around us (which Laruelle suggests with his use of the word 'postural'), whilst at the same time, everything around us is similarly 'given in' that Real. Whereas in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze works through a definition of 'the univocity of Being', stating that, 'the essential in univocity is not that Being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities' (Deleuze, 2004: 46), for Laruelle, no such statements about Being, or the Real, can be made. In this sense, Laruelle's non-philosophical approach is to an extent closer to that of Badiou's commentary on the unknowable nature of Being, although he clearly has a number of misgivings about Badiou's ideas. For example, where Badiou refuses even the contemplation of the One, (such that the 'One is not'), Laruelle finds equal fault in the former's position, as we can see in the following statement:

How to obtain a Being really void of all beings and even of any ultimate and secret reference to beings? For this we need the One: Being is thus (not-) One, and it is on this condition that it is really void of beings, and not merely nothingness. (Laruelle, 2013 AB: 118)

Laruelle circumvents Badiou's prohibition of Being, of the void-ness of that which is at the heart of everything that is given, and instead he insists that nothingness, as with Deleuze's univocal Being, does not go far enough to describe the One: indeed, it can never go far enough, since the One is that which must always remain indescribable. As Laruelle makes clear in the above distinction, it is not that the One has nothing to do

⁴ Whilst working through Laruelle's non-philosophical critiques of Western philosophical models goes beyond the scope of this project, it is also worth noting that Laruelle's book *Anti Badiou* is also a direct engagement and refutation of what he terms Badiou's 'ontology of the void', and Laruelle opposes non-philosophy to the 'ontology of the void [...] as context or vision of the world for mathematics' (Laruelle, 2013: xxvi).

with Being, rather it is that the One exists regardless of beings (human or otherwise), and his bracketing off of the (not-) of Badiou's not-One, suggests that the One is neither Being, nor is it not-Being, it is simply itself, the One.⁵

1.2 Vision-in-One

Although complex, Laruelle's concepts of the One and the Real can be set out in a relatively straightforward manner, such that the One is immanent to itself without cause or necessity, and is radically immanent to everything, or that everything is 'given' in the One.⁶ We shall return to this sense of being given in the One, but for now we shall begin to look at some of the more intricate mechanics and detail of non-philosophy. As with much of Deleuze and Guattari's work, Laruelle's theoretical approach brings into use a chain of interlinked concepts and strategies whose purpose seems to emphasise the break with conventional philosophical practice, as much as it supports a re-purposed philosophical method. In order to describe or illustrate what the experience of being or experiencing within the One is, or at least might be, Laruelle uses the neologism 'vision-in-One'.⁷ As we progress through his various books and texts, we find echoes of this phrase being used, such as 'being-in-photo' which appears in *The Concept of Non-Photography*, and the 'Man-in-person' of *Future Christ*.⁸ Given the centrality of this concept, it is essential that we secure our

⁵ Ray Brassier takes up this point elsewhere and makes a similar claim about the One, telling us that it is 'indifferent to [human] decision' (Brassier, 2003: 30), and that whilst the non-philosophical subject is able to differentiate between this immanent One that is the 'determining' essence of everything, and his or her own power of 'decision' which is 'determinable' (Brassier, 2003: 30), the One itself remains indeterminable, or in other words, foreclosed to thought. Identifying and justifying this difference was clearly one of Laruelle's key philosophical goals, indeed his *Philosophies of Difference* is entirely dedicated to establishing a framework within which to discuss and defend his position in regard to Deleuze, Derrida, Heidegger and Nietzsche's philosophies which are unable, as far as Laruelle is concerned, to escape the problem of *bilateral* determination (where the Real is a determining force, that can also be determined, or understood) as opposed to his own model of *unilateral* determination (where the process does not work both ways and the Real cannot be understood). We shall explore Laruelle's use of the idea of unilaterality later in the chapter, but for now it is useful for us to be aware of this key distinction between Laruelle's and Deleuze's work, that the One is simply a cause, it cannot be determined. Clearly, Laruelle's argument is a complex one, and draws on an extensive knowledge and analysis of a wide range of philosophical perspectives and traditions. In terms of our current study, the important point to establish is that for Laruelle, everything is *given* either *from* or *within* the One, and that as a consequence we must re-think the nature and trajectory of philosophy itself.

⁶ Hence we see Laruelle's rationale for the non-possibility of a Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, since only the One can be immanent to itself and self-sufficient, and therefore philosophy is itself simply given in the One.

⁷ Laruelle tells us that 'the vision-in-One supports the specific faith-in-the-real of philosophy, i.e. the philosophical hallucination of the Real' (Laruelle, 1998, tr. Adkins 2016)

⁸ In his Translator's Introduction, Smith acknowledges the awkward and problematic nature of his translation of Laruelle's original phrase *Homme-en-personne*, such that Laruelle's phrase could be taken to suggest both a reductive as well as an excessive sense of what it means to be a human, namely man could be nowhere and man could be anywhere (Smith in Laruelle, 2010 FC: xxii). Smith's solution is to use the simple

understanding of it before going any further in our exploration of non-philosophical theory.

In *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, Laruelle outlines the vision-in-One in reference to his previously cited assertion of the One as the Real or Absolute, and he states quite simply that, 'vision-in-One is the experience of this real' (Laruelle, 2013 P&NP: 54). Clearly Laruelle is aware that such an assertion raises a number of issues as to how this experience manifests itself, and after a detailed exposition about a non-philosophical conception of representation, wherein he argues that vision-in-One does not represent or identify (with) the real, Laruelle instead thinks in terms of a *reflection* of the Real. However, this idea itself is problematic, since he talks of a 'real without reflection [that determines] a reflection without real' (Laruelle, 2013 P&NP: 55), and therefore it may be useful to think of this experience more as a *refraction* of the Real, such that we may have some kind of glimpse of it, but not its original or complete form. To help us build up an understanding of what vision-in-One means and to think about how we might apply it, we can turn once again to Smith who, in his translator's introduction to *Future Christ*, describes, 'the tracing of the causality of the One in the vision-in-One [which] traces the unilateral causal relationship between the Real-One and thought' (Smith, in Laruelle, 2010 FC: xvi). The vision-in-One is thus an indication of a causal relationship that goes from the One to the world that we experience (where experience becomes analogous to the vision-in-One), and the phrase 'unilateral causal relationship' conveys the idea that, in a non-philosophical context, this causal relationship can only ever proceed *from* the One; there can be no reciprocal engagement between thought and the One, and thus the One cannot be affected by thought. This unilateral, one-way causality is what Laruelle means by the phrase 'given-in' that occurs repeatedly throughout his work, and it is used to convey the sense in which everything that has been caused by the Real (which for Laruelle is everything that there is) has no subsequent access to its own point of origin. Everything within Laruelle's non-philosophical framework centres on this idea of unilaterality, such that it makes no sense to speak of any kind of 'access' to the One. Hence, the vision-in-One arises in the One in the same way that thought arises in the One, and as we saw above, human investigative and creative practices such as science, philosophy and music are all therefore 'given-in-One'.

The vision-in-One is not a description of an experience per se, instead it is an indication of what kind of experience being 'given-in-One' is. Hence, with this formulation, Laruelle is suggesting that the vision-in-One is a statement about how we come to understand the world as a context that we are given into and which therefore

phrase 'Man-in-person' so as to emphasise the ordinary, generic (although not in the Badiouian sense of the word) nature of being human, or human-ness.

forms the context for, and the horizon of our knowledge.⁹ The non-philosophical principle here is that an activity demonstrates its 'Real-ness' simply because it is positioned within the One, as opposed to having any special status as regards the One-Real. This also tells us why the related concepts of 'being-in-photo' and 'Man-in-person' work in the way that they do, and are thus another example of a real occurrence that is given within the One. The phrases 'in-photo' and 'in-person' set up contexts that suggest that the elements of a photograph – whose 'being' is within that photograph – function according to the parameters set up by that photograph, and that the attributes of a particular 'Man' operate according to the principles of being a particular person.¹⁰ What is critical to our understanding of Laruelle's conceptual framework at this point is that these statements about context simultaneously remain statements about being given-in-One, so whilst the elements of a photograph are given within that photograph, they are at the same time 'in-One'. This nesting of contexts shows that a real experience of the features of a photograph (with a deliberately lowercase 'r') is analogous to being given in-One, but it is also precisely what being in-One means, which again reflects Toscano and Kinkle's statement about the non-representability of the absolute: the vision-in-One does not 'represent' a relationship with the absolute, it *is* the process of being *in* the absolute. Also worth noting at this stage, is the related non-philosophical recalibration of philosophy as practice. It is this very nesting of contexts that allows us to understand why philosophy, just as science and music, is given-in-One, and that a thinking-in-philosophy would offer no more and no less of a possible route to the vision-in-One than a thinking-in-music.

1.3 Determination-in-the-last-instance

In a broad sense, one of the key reference points for Laruelle's use of the Real as a foundational context in which the world of experience is given, is Karl Marx's base-superstructure model that he outlines in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. (Marx, 1904: 11)

⁹ This is an implicit reference to Marx's comments about the way in which we are given into 'relations of production', and we shall discuss the relationship between Laruelle's ideas and Marx's theories in the following section of the chapter.

¹⁰ In *Future Christ*, Laruelle develops the concept of the 'man-in-person' to describe the way in which we experience being in the world.

Marx's model, which places emphasis on the 'totality of relations', is a clear forebear of the One as all-encompassing framework that we see in Laruelle's thought, and by establishing that everything is already within a non-philosophical Real-One, Laruelle parallels the relations of production as the 'real foundation' of social consciousness, by suggesting that the One is just such a foundation for human consciousness. However, this sense of being given within a real foundation is not the only idea that Laruelle borrows from Marxist thought, and in his introduction to *Future Christ*, Anthony Paul Smith sketches a definition for another key non-philosophical concept, the notion of determination-in-the-last-instance, Laruelle's adaptation of a key component of base-superstructure theory. In *For Marx*, we see Althusser combing through Friedrich Engels' discussion of the relationship between the productive foundation of society and its political, social and cultural superstructure, to establish that, 'production is the determinant factor, but only "in the last instance"' (Althusser, 1969: 111). Althusser is telling us that for Engels, it was vital to establish that the relationship between the base and the superstructure remained entirely reciprocal, and that the one-way process wherein the superstructure is solely determined by the relations of production would only occur when no other forces were in play. In *From Decision to Heresy*, a collection of Laruelle's writing from 1985 to 2012, Laruelle usefully provides us with his own reading of the 'last instance', which as we can see from his brief definition, is fundamentally another way of describing the One:

By *last instance*, I describe that which is real in itself, that is to say that which has no need of existence in order to be real. Or that which the description as real in itself has no need of this description in order to be real in itself, and of which it must be constituted. (Laruelle, 2012 FDH: 395)

In one sense, determination-in-the-last-instance is another reference to the process that we have already encountered wherein everything in the real world is given in the One, but it is also a means of capturing Laruelle's modification of Engels' statement, which suggests that real is *always* unilaterally determined by the One-Real. The concept of 'determination' also enables Laruelle to talk about causality in a very particular way, and where we saw above that the vision-in-One is a tracing of a non-philosophical causality, determination allows us to understand that although the real world is given in the One, and is therefore determined by the One, this does not mean that it is directly 'caused' by the One. We cannot say 'how' things come into the world, because we can have no knowledge about the One, we can simply say that they are in the One. As a system that only allows for a one-way, non-reciprocal relationship between the One and that which is given in the One, non-philosophy is also a departure from the models that his contemporaries Deleuze and Guattari assembled, whose concepts of the actual-virtual and the plane of immanence allowed for a much more interactive, 'two-way' relationship between human activity and the Real. Deleuze's concept of the univocity of Being suggests that the Real can in some way be apprehended, in terms of his assertion that it can be both one and multiple, whilst his

and Guattari's claims about our ability to engage with a plane of immanence suggest that we can somehow engage 'with' such a Real in order to create territories, art or music, that then themselves become the material for future creative acts. However, Laruelle's work specifically forbids any kind of active relationship with the Real - we must remain completely unable to 'experience' or 'witness' the Real, we can only unilaterally perform it. These differences aside, non-philosophy, as with Deleuze and Guattari's work, is directed towards understanding and conceiving human experience in terms of immanence, where for Laruelle it is the inaccessible, incomprehensible One, rather than a uni-vocal Being, that is the overarching cause or context for everything that we experience. As Smith tells us, since we are unable to 'think the Real in any meaningful sense [...] the point of non-philosophy is simply not to think the Real' (Smith, 2013: 69), which is to say that non-philosophy puts the Real to one side as it were, and instead directs our attention towards the process of thinking 'from it' (Smith, 2013: 69).

1.4 Rethinking practice: Non-philosophy and Non-photography

Having established some basic principles with which to navigate non-philosophy, we can now turn to Laruelle's own discussion of a creative practice, and in the first instance, to photography, so as to develop a discourse with which we can go on to think about improvisation from a similar vantage point. In *The Concept of Non-Photography*, Laruelle introduces the concept of *photographic thought*, suggesting that, by becoming 'a body absolutely without organs [the photographer] replaces himself firstly in his body as in a stance, and renounces all corporeal or psychic intentionality' (Laruelle, 2012 CNP: 12). In so doing, the photographer becomes a *real-photographer*, where a pure photographic stance, again a vision-in-One, could almost be said to be the 'Real becoming real'. Clearly, Laruelle's reference to the body without organs draws directly on Deleuze and Guattari's work, although his use of the prefix 'absolutely' indicates a wholesale change of use from the body of organs that we encounter in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the BwO causes, 'asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate' across an organism (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 4). For Laruelle, an 'absolute body without organs' can offer up no such interaction with an organism, for we can have *absolutely* no knowledge of any of the powers or properties of the absolute, and it would therefore make no sense to talk of intensities or particles, whether they asignifying or not. In short, Laruelle is telling us that the photographic stance is what we can now understand to be a 'performing' of the Real, it is a being Real, without trying 'to be' the Real, as he indicates with the term 'positional' in the following passage:

Photographic thought, rather than being purely relational, differential, positional, is first of all real, in that sort of undivided experience, lived as non-positional self-vision-force, which has no need to posit itself simultaneously on the object, to divide with itself, to identify itself with the World and to reflect itself in itself. (Laruelle, 2012 CNP: 12-13)

Although Laruelle does not obviously differentiate between a capitalised and a lowercase version of the word 'real', he is clearly indicating that the photographic thought, in the sense that it is undivided, is of the Real, although the fact that it is also 'lived' and not 'purely relational' also tells us that is a real thought. Hence, the photographic thought is an instance, or in photographic terms, a 'snapshot' of the Real in action, of Laruelle's intuition that, whilst in the lived world there may be a categorical division between the real and the Real, the photographic thought is a removing of that divide. We shall discuss Laruelle's interest in positioning photography later in the chapter in relation to his interest in quantum theory, but the key point for us in the above statement is that the photographic thought exceeds the vision-in-One, to become a 'lived self-vision-force', which in Deleuze-Guattarian terms we might call a *becoming-Real*. In this context, the photographic stance, the act of thinking in-photo and of taking a photograph, is a kind of being-absolute; it is an act of producing a real context that conditions its own frame of reference, rather than needing to be identified with the world. In this way, for Laruelle, the photograph (which might appear curious given that it is an object that presents representations of objects that are seen in the world), is seen as being non-representational; the objects within the photograph function within the context of that photograph and not because they relate to, or represent anything outside of the photograph.

Non-philosophy therefore allows us to understand that the process of making something, seen here as 'vision-force', is a process of superseding a normal set of relations with the real-world and indeed with the Real-One, whereby the taking of a photograph or creating an improvisation is a performance or a *performing* of the Real. This becoming non-positional and undivided, which describes the creation of contexts and environments that generate real contexts for experience, suggests that we are never more a self-vision-force, when we are completely lost or absorbed in what we are doing.

Although there are clearly differences between Laruelle's and Badiou's approach to thinking about our relationship to that which is not 'of' a world of lived experience, it is possible to detect certain similarities. Where, for Badiou, Being (which serves as an approximation of Laruelle's sense of the Real) is configured as something that exists outside of our normal, current situation, for Laruelle, the Real is always immanent to, and therefore never 'not present', in the real world. However, if we remember that Badiou's void or inconsistent multiplicity is also always present within the fundamental structure of a situation, and that it is the subject's belief in the possibility of an event that generates a recount of the situation, then we can see that both men are working through a process that allows for a non-problematic coincidence between two states of being: a being in a lived real world, and the Being of the Real, which is separate to normal human experience.

1.5 Non-thetic Transcendence and Cloning

Looking at the vision-in-One and photographic stance in this way provides us with a strong indication of how we can begin to think about improvisation as a performing of the One in non-philosophical terms, and generate similarly non-philosophical concepts such as improvisation-force, being-in-improvisation and the improvisation-stance. Whilst Laruelle's use of determination-in-the-last-instance provides us with an insight into the way in which the lived world is determined by the One, this is not to say that the cause of things can be directly traced back to the One. This is the subtlety of Laruelle's non-philosophical method: although everything may well be given in the One, this does not mean that taking a photograph or improvising musically, as a 'performing' of the One, is an encounter with an immanent, 'virtual' One.

One of the most complex aspects of Laruelle's non-philosophy is the way in which the One unilaterally determines everything about us and everything that we experience, whilst remaining as it were, 'separate-without-being-separated' from everything that it determines. In the following brief, but densely packed sentence, we see Laruelle setting out some of the main vectors of this issue:

It will be said that, in vision-in-One, representation is a non-thetic or non-positional reflection (of the) real, that it is descriptive, in the last instance at least, and not constitutive like philosophy claims to be. (Laruelle, 2013 P&NP: 55)

Here we see Laruelle using the term 'non-thetic reflection' to describe the way in which the Real 'appears' in the guise of the vision-in-One, a problematic kind of appearance that we have already suggested may in practice be more of a refraction than a reflection. The fact that this reflection is 'descriptive', rather than 'constitutive' is another example of the way in which Laruelle is clearly working through a similar set of issues to Badiou and is attempting to create a context within which a given-in-One (which is not unrelated to Badiou's finite situation) can interact with the One (again, not unrelated to Badiou's Being). Badiou's use of the evental site is his attempt to resolve the impasse of allowing for access to something beyond the world of experience whilst remaining *in* the world of experience, and his adoption of set theory allows for a logically unproblematic connection between something that at first does not exist within experience and then subsequently does exist. Badiou acknowledges the problem of engaging with or encountering something that is outside of or beyond current experience and uses the concept of indiscernment as a means by which his finite subject is able to 'name' rather than identify or understand the generic within a situation. In a similar way, Laruelle's sense of 'description' is analogous to Badiou's process of naming, such that the experience of being a real that is given in the One can be identified and named, but cannot be interpreted or characterised at all. As such, where the event functions as a tracing of immanence, so too does Laruelle's vision-in-One inform us that the One forms a context within which thought, or a

creative process can happen, without in any way configuring the One or making any claims about how this process might be happening.¹¹

Where Badiou creates the Event and the subject-to-Truth as a means to investigate and allow for a connection between the finite and the infinite, Laruelle's strategy is to use what he calls 'transcendental cloning' or 'non-thetic transcendence' as a means to capture a movement between the One (as a non-appearing, yet all-pervasive foundation of everything) and the world of experience (or what Laruelle refers to as 'Lived Experience' (Laruelle, 2011: 246)).¹² As discussed earlier, in *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, Laruelle asserts that the things we experience *in* and *as* the world, are neither representations of the One or the Real, nor is this experience directly constituted by the One (it can only be said to be determined-in-the-last-instance, and given in the One). With the notion of non-thetic reflection, which suggests that we are looking at, and experiencing the reflection of an object that cannot be seen, Laruelle provides us with a further concept, unilateral duality. As we have seen, unilaterality is a tracing of the non-reciprocal movement from the Real to lived experience and duality speaks of the two parts of this formulation, the Real and lived experience. Although there is no movement from the world of lived experience back into the Real, such that lived experience has nothing to 'say' to the Real, and the Real is 'disinterested' in lived experience, one of the more compelling, and yet obviously complex aspects of non-philosophy, is that Laruelle asks us to imagine this trajectory from the perspective of the One.

As already noted, between *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy* and *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, we see Laruelle developing and reformulating this particularly convoluted area of his work. Importantly, he moves beyond the idea of 'non-thetic reflection' and makes use of the more straightforward term, 'cloning', to denote the way in which the One is both an active but inaccessible essence for the phenomenal world of experience.

Cloning is the result of an empirical term = X which as 'occasion' or occasional cause' extracts from the Real a simply transcendental identity by way of a

¹¹ As we shall see in the following chapter, Quentin Meillassoux employs a similar approach when he introduces the concept of 'facticity' in order to show that we can come to understand that we exist within a world that has a meaning to us and which we can understand, whilst at the same time we can know that this world is not the sum of all possible knowledge, without knowing how this finite knowledge comes about.

¹² Cloning or non-thetic transcendence is the mechanism that we see Laruelle formulating over a period of time, and in terms of Laruelian scholarship, between two phases of his own theoretical development (namely *Philosophy II* and *Philosophy III*). In *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, he tells us that, 'Transcendental cloning [...] was not present in *Philosophy II* except under the barely drafted and inadequate forms (theory of 'non-thetic reflection') (Laruelle, *PoNP* 2013: 36), which gives us an indication that, whilst these different forms of his argument share a basic principle, developing the means to describe and track the movement between the One and the world of experience was in itself a sustained project.

mechanism that is no longer that of the double or philosophical reflection.
(Laruelle, 2013 PoNP: 31)

This use of the term 'cloning', as with Badiou's deployment of the generic indiscernible, is an attempt to generate a non-contradictory movement or transposition between the One and the world of lived experience, or what Laruelle refers to here as the 'empirical' world. Where he talks about 'transcendental cloning', Laruelle is referring to what could be thought of as a kind of copying of the One, but is in fact a unilateral determination of the real world in exactly the same way that the One unilaterally determines the world. Laruelle's use of the word 'transcendental' is important here as well, since he is using it within a strict context, saying 'if we experience or gain access to transcendence, then it is in the mode of a radical being-immanent. (Laruelle P&NP, 2013: 68-71). This is at the heart of the idea of cloning; the implication that what is being cloned is not an aspect of the Real, but a mode, or an operating principle. 'Double' and 'reflection' thus inform us that the process of cloning does not simply create something that 'looks like' the One, or that is exactly the same as the One, albeit in a different context; instead, as a result of all of the operations and processes that we have discussed, cloning is an enacting of the One. In the following passage, we see Laruelle developing the relationship between cloning and identity, allowing us to expand our understanding of this process:

The theory of cloning is of course fundamental within a thought which is nonetheless not one of identity in the philosophical and intentional sense, but a thought by and according to identity. More exactly, a thinking in-identity.
(Laruelle, 2013 PoNP: 32)

Thinking according to identity, or thinking in-identity, is therefore a way of thinking about cloning within a practical or lived context and, as we shall see, is one of the most valuable non-philosophical tools in terms of thinking about improvisation and the production of music. In its basic formation, thinking in-identity clones the One's capacity to be the force of determination-in-the-last-instance, but rather than determining anything in the way that the One does, thinking according-to-identity remains given in the One. This is the transcendental nature of non-philosophical cloning; that reminds us that thinking in-identity 'does what the One does', in that is a point of determination, but is never 'not the One'. Thinking in-identity is always given in the One, but determination can momentarily be understood as operating according to identity *and* in the One.

One way to think about this process would be to consider the act of creating a self-referential context, for example a photograph or a musical improvisation, as a cloning. In this instance, the contents of the improvisation would no longer simply belong to the world, instead they would belong to the improvisation, and they function literally as the clone of the world. In sonic terms, we could say that his cloning process creates 'distortions' of the world, an improvisation is clearly given in the One, and it is real,

since it is of the world), but the sounds that are constructed no longer operate according to a recognised context: the self-vision-force of the improviser has reconditioned them as sounds-in-improvisation. As a result, this strange and double sense of movement and copying that cloning gives us, enables us to understand that thinking according to identity is the same process as thinking according to the One, but as with Laruelle's comments about non-thetic a priori, the process of cloning is a 'living in' the One, without 'entering' into it. The practical outcome of this is that, since all of these identities are given in-One, they all have the same capacity to clone the Real and thus produce real experiences. As we shall see in the next chapter, Laruelle is not alone in thinking that an incomprehensible Real or absolute can be understood as being folded into a lived experience of a world that is both real and comprehensible, and Reza Negarestani's use of 'insider time' and 'nested interiorities' explores a not unrelated trajectory in order to think about our relationship with something that is beyond human comprehension.

Also worth noting at this stage, is Laruelle's use of the term 'superposition' in the context of cloning, as it indicates another (relatively) recent development in his thought; a move towards using an aspect of quantum physics as a means to capture a sense of what radical immanence could be 'like'. For Laruelle, 'the One-in-the-last-instance, the absolutely non-mixed [...] is radical immanence, or immanence through superposition' (Laruelle, 2013 AB: 118). Quantum superposition is a means to describe the way in which, at a quantum scale, particles or waves are not simply in a variety of different states such as different speeds, different positions, different energies or as particles or waves; instead, until they are measured, quantum particles are said to exist in every possible state at once. As such, Laruelle's contention that radical immanence can be understood as superposition suggests that our experience in the lived world is a form of observation, or indeed 'measurement' of the One as immanence, which is to say that human thought takes what is given in the One on the terms that are presented to us, but as with quantum physics, we are unable to develop any insights regarding the provenance of the world that we observe.

This survey of Laruelle's non-philosophical project enables us to draw three main conclusions that will be of value to our discussions of improvisation. The first is that all of the various strategies that we have discussed are different readings of an essentially identical process. For example, where Laruelle suggests that 'experience [of non-thetic] transcendence, [would be] in the mode of a radical being-immanent', this is another way of describing the self-vision-force that was discussed earlier. As with the interconnected framework of terms and ideas that Deleuze and Guattari put forward, non-philosophy projects outwards from a set of key principles, and we can see Laruelle thinking through a number of ways to put his ideas into practice. Having established that we do not 'see' the One, but that we see the things that are given-in the One, and similarly asserting that whilst we cannot think the One, we can however understand that our thought operates within the One, which enables us to conceptualise a thinking 'from' the One, Laruelle then uses a range of terms including

vision-in-One, self-vision-force, the photographic stance, non-thetic transcendence and cloning as vehicles with which to play out such a thinking from, and a performing of, the One.

Secondly, by configuring radical immanence as superposition, Laruelle introduces the idea that the One can be thought of in terms of contingency and uncertainty. This is not to say that the One is necessarily contingent, because as Laruelle informs us, we can have no knowledge of the identity of the One, however, it does mean that because we cannot say anything about what the One is, or why it operates in the way that it does, then all that we can say about it is that it is contingent, or as Laruelle suggests, that as with the concept of superposition, the One-as-radical immanence, is both in every possible state and at the same time in no state. This does not mean that the One is unpredictable, but it does mean that we can have no way of predicting what the One can or will do, which again brings us back to the idea of unilateral determination, and the fact that we cannot understand how things happen in the One, we can only see that they are given in the One. Hence we cannot 'repeat' the One, instead we must non-philosophically 'clone' the One.

The final conclusion that we can draw from Laruelle's work will lead us directly into a consideration of practice, and pertains to the relationship between cloning and contingency. If we can allow that the One is contingent, since it is not categorisable and therefore not predictable, then a cloning of the One would mean a cloning of contingency. As we have seen, the self-vision-force of the photographic stance is just such a cloning of the One, which suggests that if a creative act is a cloning of contingency, then the disruptive tendencies of creative practices could be understood as a performing of contingency.

2. Non-philosophy and improvisation

2.1 Lost within the music: improvising in-identity

Earlier in the chapter we looked at Laruelle's image of the photographic stance as a way to understand the vision-in-One. Now we can take this image further and see it as an instance of what he refers to as 'thinking in-identity', where thinking according to identity serves as another way of understanding thinking-in-One: by giving ourselves to the taking of a photograph or to creating a musical improvisation we are cloning the One and thus unilaterally determining a photograph or an improvisation. Laruelle's notion of the photographic stance suggests that in the moment of taking a photograph (when the photographer is using *their* eyes, holding a particular camera with *their* hands, at a particular time and place, in order to create a particular image that is completely from *their* perspective), the photographer (and the photographic stance that produces the particular image) is completely situated and located in time and space, and has an identity that results from all of these, and no doubt more, very specific features. However, the photographic stance also speaks of a stripping away of all of these features and perspectives, such that we no longer think of a specific person, a specific camera, a specific time or place, we only think the One. If the One is the ungraspable absolute that allows for, but remains foreclosed to lived experience, then by performing the Real through an act of situated identity, in other words by taking up the photographic stance, the photographer becomes or rather *clones* this absolute. Hence, by completely giving themselves to the act of doing something, by becoming lost within the photographic stance and by cloning 'a sort of undivided experience', the photographer performs the ungraspable absolute Real, which, in reference to the conclusions above, we can also think of as a superposition-as-quantum contingency.

If we follow Laruelle's lead and therefore think of an improviser in a postural, performative *improvising* stance, then we can begin to see how the creative act of improvisation is also the clone of determination-in-the-last-instance. The improviser inhabits their situated experience of their instrument and their environment, experiencing their own thoughts and responses to that environment as *a prioristic* images, as well as observing their interactions with the musical and sonic components of that situation, which could take the form of interplay with other musicians, the sonic properties of a performance space, and the sounds that they themselves are producing on their instrument. All of these components construct the improviser as the musician-in-improvisation, where the choices about what sound to make, what kind of musical structures could be developed, what kind of instrumental technique should be used, all form aspects of the improvising stance.

2.2 Inventing music: the improviser as synthesiser

In *Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music*, the guitarist and bass player Joe Morris suggests that if 'pioneering a creative frontier' (Morris, 2012: 1) is the goal of improvising musicians, then we could say that these musicians are seeking 'the highest degree of invention possible in every performance' (Morris, 2012: 2). Morris goes on to suggest that, 'the integrated employment of the properties [of free music] offers the greatest possible percent of originality,' and that this originality and innovation is 'manifested in a sound' (Morris, 2012: 31). As such, creating music spontaneously is, for Morris, a search for originality, an originality that could be expressed in a variety of ways including discovering new sounds, inventing original musical structures, making unexpected tempo shifts or arranging instruments in innovative ways.¹⁴

Clearly, all of these elements can combine to create a musical experience that contains a high degree of originality within the terms that Morris puts forward, but we can also think of Morris' ideas within the context of the improvising stance, where the quest for originality not only relates to creating new combinations of the resources that we can access in the real, lived world (in other words musical instruments, the acoustic properties of a performance space, our own thoughts and musical knowledge, our interactions with other musicians), but also pertains to the fact that an improviser and an improvisation are both given in the One.

One of Laruelle's recent projects has been to formulate the concept of 'photo-fiction', and across two books, *The Concept of Non-Photography* and *Photo-Fiction, A Non-Standard Aesthetics*, he builds a theoretical framework with which to support this idea that builds on the by-now familiar sense that, within the context of photo-fiction the value of photography lies not in the fact that it is able to create representations of the real world (Laruelle, 2012 PF: 16), '16), the context of photo-fiction process of unilateral determination (Laruelle, 2012 CNP: 26).¹⁵ We can appropriate another musical term, 'synthesiser', in order to think of an improviser as the creator of a similar kind of musical or sonic fiction. Where Laruelle suggests that 'the photo is not a degradation of the World, but a process which is "parallel" to it' (Laruelle, 2012 CNP:

¹⁴ In this regard, we could think of changing attitudes towards the arrangement of musical instruments in jazz ensembles that occurred during the formative years of Free Jazz, where the traditional boundaries between front-line instruments (such as saxophone and trumpet) and rhythm section instruments (in particular drums and bass) became blurred. As we saw in the Introduction, Paul Dunmall referred to this re-calibration of the relationship between instruments as something of a 'democratic' process in Western music.

¹⁵ In the Preface to *Photo-Fiction*, Laruelle informs us that the book is a, 'reciprocal liberation of art and thought by the under-determination of their means is tested out here on the concept of photography, hence the concept of photo-fiction, in waiting for perhaps a music-fiction' (Laruelle, 2012 PF: 2). Whilst the chapter is not an attempt at a music-fiction, nevertheless, it is a re-application of some of Laruelle's theoretical principles relating to non-photography and photo-fiction.

19 and 24), the improviser-as-synthesiser improvises, and creates a 'synthesised' musical fiction, which is parallel to the world; and in the same way as a photo-fiction, although a music-fiction exists in the world, it is not 'of' that world. The improviser's commitment to invention, can therefore be a reference both to a conventional interpretation of improvisation, which would be an improvisation that makes use of available resources in the lived world, but now, we could think of an improvisation as an acknowledgement of Laruelle's thoughts on 'music-fiction' that frames the process of improvising as the creation of a synthesised real within the world.¹⁶

Throughout *The Perpetual Frontier*, Morris goes to great lengths to describe an exhaustive array of techniques and resources that a musician can use when conducting a search for new forms of musical expression, and his thorough analysis of the various improvising and compositional methodologies used by Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey among others, provides something of a catalogue of ideas for improvising musicians to make use of and modify in their own practice. In his own description of the book, Morris suggests that,

Free music is an art form that has been made by individuals [...] who *invented* the way they play their instruments and *invented* platforms on which to play that music, based on whatever aesthetic value they thought mattered to them. (Morris, 2012 online)

Here again we see Morris further emphasising the importance of invention, but now going beyond a simple discussion of creative invention during the course of performance, but broadening his scope to consider some of the broader contexts that surround live performance. Inventing techniques, designing performance spaces, as well as creating instruments, scales and rhythmic patterns are all examples of the way in which the creation of synthesised sound and music fictions clone the One, creating new paradigms for musical performance practice, in terms of creating new methods and tools to facilitate the creation of music, a music that would therefore not operate according to pre-established practices. This is another important aspect of Laruelle's interest in fiction as practice; that a fiction does not 'represent' what is in the world, it creates ('synthesises') its own codes and means of engagement.

Not only does Morris offer new perspectives on the importance of musical invention as fiction, but he also provides us with another means of thinking about transcendental cloning when he puts forward his views regarding 'Spirit vs. Technique' (Morris, 2012: 22) in improvised music practice. Morris takes the view that phrases such as 'let the spirit come through you' (Morris, 2012: 22), which suggest that improvising might

¹⁶ In the context of the current discussion, the term 'synthesised' therefore does not refer to creating something unreal or fake, instead it is being used to suggest that the process of cloning, within a musical context can be likened to a process of synthesizing, and thus a means to produce real (as opposed to Real) sounds.

precipitate or be the result of some form of transcendental experience, do not suffice in terms of discussing the practice of producing music. On the contrary, his work is very much focused on developing an expansive lexicon of terms and techniques that are specifically designed to illuminate and enhance the act of creating music spontaneously. However, in non-philosophical terms, rather than thinking about a vague notion of transcendental spiritual communion, we could think of Morris' 'spirit' as the One. In this regard, spiritual transcendence, or more accurately *non-thetic* transcendence, would in fact suggest that it is *precisely* through the rigorous application of musical technique and knowledge, that the One could be said to 'come through us', although as we have seen, a strictly non-philosophical 'coming through' would in fact be a cloning of the One. However, Morris' work does suggest that even within more formal discourse relating to improvised music practice, in terms of analysis and education, Laruelle's ideas can be used to provide new perspectives on established ideas.

In chapter one, we saw how, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari use the image (after Burroughs) of the junky sitting around 'with a spine like a frozen hydraulic jack' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 153) as an analogy for the way in which the individual engages with the plane of consistency and becomes a body without organs. Their discussion focuses on the way in which an organism must dismantle itself and open 'the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorialisations' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 160). Deleuze and Guattari offer us an undoubtedly compelling image of the body without organs as a means to propagate distributions of intensities within an assemblage, and by dint of their assertion that the act of creating a territory is analogous to creative practitioner making a piece of art, they are signalling that a shutting-off and closing-down of the body's functions can convey a sense of a creative process in motion. However, our discussion of Joe Morris' ideas in terms of his views on developing a rigorous free music practice alongside our modification of his views on 'spirit vs technique' can provide us with an alternative sense of what a creative act might be. As our interpretation of Morris' work suggests, one of the more interesting consequences of thinking of the improviser in terms of non-philosophy, is that rather than imagining a musical performance as an exercise in self-dismantling, where an improviser would go beyond themselves and their particular limitations, the non-philosophical improviser would proceed absolutely through themselves according to their specific identity, that is located, with a particular instrument, with a particular set of skills and knowledges and so on, in order to understand that a particular improvisation is a performance of the Real. In the previous chapter, we saw Eddie Prevost describing the process of improvising to being 'lost within the music' (Prevost, 2011: 87). Whilst this might initially suggest an out-of-body experience that could be similar to the one we see Deleuze and Guattari putting forward, we can also think of Prevost as a musician-in-improvisation. In this regard, it is precisely because of a particular set of qualities and features that Prevost the improviser becomes 'lost': it is not that an improviser 'steps

out' of their normal perspective in order to spontaneously create music, it because he or she acts according to identity, and therefore according to the One, that they are momentarily able to live an undivided experience, thereby cloning the contingency of the One.

2.3 Improvisation as Heresy / The improviser as Heretic

Having mapped out a way of approaching Laruelle's notion of thinking in-identity that can help us to broaden out the framework for what an improvisation is, what it can do and how it might come about, we can now turn our attention to another non-philosophical concept, *heresy*, in order to conclude this articulation of improvisation in a non-philosophical context. Although what follows is a technical discussion of Laruelle's image of the Future Christ, the framework for this conception has significant value in terms of understanding primarily what Laruelle actually means when he speaks of heresy and can provide us with a clear starting point to begin a discussion of the improviser as heretic. Laruelle's non-philosophical appropriation of the concept of heresy is both the consequence of the research and development that informs the book *Future Christ*, but more importantly, according to Smith and other commentators, it marks a shift in his broader philosophical output. With non-philosophical heresy, Laruelle makes a palpable break from the analysis and delimiting of *difference* that features in earlier works such as *Philosophies of Difference* and *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy* (the work that makes up the majority of Laruelle's output from Philosophy I to Philosophy IV) to the more constructive and creative approach that characterises his most recent research under the heading of Philosophy V. In this way, heresy appears as a deliberate attempt on Laruelle's part to move away from critiquing other philosophical models, and to develop instead a coherent model of what non-philosophy can achieve in regard to religious and scientific thought. Whilst Laruelle's focus is clearly the figure of the heretic within the context of religious, particularly Christian, thought, we shall come to see that the heretic and 'heretical decision' can make a valuable contribution to our discussions of improvised music practice.

The figure of the heretic combines a number of the ideas that we have already encountered, and at its core we can think of the heretic not only as a non-philosophical reflection on Christianity and the figure of Jesus Christ, but perhaps more simply and more fundamentally, as an attempt to re-calibrate the experience of being in the world. Whilst most of what we have covered so far discusses what kind of experience being given in the One might be, and how ideas like unilateral determination and cloning might provide new insights into creative processes, it is only when we encounter the heretic that we begin to think about the consequences of turning these non-philosophical operations on ourselves. As we shall see there are various parallels that we can draw between Laruelle's work on the heretic and his more recent interest in photo-fiction, and thus, when he tells us that 'the heretic really is the only thinker who happens not in the World but in a background' (Laruelle, 2010 FC:

52) and in making this distinction, as with photo-fiction he is suggesting that whilst in a practical sense, the heretic exists in the real world, his or her identity is not dependent on the world. Whilst a photograph and photo-fiction are ostensibly both aspects of the same real object, a photograph creates meaning by referring to, or representing things that appear in the real world, and as we have seen, photo-fiction creates a parallel to the real world. Thus the heretical thinker can be discerned as an aspect of a real person, and yet, as with photo-fiction, which Laruelle tells us, 'is lived as an art without any bit of realism and it is in this way that it forms an even more intense chaos by the absence of the world or of its own sufficiency' (Laruelle, 2012 PF: 20-21), the heretic is not of the real world. This comparison to photo-fiction allows us to see why the heretic can be understood to be heretical in a conventionally religious sense, since he or she, would not be determined by the codes, practices or conditions of the world (in a simple sense, they would not 'relate' to them). Laruelle's comments about photo-fiction's lack of its own sufficiency are also key to the heretic's destabilising tendencies, since this idea relates directly to the way in which the heretic is able to apply a unilaterally determining self-vision-force to themselves. In other words, the heretic's lack of its own sufficiency is due to the two-part process of firstly being self-determining as a result of self-vision-force, but then, because of the non-traceability of causality within unilateral determination, the heretic appears to arrive without provenance. Laruelle goes on to inform us that 'the heretical decision is this historically impossible gesture and nonetheless real' (Laruelle, 2010 FC: 52), which further confirms the contradictory and disruptive nature of heresy. Again, within the real world, the heretical figure should not be possible, as it breaks with structures and conventions of that world. The heretical decision is therefore an act of self-determination; it is the making of oneself such that we ourselves become a parallel to the world, in many ways akin to Badiou's use of the concept of forcing. In this way, heresy appears to be something of a channeling of contingency-as-superposition, it 'plays' radical immanence into the real world, and at the same time, from a real world observer's point of view, where the One is incomprehensible, the origins of this disturbance are impossible to discern.

In *The Concept of Non-Photography*, we see Laruelle putting forward a similar perspective about the propensity of a photograph to be self-determining, which not only acts as a precursor to the concept of the photo-fiction, but in some regard could be thought of as a development of the heretical decision.

The photo 'arranges itself' to precede things on whose basis, nevertheless, it has been produced. Far from any empiricism, it is not already amongst things, things are already rendered inert and sterile as soon as it appears. These are the things that are for all eternity in the photo and nowhere else, at least so far as they are 'in-photo'. (Laruelle, 2011 CNP:100)

In simple terms, a photograph 'arranging itself', suggests that the photograph has become something other than simply an image of whatever has been photographed;

that this 'heretical' object has an existence that is independent not only of the things that have been photographed, but also of the real world of representation. What Laruelle is claiming here, is that not only is the photograph not 'of' the things that have been photographed, which is one aspect of Laruelle's non-photography, an undermining of the idea of representation; but also, by saying that the photograph 'arranges itself', Laruelle connects the photograph to the process of self-determination that we explored above. The sense in which the photograph precedes the things 'on whose basis it has been produced' both conveys the idea that the photograph creates its own context that is not based on real relations, it is self-defining (and again 'parallel' to the world), and at the same time, reconfigures the identity of the images that appear in the photograph. Those images now only have an identity by virtue of the fact that they are 'in-photo', again in a strict non-photographical sense, the images do not relate to, or represent anything outside of the photograph, they are a different kind of thing. As an example of thinking according to identity, we can clearly see that being-in-photo conveys a strong sense of the way in which firstly, the things 'in' the photograph have an identity due to the fact that they are in that photograph and nowhere else, and secondly, that the images that a photograph presents are also unilaterally determined. This qualifies Laruelle's statement about the photograph being 'far from any empiricism', since the photograph, as with the heretical decision, is determined by the One, and not caused by something in the real world.

Whilst the above analysis has drawn comparison between heresy, non-photography and photo-fiction in order to further develop a context in which to discuss non-philosophy and practice, we can also direct some of these terms towards improvisation in order to draw some useful conclusions. One of the key insights that we can take from Laruelle's work on heresy is that whilst the heretical decision is a particular type of thinking-according-to-identity, a self-determined identity, it is also an acting outside of real space and time. Obviously in its traditional formulation, heresy does not conform to the rules and conventions of the culture or society that it heretically transgresses, and in the same way, non-philosophical heresy is seen as breaking with a conventional means of understanding things. Ultimately what is heretical about non-philosophical heresy is that it seeks to be two types of thing, or at least to fold two categories of heresy into itself. On one hand, we can think of a real heresy, a given-in-One, that outputs into a world that we can comprehend, a musically transgressive heresy of dissonant sounds, counter-intuitive structures, extended instrumental techniques, or less obvious heresies that are more contextually nuanced; quiet music that should be loud, diatonic music that should be discordant, repetitive music that should be varied. On the other hand, we can think in terms of heresy as self-determining vision-force, which arrives with no precedent, and does not function in relation to real categories, instead it is its own category, it is a cloning of the One and a synthesiser of parallel worlds. What is interesting about the sense in which this second, 'synthetic heresy', creates new categories and new worlds is that such a wholesale act of creativity suggests the creation of new parameters within which to have experiences, such as time and space itself.

Laruelle builds just such a conception of the Future Christ as the heretical figure that does not return within what we would normally understand as a conventional eschatological context, in other words 'at the end of time'. Instead, the Future Christ is itself a new time, and creates a new time.

The Future Christ is time as subject-time, cloned or born but without a birth brought about in the time of the World. (Laruelle, 2010 FC: 123)

Here, Laruelle speaks about the Future Christ as a figure that disrupts time and appears as something we do not recognise. This is the real force behind the idea of the heretic: it is beyond comprehension and outside of our standard temporal frameworks and physical points of reference, and thus it forces the creation of new frameworks and references, and as we saw with the heretical decision, the Future Christ is a cloning of the One, it is a unilaterally determined identity which itself can determine other identities.

The claim that 'time is immanent to time' (Laruelle, 2010 FC: 119), is a further extension to this idea, which is to say that even time can be considered as a determination according to identity, in that what we take to be clock time in a real sense, is simply a feature of lived experience rather than any sort of feature or condition of the One. Clearly, time is a central feature of improvised musical performance, given that it is a time based activity, and that the duration of a musical performance can very often feel out of step with clock time; an indication that time – and the experiences that we have within that time – can seem to exist according to the identity of a given improvisation, rather than within strict chronometric time. What is also notable in the current context, is that we can identify a direct correlation between quantum superposition and the figure of the Future Christ. As we have seen, temporal differentiation only occurs at the moment of measurement, since prior to measurement, a quantum particle exists in all temporal states. In terms of non-philosophical heresy, therefore, time becomes determined by the heretical figure of the Future Christ, and time can only be understood as real time at the point of determination: up until that moment, there can be no concept of time, as there is only radical immanence. This is to say that, whilst we might accept time as a fundamental part of our experience of the lived world, in fact, as non-philosophy reminds us, time is only one other aspect of a world that is given in One, and that outside of this context, our real conception of time has no meaning.

Future Christ as distortion of time demonstrates the double aspect of heresy that we discussed earlier: a heresy in the conventionally religious conception of the word, which undermines and subverts a Christian eschatology, and the non-philosophical, heresy-as-synthesis which as self-determining radical immanence is able to create a new kind of time. As we saw in Laruelle's non-photographic proposal for being-in-photo, wherein the photograph 'arranges itself to precede things on whose basis it has been produced', the future-in-person of the Future Christ is a future that mirrors this idea. The Future Christ does not arrive in the world in a real time, instead the Future Christ creates a parallel time

which similarly 'arranges itself', thus as an actual rupture in time, the Future Christ is a creating of a new kind of future that would not have previously existed, which in more straightforward non-philosophical terms would be a determining of the real components of that future as being in that future, and nowhere else. Whilst this might appear to be a rather obvious statement, one of the main consequences of thinking about time in terms of the Future Christ is that it directs us towards contemplating a future that could exist both as an extension to our current world (it would be a future that we would be able to live in), and yet it would operate according to its own set of principles, which would not be drawn from the present; rather, they would be self-determined. Thus the future-in-person is a state or condition that is absolutely born of a break with a current conception of our normal state of existence, and which creates its own set of conditions, values and codes. The real import of this idea is that the future does not necessarily need to be a continuation of the present, instead, the heretical decision suggests that different kinds of futures can be constructed, and as John Cage claims in his 'Future of Music Credo', 'the composer (organiser of sound) will not only be faced with the entire field of sound but also with the entire field of time' (Cage, 2004: 27), thus suggesting that a heretical musician, is not only a creator of sounds and of music, but also a creator of time.

If the Future Christ and non-philosophical heresy are assertions that the present is only ever a determination of Real contingency, and that the self-determination of the heretical decision is a means to create new worlds and new kinds of futures, then we can begin to see how improvised music practice, can similarly be seen to be a playing out of self-determined radical immanence. In his introduction to *Songs in the Key of Z: The Curious Universe of Outsider Music*, the journalist and music historian Irwin Chusid sets out to explore and discuss the work of a series of 'unintentional renegades' (Chusid, 2000: x), whose musical practice is 'fragmented and lacking in common structural threads' (Chusid, 2000: xiv). Whilst this is in no way intended to be a formal and scientifically controlled tracking of heresy, Chusid's interest in a set of creative musicians who are seemingly at odds with not only their own cultural contexts and environments, but who also have very little in common with each other, does reflect certain aspects of our exploration of the heretic. Whilst the book is ostensibly focused on musicians whose work falls outside of jazz and improvised music practices, Chusid does include the jazz musicians Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk and Sun Ra in a list of musicians whose work he sees as being 'difficult to catalogue' (Chusid, 2000: xiv), suggesting that their music, for a variety of reasons, breaks with audiences' expectations. In chapter one, we saw how Coleman's music was so unsettling, and provoked such a negative response that he was physically assaulted by his fellow band members early in his career. Coleman's theory of *Harmolodics*, which became a cornerstone of his musical practice, was described by a later collaborator, the guitarist Bern Nix, as 'a way of looking at music - it's not a system. It's a way of [handling] the difficulty of dealing with melody, rhythm and harmony [by way of utilising] melodic variables, [it's] exploratory' (Nix, 2009). Nix's description indicates the elusiveness of Harmolodics, pointing towards its potentially heretical nature, such that it can be apprehended in the world, but it is not of the world. Similarly, when Nix relates his

own conversation with Coleman about Harmolodics, he tells us, 'I said to him, "You know, to me this sounds like counterpoint." He said, "Well, it's not exactly counterpoint, it's something else." The way Ornette uses language, he likes to put his own spin on everything' (Nix, 2009), which again suggests that Coleman's ideas were turned towards creating an approach to making music that was not premised on a set of accepted codes and practices. We have already examined the notion of unilateral determination from a number of perspectives, but in contrasting unilaterality to alterity, and suggesting that heresy is 'the Other than [...] and not the Other of', (Laruelle, 2010 FC: 51), Laruelle introduces a conception of otherness that is similar to the one the Coleman uses. Here we see Laruelle describing a complete 'other,' not simply a mirror image or other type of reflection of what we already can see. This is the power of the photograph that we saw Laruelle describing earlier, where, by arranging itself the photograph does not simply exist in relation to the things that have been photographed; it is not the other 'of' these things, it is other 'than' these things, it is something else entirely and it would be a mistake to confuse them. In this way although an improvisation may well make use of the same notes or sounds that we hear in other musical contexts (as Nix suggests, in melodies, harmonies or rhythms), the improvisation is not simply the 'other' of these different contexts, the notes are not simply re-arranged in an-'other' way, instead an improvisation as heresy, which could be seen as the result of the improvising stance, is distinctly other 'than' any piece of music that is not that particular improvisation, which is to say every 'other' piece of music.

2.4 Non-improvising improvisation

As we have seen, non-philosophy offers a number of opportunities with which to discuss improvisation, and before completing this chapter with an extended discussion of the work of the improvising trumpet player Peter Evans, we shall perform one final non-philosophical operation in order to consider what a non-improvisation might be.

Non-philosophy was designed to destabilise philosophy, by denouncing any special status accorded to philosophy in terms of its ability to offer either 'special knowledge' or 'privileged access' to the Real (what Laruelle refers to as the 'Principle of Sufficient Philosophy'), seeing it instead as simply one discourse amongst many. In putting non-philosophy to work, Laruelle conceived of a non-photography, which as we have seen, enabled him to think practically about what photography is doing; what it does to the things it photographs, what it tells us about the things that we see in photographs, what it tells us about the act of taking a photograph and what might be happening when we look at a photograph. Non-photography is not a negation of photography, instead it is designed to establish a conception of photography that accepts non-philosophy's negation of representation and causality, replacing it instead with two key ideas: non-photography as a cloning of radical immanence (which relates to self-vision-force and the way in which the photograph is a playing out of contingency, in other words it shows us that we cannot know, or represent the Real-One), and non-

photography as a unilateral determination of identity (such that things that appear in a photograph exist according to the parallel world of that photograph, but are not directly caused by it).

Similarly, non-improvisation would be not a negation of improvisation, instead, by acknowledging the same non-photographic principles, cloning of radical immanence and unilateral determination of identity, it is an opening-up of improvisation to new ways of thinking about the production and experience of sound. As a time-based activity, non-improvisation encourages us to think about the various temporal aspects of improvisation; new timeframes, new rhythms, new patterns; to an extent, non-improvisation is an attitude towards improvisation, it is a way of 'performing improvisation'.

One of the particular consequences of thinking through a non-improvisation is that it allows us to foreground the fact that improvisation itself is a non-linear process, which is how we can understand non-improvisation as a performance of improvisation. Where non-improvisation is a process that understands that the improvisation stance is a cloning of quantum-superpositioning, then we can trace this contingency through both the improviser's and the improvisation's determination according to identity. This is not to say that improvisation is unpredictable because it performs the contingency of the One, but that a non-improvisation is unpredictable because its rules are not simply drawn from the real world of lived experience, they are self-determined by a heretical improviser. In this way non-improvisation encourages us to think about the outcome of an improvisation as a measuring of quantum movement, understanding that we can no longer simply say that 'this decision has caused that outcome' in a conventional formulation of cause-and-effect, but instead, to think that although musical and sonic outcomes and aesthetic effects and can be observed, their direct causes cannot be traced. In addition, non-improvisation allows us to think in terms of improvisation-according-to-identity, where sounds and gestures take on a value and a meaning according to an improvisation, which is a meaning 'other than' a previous meaning (in other words, a non-improvisation does not attempt to make its materials 'say something' or to communicate with an audience), it simply exists in terms of the meaning of the context that an improvisation has generated, and as we saw with the figure of the Future Christ, even an experience of time can be given according to identity. In this sense, non-improvisation resists conventional conceptions of improvisation and instead thinks of it as a process of creating synthetic, parallel worlds. In his description of photo-fiction, Laruelle tells us that a photo-fiction 'will produce [...] a kind of chaos that is even more intense than the photo [...] on the basis of a special logic of what we could call an art-fiction or a non-standard aesthetics' (Laruelle, 2012 PF: 13). Thus, if we are to understand non-improvisation as a similar kind of fiction (if it is to be a music-fiction in the way that Laruelle suggests that music-fiction will follow on from photo-fiction), then we can recognise that the musician-in-improvisation, or a non-improviser as the producer of 'intense chaos', is the creator of sounds, patterns and even an experience of time that seems to literally come from

nowhere. A non-improvisation is disruptive because it interferes with time and presents us with sounds and structures that we cannot relate to in ways that we recognise.

3. Conclusion: Peter Evans, the Non-improviser

The work of trumpeter Peter Evans spans a number of areas of contemporary jazz, from the meta-jazz pastiche of the jazz quartet *Mostly Other People Do the Killing* to the experimental jazz-rock of projects such as *Pulverise the Sound* through to the completely free-form improvisation of the live and digitally-manipulated solo performances of *Nature / Culture*. His work demonstrates a familiarity and fluency with a range of discourses surrounding post-1960s improvised music practice including developments in instrumental technique, experiments in sound aesthetics alongside the more formalist debates surrounding organisation, composition and structure within improvised music. In terms of the current project then, it seems that Evans' structural and compositional interests, as evidenced in a number of recordings, are rooted in firmly in performance.

As this exercise in mapping non-philosophical theory to improvised music practice has demonstrated, there are clearly a number of links that can be made between the two, and Evans' approach to playing the trumpet makes him a compelling subject with which to consider notions of the non-improviser, the improvising stance and a sense of being-in-improvisation. In setting out his approach to playing, Evans communicates a number of key themes that will form the basis of this discussion of his work; 'I've always liked to play the trumpet a lot, and I was always into finding ways to play as much as possible. I like information overload' (Evans, in Hunter, 2008). His interest in music as information overload alludes to his related enthusiasm for using the trumpet to create sounds and music that push his own and his audiences' expectations via an expansive sonic palette, and a range of innovative instrumental techniques and adaptation of the trumpet. In a non-philosophical sense, this statement communicates exactly what Laruelle described with the photographic stance: Evans' trumpet takes up a *trumpet* stance in order to play the world. As we shall see, Evans' transformation both of the trumpet itself and of the sounds it can produce, gives us a sense of what being-in-improvisation could mean, and as a musician-in-improvisation, or a non-improviser his approach to playing signals a move away from simply thinking about improvisation as a re-arrangement of available materials. If we pause to briefly compare this sense of the non-improviser to the 'subject as improviser' that we examined in relation to Badiou's theory of the Event, then we can quickly see a marked difference as to the terms of reference for improvisation in each instance.

For the Badiouian improviser, we saw that an improvisation involved a process of 'forcing', of bringing into existence a sound or a musical form that had hitherto been unrecognised or unknown. This sound or form then shaped the progression of an improvisation, the musicians involved in a performance developed a fidelity towards this improvisation event that then informed the development of the playing and real-time composition from that point on. In addition, an audience listening to or watching an improvised music performance could also be said to develop a fidelity towards a particular sound, gesture or musical passage that then shapes their expectation and

experience of a piece of music. We could scale this improvisation event up to look at the way in which improvised music making, as a school of thought, and as a musical practice, is itself the result of a fidelity to one or a number of events. Hence there are certain expectations about what does or does not constitute an improvisation, what counts as a 'good' or 'bad' improvisation, and on into debates surrounding stylistic and genre-based approaches to playing and analysis. All of these ideas can be traced back to a way of thinking about improvisation that sets it up as a process through which an improviser brings into being something that was not previously present, something that was beyond the finite bounds of our environment, or situation.

For the non-improviser, where the Real is shut off from the lived world, but remains radically immanent, non-improvisation is a recognition that improvisation is a cloning of the Real and therefore the production of new identities and new forms of experience as identities, along with new contexts for experience according to these identities. This is what Laruelle is referring to when he uses the term 'non-standard aesthetics'; aesthetics that are not representations or aspects of things in the real world. Instead they are aesthetics-as-determinations, which provoke responses in accordance to their identity as something that is in the world but at the same time parallel to the world, in addition to the way in which unilateral determination draws our attention to the One as contingency. As we have already shown, cloning Real contingency does not mean that we bring that contingency into the world as uncertainty and unpredictability, instead, a non-improvisation according-to non-standard aesthetics would suggest that chaos is created because we cannot know what these non-standard aesthetics mean.¹⁷ This is the crux of the argument for us, that as non-improviser, Evans is creating sounds, new approaches to playing the trumpet, working with different combinations of musicians, engaging with new playing environments, new kinds of instruments; all of which, as potential heresies, are not being made according to the lived world, they are unilaterally determined and are themselves unilaterally determining.

In a piece discussing Evans' work, the musician Eric Wubbels describes the way in which Evans adapts and modifies the trumpet in order to generate new techniques and new sounds.

For Evans, the trumpet serves as a point of intersection between the human and the technological, and his treatment of the instrument [...] is primarily abstract and analytical. The trumpet, voice, and microphone are treated as equal partners, as if the metal tube of the instrument connected smoothly to the flesh tube of the vocal tract through a composite vibrating membrane of lips and mouthpiece. (Wubbels, 2009)

¹⁷ As we shall see in the next chapter, Quentin Meillassoux enables to understand contingency in a similar way, as a knowing that we can't know something.

In addition, Evans also uses the trumpet as a vehicle to explore the possibilities for creating new kinds of musical structures. As Wubbels goes on to suggest in reference to the album *Nature / Culture*, Evans produces, 'exactly the result the second-generation of New Complexity composers attempt to achieve again and again' (Wubbels, 2009). As we know, non-philosophy emphasises practice, thereby asserting that unilateral determination is lived rather than explained through philosophical speculation, and in this regard, it is worth noting the emphasis that Evans and others place on his playing in these passages. He is clearly aware of a range of technical and musical antecedents to his practice as a musician, and his performances are focused on achieving a particular sound that is in part concerned with pushing the trumpet to the limit of its capabilities, whilst at the same exploring the possibilities of spontaneously composed music. This emphasis on playing, in particular Evans' decision to push both the himself and the trumpet to the limits of his own and his instrument's capabilities, his 'abstract and analytical' approach, very much casts in him as a non-philosophical heretic in the sense that he creates himself as self-determining vision-force, acknowledging that the answers to the questions he is asking about his own and his instrument's capabilities cannot necessarily be answered by turning to the world as he finds it. His sonic and structural innovations, his use of specialist techniques, all suggest that his is an approach that opens us up to thinking about some of the key tenets of heresy, where the extended technique produces sounds that are 'other than' what would be considered possible on the trumpet, and where his improvisations 'arrange themselves' (they are not simply an alternative to standard music, they are other than standard music), such that new sounds and new forms are beings-in-improvisation.

For Evans, performance is the primary tool for exploration and research, and we can see in the following passage, where he talks about his preference for rehearsal over performance, that a core interest for him is the use of notated pieces as a starting point for further exploration.

In new music ensembles, my favourite part is not playing the concerts —it's rehearsing. I really like rehearsing crazy pieces. But then you play the concert, and usually there's just one, and that's it. To me that's not very interesting. It seems to make a lot more sense and be more alive if you look at notation as something you have to water, and it grows in unexpected ways. (Evans, in Hunter, 2008)

In this sense we can think of the way in which the Future Christ as future-in-person does not come back 'in time', but instead, 'as subject-time', thereby creating a new context for time. In a similar way, although at a much smaller scale, Evans' re-arrangement of scores in 'unexpected ways' speaks of a similarly disruptive process of derangement and rearrangement of time, where music does not come out in the way that a listener, or even a composer would expect, but instead is a heretical

modification of its patterns and rhythms. For Evans, embracing the possibility to either experience or produce the unexpected is clearly a key part of his approach to music making, and as Wubbels observes, 'watching Evans perform live, it's clear that, for all his monstrous prowess on the trumpet, he still insists on playing at the absolute limit of his own technique' (Wubbels, 2009). This perspective on Evans' approach to performing further suggests that he is aware that neither his instrument, nor his own instrumental technique are 'enough' to enable him to produce the music that he wants to. Clearly Evans is not intentionally adopting an improvisation stance, and neither is he deliberately making a heretical decision to become self-visioning point of determination, nevertheless, as we saw earlier with the discussion of Joe Morris' attitude towards the importance of practical rigour and technique, Wubbels' thoughts on Evans' playing convey a sense in which, for Evans, 'the world is not enough', and that by exceeding his own and his instrument's capabilities, he will be able an non-improvised world that could be akin to Laruelle's music-fiction.

On the album *Nature / Culture*, Evans uses solo performance as a means to trigger and investigate a range of improvisational possibilities with the trumpet. The record consists of two sets of pieces, the first a series of studio-based performances that make use of multitrack recording and editing processes in order to recontextualise his playing, whereas the second set of pieces are the result of a continuous solo performance that lasts over forty minutes. When being interviewed about the ideas behind his solo performances, Evans described his aims and approach and spoke about particular playing techniques and the way in which his interest in excess and overload enables him to create and discover new sounds and new compositional strategies.

There are very specific types of material that I've been working on in the context of solo playing [...] particularly ways of generating polyphony and rhythmic variation with three, four or five notes only. The level of variation and complexity that can be derived from the most basic materials is amazing, so rather than shy away from returning to certain types of playing, I dive deeper into them. Then the challenge is to push myself during performance to the edge of what I know, which is the most exciting part, and actually that's usually where the most interesting things happen and where I discover new things to cultivate. It's an endless process, and 'mastery' is a total illusion. (Evans, in Clark, 2011: 34)

As we can see from this passage, Evans' approach often begins with a particular focus (in this instance experimentation with polyphony in solo performance), which prompts further exploration. Evans' point that he tries to push himself 'to the edge of what [he] know[s]' is key, since it reflects Laruelle's thoughts on non-standard aesthetics, suggesting that knowledge, as a means to represent the world to himself, clearly becomes insufficient to Evans' needs. Non-standard aesthetics do not create outcomes because of what they represent or what they communicate, but because

they create the conditions for future responses, or for future determinations: this is the 'special logic' that we saw Laruelle alluding to earlier. In this sense, when Evans states that he is working at the edge of what he knows, in a non-philosophical context, we could take this as an indication that his improvisations require something more than just knowledge of the world that he is in. In setting out to deliberately expand on an existing vocabulary of the trumpet, Evans conveys a sense of non-improvisation as the performing of contingency, in other words, he is not just using what he knows, he is trying to use what he does not yet know, and, in regard to a non-improvisation being a performing of the One, possibly what he cannot know. However, producing improvisations is not simply about identifying rules and then transgressing them, and that is certainly not any kind of formula for producing either interesting or musically successful improvisations. So this sense of 'going against the grain' or working against accepted norms, is only part of Evans' non-improvisational strategy.

The second aspect of Evans' approach that we need to understand is the open-ended nature of his overall performance strategy; he understands that the 'working-against' elements of his playing can only take him so far. The performances on part two of the *Nature / Culture* record are clearly grounded quite literally in an experimental trajectory, in that Evans can certainly articulate his playing strategy as an experiment with certain aspects of instrumental technique, but what certainly marks these pieces out as being potentially non-improvisational, is the fact that this deliberate experimentation is only the starting-point for Evans' playing. If improvisation is the art, or at least the act of starting with an idea and developing it, responding dynamically to changes in the performance environment whilst maintaining a clear aesthetic focus, in order to arrive at a coherent set of sonic and musical statements, then it is Evans' ability to both recognise such areas for potential formal development within the language of trumpet playing, and then play according to those identities and to be determined by them. In this sense, the improvisation stance becomes more closely focused, and we can observe Evans improvising according-to circular breathing, according-to trumpet key noise, or – when Wubbels informs us that Evans inserts a microphone into the bell of a trumpet in order to create 'a kind of paradoxical "amplifier mute"' (Wubbels, 2009) – we could say that he is improvising according-to amplifier mute. In these instances and more, we can see Evans inserting himself into a particular context, allowing himself to be 'determined' by these contexts, and thus forcing himself to exceed his current knowledge and understanding.

In another interview excerpt, we can see Evans talking similarly about using particular aspects of trumpet playing as catalysts for performance, that then take him further into a determined identity and thus beyond his knowledge. To an extent, this alludes to Laruelle's older model of non-thetic transcendence, in the sense that this concept allows us to 'live' the non-thetic *a priori*s that are seen in the One, and by working absolutely into the fine-grained details of various performance identities, we may be able to infer that Evans is thus able to live (via his own performance) the non-thetic *a priori*s of the One and of the various performance contexts.

I'm very interested in the way that proportions of different kinds of materials distort how they are heard. A mid-register note on a trumpet with a Harmon mute; that's the most clichéd trumpet sound around, from Miles Davis down to Chris Botti and anonymous supermarket trumpet noodling. But the actual sonic properties of a Harmon muted trumpet are completely insane. If you hold the note for 30 seconds, or ten minutes, a completely different frame of reference emerges. And what I'm interested in is not just the contrast exposed by differences of proportion but the journey the ear makes from disconnecting one sound from one signification, and either attaching a new one, or being stranded suddenly in a very abstract place. There you go – that's the one constant whatever I'm doing. (Evans, in Clark, 2011: 34)

Evans' interest in 'stranding' either himself or his audience in 'a very abstract place' strongly communicates this sense of immersion or, non-philosophically speaking, improvisation according to a set of instrumental and performative identities. In this sense, we can also discern the emergence of the heretical 'other', in the way that this abstract place, is almost a direct rendering of Laruelle's assertion that photo- and music-fictions are the constructions of parallel worlds. As with Laruelle's Future Christ, Evans' is a point of focus that creates new conditions and new points of reference, which are themselves new identities and new points of determination. As a non-improviser, Evans' music requires listeners to generate a new set of criteria with which to understand the sounds and music that he is generating. As he says, a common association that listeners may make with the Harmon mute (a device that is fitted into the open end of a trumpet in order to produce a more muted and softer sound than is normally produced by the trumpet) is the sound and music of the Jazz musician Miles Davis. Davis' music from the 1950s is the archetypal 'cool' Jazz, indeed one of his landmark albums *The Birth of the Cool* is very much seen as having generated a particular set of associations that audiences have with a laid-back, soft and contemplative style of Jazz that still persists today.

What follows is an examination of Evans' performance during the piece *Nature / Culture*, (CD2, tracks 1-5 of the 2009 album of the same name) that is intended to go some way towards broadening out a number of the themes that have been raised in this chapter. As an overall piece, *Nature / Culture* does not have a consistent structural arc, instead, there is a sense that we pass through a number of episodes, or in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, we could even say 'plateaus'. Although the piece 'has been separated into tracks on the disc for the listener's convenience' (Evans, 2009), each of the tracks contains a number of these smaller episodes, where we hear Evans working through and investigating various sonic and technical aspects of the trumpet.

Part B is a fascinating example of much of what has been discussed throughout the chapter, particularly in relation to the ideas around the heretical decision and the distorting effects that we see Laruelle alluding to with the image of the Future Christ. In

this track, we hear Evans sustaining a continuous sound for over half of the four-and-a-half-minute piece, however, this is in no way a simply demonstration of technical prowess; instead we hear an act of sonic transformation in its fullest sense. Listening to the piece on a CD, rather than seeing the performance live, further emphasises the process that Evans is working through since the acousmatic nature of this experience prevents any kind of visual distraction from what we can hear.

The piece starts with a low feedback tone, possibly achieved by inserting the condenser microphone that Evans mentions in the liner notes too far into the trumpet's bell. Over the course of fifty seconds, we hear and gradually after one minute, we hear Evans rapidly fingering the trumpet's valves, whilst at the same time creating more of the vocalisations through the trumpet – akin to explosive and crackling sounds – that we heard on part A. The valve noise and feedback continues until just after two minutes, with Evans manipulating the feedback so that it opens out and 'pulses', with swells in volume and high partials becoming audible, until Evans subtly begins to play a sustained note at the same pitch as the feedback. From this point until the end of part B, the note is either held continuously, or punctuated by tongued notes, although with no gaps long enough for Evans to draw breath. We hear Evans mimicking the smeared frequency slides of the feeding-back tone, by subtly increasing and decreasing the pitch of his note at first, and then, from 3'20 onwards, he starts to push these frequency oscillations further, with overblowing, multiphonics and by working closely with the feedback, thereby creating three closely interwoven sounds. Evans gradually pulls out of this from 3'50 onwards, reducing to a single sustained trumpet note that he then raises and lowers with conventional valve strokes, before moving into part C of the performance.

It is during playing such as this that we begin to hear the way in which we could describe Evans as a heretical improviser, as his playing passes beyond an easy sense of categorisation. Whilst he is clearly making use of a given set of tools, techniques and resources – he is not the first musician to use circular breathing, multiphonics or amplification to modify and counterpoint their playing – he is able, for a brief period of time, to suspend a straightforward categorisation of what we are listening to.

Similarly, towards the end of part C, we hear Evans using the volume pedal to create volume swells that slightly distort, giving the impression that the lower notes that he is playing are breaking down somewhat. He then further emphasises by playing near to, and then away from, the microphone. This sense of destabilisation, of interfering with the listener's sense of distance from what is being heard, although slight, is nevertheless unsettling. It makes for a fractured experience, almost as if Evans is resetting the trumpet's position in our awareness with every move towards or away from the microphone. It is an interesting effect, because the result is to unbalance our sense of listening to either an amplified or unamplified trumpet, although it is obviously the same person playing the instrument in the same performance.

He continues this work with the amplified signal through part D, at first by playing lower notes and vocalisations through the microphone, again slightly overdriving the signal, before oscillating between two notes – resulting in a sound not unlike an emergency vehicle siren – that he then continues to modulate with swells in speed, volume, changes in rhythm, and tonal modifications that he achieves by continuing to manipulate the amplified trumpet signal. Eventually, at 4'15, he fully overloads the signal and achieves the effect of a distorted guitar or organ, playing a rapid and looping trill that is once more facilitated via circular breathing. Evans cuts the amplified signal at 5'25, thus bringing part D to a close and taking us into part E, the final episode of the performance, where he continues to circular breathe until approximately two minutes, with a dense series of runs and short three and two note loops.

Part E continues with a descent into indistinct noise at approximately 4'20, with a variety of rapidly keyed valves, overblown sounds and close-miked playing that result in the most 'un-trumpet-like' playing of the entire performance. Whilst this part is by no means abrasive, there is a strong sense that Evans is taking the trumpet as far away from its point of origin as possible. For this middle section of part E, until approximately seven minutes onwards, when he introduces a sustained tone that continues to the end of the piece, we hear a blurred and deliberately abstracted set of sounds, as if Evans is trying to transform the trumpet tones themselves into the feedback that we have heard throughout the performance. These are low register sounds that produce oscillating overtones that gradually evolve into the single tone at 7'20. From this point until the end of the piece, we hear Evans return to the interplay between the pure trumpet sound and the feedback produced by the amplified signal, and as Evans creates a beating tone by varying the frequency between the two tones that we hear, he brings the improvisation to an end.

Thus, Evans presents us with a performance that very much reflects a number of the themes that Laruelle introduces for us. Whilst it would be hubristic to suggest that *Nature / Culture* is a radicalisation of music in the way that ideas such as atonalism, serialism, or even free improvisation itself fundamentally altered the way that we approach music, or that Evans' technical innovations have forever changed the way that players will approach the trumpet; if we are able to say anything about deliberate attempts to innovate in music, to think heretically – or at the very least challenge our own conceptions of what is possible – then Evans' performance here provides some directions for thought. We hear him re-imagining what a trumpet can do sonically, taking its constituent elements apart and turning it instead into a sound-making machine that has more in common with an electronic signal processor than a brass instrument with hundreds of years' worth of history within the classical, and more latterly, the jazz tradition. We hear Evans displacing the audience's point of focus – what kind of sound are we listening to? An amplified trumpet? An un-amplified trumpet? Multiple trumpets? All of these techniques are redolent of the idea of cloning the One, such that even the act of multiplying and confusing the boundaries between the various sound sources could be seen (or heard) as a performance of radical immanence, where the point of the sound's origin in many ways becomes a matter of superposition.

In working against his own and his audiences' expectations, we can see that the various creative constraints that Evans sets himself work as trigger points, forcing him to generate a new knowledge that is a cloning radical immanence. Just as non-philosophy requires that we re-assess our understanding, expectations and conception of philosophy, when Evans' playing moves beyond simple improvisation in the way that we have seen, when he creates a stance in relation to improvised music practice, and demands of both himself and his audience that we rethink our approach to what an instrument or an improvisation can do, then we can fully appreciate that by stranding himself in an abstract place, he has not only projected himself and his audience into a world that is other than the world that we had previously experienced, but using improvisation as a means to clone and perform the One within a lived world, he has radically transformed what music can do. He has non-improvised music.

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In Through the Out Door: Three speculative perspectives on improvisation

In *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, the philosopher Quentin Meillassoux tells us that,

[W]e know two things [...]: first, that contingency is necessary, and hence eternal; second, that contingency alone is necessary [...] Everything is possible, anything can happen - except something that is necessary, because it is the contingency of the entity that is necessary, not the entity.¹ (Meillassoux, 2016: 65)

In this brief excerpt, we see Meillassoux setting out the central thesis of *After Finitude*, and claiming that the one thing that we humans can be certain of, is that contingency must exist. For a project that aims to generate new ways of thinking about improvisation, an activity that thrives on and embraces unfixed outcomes, Meillassoux's claims about contingency are clearly appealing. In what follows, we shall explore the way in which Meillassoux, and the thinkers Nick Land, Ray Brassier, Reza Negarestani have undertaken to think about how human thought can be contrasted with something that is seen to be either outside of, prior to or radically immanent to itself. In many ways, this was one of the central concerns of the so-called Speculative Realist movement, where Meillassoux and Brassier, among others, developed a means of thinking about human thought's access to an immanence that was radically different in kind to that thought.²

This chapter will thus explore improvisation's relationship to three perspectives that can be associated with Speculative Realism, all of which engage with notions of contingency and the destabilisation of human experience. First among these will be an exploration of Meillassoux's use of the concepts of the 'correlation' and 'facticity' and we shall consider the potential to extend some of the conclusions that we reached in the discussion of Badiou's work in regard to the way in which infinity and the void can interact with finite thought, in order to think through a 'de-correlating' of improvisation, and thus consider improvisation as an encounter with something that is not simply a correlation of thought. Secondly, we shall use the work of Jane Bennett as a starting point to begin a reconsideration of aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas relating to assemblages and intensities. Bennett has furthered the potential to think in terms of the 'agency' of what she calls 'vibrant matter', which would enable us to view an improvisation as a 'gathering of forces'. However, as we shall see, the work of Nick Land and Ray Brassier would instead encourage us to see an improvisation as an act of 'unbinding' or of dissipation, that tends towards an underlying contingency. Thus, this middle section, in musical terms, will function as a 'middle eight', or a bridge, and by showing that things are 'deathlike', rather than 'lifelike', it will provide us with a means to move from Meillassoux's abstracted logical operations, to a more practically oriented set of discussions. Thus, in the chapter's third and final section, the work of Reza Negarestani will enable us to think about how an

¹ See also footnote 4

² The other two participants at the original Speculative Realism workshop in 2007 were Iain Hamilton Grant and Graham Harman.

improvisation could be viewed as an act of passage, or a portal between a human conception of time, where human time allows for human experience, and an absolute time that is normally beyond human comprehension. In this way, the chapter will be a mapping of improvisation first as an activity that has a consistency and integrity beyond human thought's capacity to 'think' improvisation; secondly, improvisation will be viewed as an act of dissolution that reveals an underlying absolute contingency that is beyond a human, or indeed a vitalist, conception of the interaction of intensities; and thirdly, and in some ways following on from the notion of improvisation as unbinding force, we shall understand improvisation's potential to bring the outside of contingency into the inside of human time.

Among the key insights that the chapter will offer, Brassier's and Meillassoux's work will indicate of some of the key trajectories that have developed under the banner of Speculative Realism. It is worth acknowledging in this context, that Meillassoux, to a certain extent, has extended some of the lines of enquiry that emerged from our explorations of Badiou's work, however, where the latter configured a finite subject's engagement with a necessarily infinite set that lay outside of the situation in his theory of the event, Meillassoux has shifted the offsetting of finitude and infinity in order to contrast the idea of a finite philosophical correlation with an unbounded and *unboundable* 'great outdoors'.³ For Meillassoux, a large part of his philosophical project in the book *After Finitude* is concerned with proving that a non-correlative 'other' must exist beyond the confines of human thought, and that whilst we are in no way able to attach any definition or meaning to this non-correlate, we must at least be able to think it that it exists.

³ For our current purposes, Meillassoux's project will show us firstly, that any correlation between thought and the objects of thought does not exist (in other words human thought *must* be able to conceive of something that is not simply another aspect of human thought, it must be able to think outside itself) and secondly, that what does exist outside of human thought is necessarily contingent. This latter claim is one of the more complex aspects of Meillassoux's thought, where his ultimate focus is to not only show that, as with Badiou's void and Laruelle's One, what lies beyond human thought cannot be conceptualised, but more centrally, that the things that happen in the lived world are grounded on what he calls a 'necessary contingency', wherein 'contingency is such that anything might happen, even nothing at all' (Meillassoux, 2008: 62). This then is the underlying contention of Meillassoux's argument, which is to express the view that only absolute contingency can be seen to necessarily exist; in simple terms, nothing is necessary apart from the fact that things might or might not happen (or anywhere in between).

[From] absolute necessity of contingency alone we can infer an impossibility that is every bit as absolute - for there is in fact something that this primary atom of knowledge ensures us is absolutely impossible, *even* for all powerful chaos, and this something, which chaos will never be able to produce, *is a necessary entity*. Everything is possible, anything can happen - except something that is necessary, because it is the contingency of the entity that is necessary, not the entity. (Meillassoux, 2008: 62)

We can also take this as a reflection of Laruelle's concept of determination-in-the-last-instance, in the sense that the superposition of the One conveys a similar aspect of undecidability to this absolute contingency: we can have no understanding of it, all we are able to do is recognise that it exists. Whilst Meillassoux makes no claims about our ability to perform or enact this necessary contingency, in the way that Laruelle does, it is not inconceivable that we might draw such a parallel between their work.

Once we have stepped through the various stages of Meillassoux's thought process, firstly, by accepting that what is produced by human thought is not the sum of all knowledge, and secondly, by applying this axiom to improvisation and understanding that although it is a process that is brought about by human thought, we shall be in a position to imagine that an improvisation may not entirely be under the control of human thought, and thus what is therefore necessarily an aspect of an improvisation is contingency: in fact, this is the *only* thing that can be said to be a necessary part of improvisation. We shall therefore come to see that one of Meillassoux's lasting contributions to this study is that he has provided us with further evidence to show that knowledge must be able to exceed a thought-world correlate. Although he makes no claims about processes such as deterritorialisation, the truth procedure, the heretical decision or indeed insider time, in many ways, Meillassoux's simple affirmation that it must be possible to think outside of the correlation suits our purposes very well: for an improviser, it must be possible to think, and therefore improvise, outside of ourselves, to go beyond what we already think and to create things that are genuinely new and unanticipated.

Also worth noting in this regard, is that Meillassoux, along with Brassier and Negarestani, and to a certain extent, Land, also questions any attempt to give shape or meaning to that which lies beyond what we have seen Laruelle refer to as the world of 'lived experience'. Instead, the focus lies on creating fundamental distinctions between human thought (or a real world of experience), and a non-conceptualisable Real-Absolute. Therefore, we shall see, for all of these thinkers, that it must remain possible that we are able to think the unthinkable, which is to say that we can acknowledge the existence of something that does not originate in human thought, even though we can have no way of comprehending it. Thus, the idea that, whilst we may not be able to understand an immanent Real-Absolute, we are nonetheless 'of' it, and therefore we cannot help but 'live' it, or 'perform' it, also has much in common with a number of issues that were raised in the previous chapter.

Whilst Meillassoux's great outdoors certainly shows more than a trace of Badiou's logical mathematisation of ontology, we shall see Brassier, Land and Negarestani move the argument in a different direction, and develop a set of philosophical models and perspectives that suggest that the bifurcation of the finite and the infinite is not able to provide the fullest, or indeed the most human-oriented account of human thought. In the book *Nihil Unbound*, Brassier interrogates the possibility of different types of time in order to abolish a Meillassouxian notion of the correlation, and his use of anterior, posterior and anthropomorphic time is a demonstration of the way in which the correlation *can never have been possible*, since for Brassier, the existence of a future time that is completely outside of human thought proves that human thought can never have been the limit of what can be imagined or thought about. Similarly, Nick Land also generates a conception of this radically non-conceptualisable other of human thought, which for him is couched in terms of contingency and absolute randomness, via a

repurposing the death-drive of Freud's essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', so as to conceive of something that is immanent to human thought, but which is squarely outside of and 'other' than human thought.

Negarestani's work introduces arguments that suggest in a different but related way, that the human capacity to think in terms of and experience an absolute time is actually already in us. In his formulation of 'insider time', or *Incognitum Hactenus*, we see one of the more nuanced arguments about human thought's relationship with an absolute. To a degree, Negarestani's ideas in both the essay, 'Undercover Softness' and in his extended work of theory-fiction, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, engage with the work of the three core thinkers that we encountered in chapters one, two and three. Negarestani's presentation of insider time, as a way of understanding the emergence of absolute time into human or vital time, reflects Deleuze's concept of the fold, where an unending series of 'horizons' that open a radical outside back onto the inside of thought; also makes reference to Badiou's adherence to an absolute difference between a finite, knowable situation and unknowable, uncategorisable void; and finally, insider time suggests, as with Laruelle's heretical decision, that the emergence of absolute time into vital time is not a bridging of an impossible divide, instead it is a playing out of a time that is already there. In this way, we are encouraged to see that absolute time is both outside of and inside of human time, as with Laruelle's notion of the real being given in the One-Real, human time is given in absolute time. Negarestani's suggestion that *Incognitum Hactenus* 'is a double-dealing mode of time connecting abyssal time scales to our chronological time' (Negarestani, 2008: 49), is key to its relevance to improvisation, since the contention that it is a form, or a mode of time enables us to draw parallels with improvisation as a practice or method. Thus, as with Laruelle's interest in fiction as a means to create new worlds within our world, Negarestani uses time to frame a similar idea.

Finally, Brassier's and Negarestani's perspectives concerning different types of time, that contrast a human form of time with a non-correlated, 'absolute' time, work in a similar manner to one of Meillassoux's contention that, whilst we exist within a context of human time, and that we cannot help but think about time from a human perspective, we are nonetheless capable of imagining that a non-human time exists. Brassier and Negarestani demonstrate a similar distinction between thought and that which lies beyond thought. In addition – and this is important in terms of whether or not an improvisation is a harbinger of new experiences – they enable us to think through how some kind of interfacing between these two forms of time might occur. We shall trace Negarestani's idea of 'insider time' as a means to forge a link between these two forms of time in the improvisatory experiments of saxophonist John Butcher; wherein Butcher's description of a gradual letting-in half-formed ideas, and half-perceived sonic qualities – something that we can understand to have pushed in from outside of his awareness - caused a subtle transformation in his own conception of sound. Brassier takes the point further, allowing us to think that such an insider time must be a necessary part of human existence. Following his logic that 'that extinction [of human life] has already retroactively terminated

[the correlation]' (Brassier, 2007: 230), we can thus come to understand that humans cannot help but 'enact' a contingent, absolute time within human and vital time. In this regard, since improvisation is the result of human thought - a set of decisions to make a sound in a certain way, to respond to any number of our own or other musicians' gestures or actions - an improvisation becomes a necessary playing-out of non-human contingency, in that as a practice, it becomes a 'lived' thinking; a thinking in-action.

As such, this chapter will provide insights into the way in which improvised music can disrupt and alter a perception of time, wherein improvised time can feel very different to clock time, but the overall trajectory of this idea goes further, and Negarestani's work on *Incognitum Hactenus* shows another way of understanding that that which is not of human conception and human time can become manifest within human time. Throughout the chapter, we shall make reference to the work of the improvising musician Stephen Nachmanovitch, who aims to show that our biological patterning must ultimately prevent us from creating anything that is strictly the result of free choice or a random decision. However, following on from the analysis of Laruelle's work, Negarestani, Brassier and Meillassoux will further demonstrate that, the inverse may well be true: that it may be impossible for us to avoid creating things that are, in a sense, beyond our control. *Incognitum Hactenus*, as with cloning and photo-fiction, is an indication that improvisation as a practice is a means to bring what is outside of human thought onto its inside.

1. De-correlating improvisation: Quentin Meillassoux and facticity

1.1. A methodology

As we saw in chapter two, Alain Badiou's ontology-as-mathematics was formulated with a number of trajectories in mind, and not least among the overarching aims of *Being and Event* was to significantly progress the field of philosophical thought. As Badiou states in the Preface, 'I thought that I had inscribed my name in the history of philosophy, and in particular, in the history of those philosophical systems' (Badiou, 2005: xi). As regards his achievements, we also saw that Badiou is not without his critics. We have already seen Ray Brassier raising concerns about Badiou's work; principally the former's contention that although thought provoking, ultimately all that Badiou had created was a closed and self-referential system. Since the current chapter is concerned with exploring certain developments in philosophical thought that have arisen in the wake of Badiou's work, including with Brassier's work itself, it is worth reflecting again, briefly, on Brassier's misgivings.

Brassier wonders how in practice a subject would be able to have any engagement with anything outside of what Brassier himself sees as Badiou's closed mathematical system, saying, 'we have no assurances that thinking has any purchase on being in situations other than the ontological situation' (Brassier, 2007: 110); and thus asking, how things that are beyond the remit of thought can impact on the subject. Brassier is clearly uncomfortable with the reach and application of Badiou's work, since it seeks to create a delineation between ontology as an axiomatic formulation on the one hand, and a lived world of experience on the other, seeing this as a disjuncture between 'discursive' and 'material' categories. For Brassier, one of the major consequences of *Being and Event* is therefore that the two categories are logically, and must therefore be strictly, incompatible.⁴ Brassier concludes that for Badiou, 'the Big Bang, the Cambrian explosion, and the death of the sun [must] remain mere hiccups in the way of the world' (Brassier, 2007: 113-14), which is to say that whilst Badiou's subject exists within a logically derived field of discourse, any discussion of a subject's involvement with a changing and dynamic material reality remains invalid. However, this is not to say that Brassier sees no value in Badiou's work, or that there is little that we can take from it. Indeed, Brassier goes on to praise Badiou's contribution to philosophical discourse, but emphasises that the value of Badiou's work lies not in the concepts that he has generated, but in his methodology, saying that, 'the veritable worth of Badiou's work lies not in his theory of the event but rather in the subtractive ontology which was merely intended as its propaedeutic.

⁴ Thus, whilst *Being and Event* as a research project could be said to embody Badiou's own fidelity to the 'truth' of what could be called the 'event-of-the-event' (in other words, having generated and delineated the concept of the event in the way that he does, *Being and Event* can in some sense be seen as an exposition of Badiou's own fidelity to the arrival of the event as an event itself), as far as Brassier is concerned, the discourses of axiomatic ontology and lived experience cannot interact, since they are different in kind. If ontology is mathematics, then Badiou must therefore work within these limits, and not attempt to work in any register beyond the formal language of mathematics.

Badiou's inestimable merit is to have disenchanted ontology: 'being' is insignificant, it means, quite literally, nothing' (Brassier, 2007: 116).

What is interesting about Brassier's approach is that it highlights and acknowledges the strength of the process by which Badiou arrived at his concept of Being and its attendant procedures, as opposed to the idea of ontology-as-mathematics as a principle in itself. As such, if we take Brassier's lead, and take a more nuanced view of how to make use Badiou's work, we shall see that there are areas of contemporary thought that reflect aspects of Badiou's thought, not necessarily using the same kind of philosophical, or indeed mathematical, language, but instead operate on thought in a similar way. Where Badiou used the non-being of the One, the generic extension, the indiscernible and the power set axiom amongst a range of other conceptual devices, in order to demonstrate that it must be possible for an individual to be able to think beyond the realms of their finite situation, in *After Finitude*, Quentin Meillassoux affirms thought's ability to go beyond the confines of thought itself by introducing and subsequently destabilising the concept of the 'correlation'. Meillassoux uses this term to discuss the relationship between human thought and, what, in Laruellian terms, we could again refer to as 'the lived world of experience', which is the subject of that human thought. Meillassoux informs us that, by "'correlation" we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (Meillassoux, 2008: 5). If we think of Badiou's void as an absolute, in terms of it standing in for the absolute limit of thought's capacity to function or to describe what it encounters, then we shall see that although there are clearly significant differences in terms of their approach, in many ways Meillassoux and Badiou share the common goal of opening up human thought's access to an infinite that is beyond the confines of finite experience. Following this, Meillassoux's work can help us to understand the way in which an improvisation can be seen as a search for new responses that reaches out beyond finitude towards what Meillassoux describes as an infinite, 'Great Outdoors', an 'outside which [is] not relative to us' (Meillassoux, 2008: 7).

1.2 Music and the correlation

Meillassoux's target is what he calls 'post-critical' thought (Meillassoux, 2008: 4), a philosophical approach to thinking that he sees as suggesting that, if anything can be said to exist, then it must exist solely in terms of that which perceives its existence. For Meillassoux, post-critical thinking requires us to accept that 'it is naive to think we are able to think something' that exists in its own right (Meillassoux, 2008: 4). In the case of human thought therefore, something can exist, only in terms of our capacity to perceive, think about or imagine it. Another consequence of thinking about human experience solely in terms of a correlation between objects of thought and the human capacity to think them, is that we quickly reach an impasse, where not only must everything that exists be thinkable, but more problematically, only that which is thinkable can exist. As such, any notion of the absolute, the real, or even the void is impossible, since there can be nothing that exists beyond the scope of human thought. In opposition to this,

Meillassoux's intention is to construct a substantial and logical proof for an autonomous absolute that sits outside of the confines of what he sees as the 'thesis of the essential inseparability of the act of thinking from its content' (Meillassoux, 2008: 36), where 'all we ever engage with is what is given-to-thought, never an entity subsisting by itself.' (Meillassoux, 2008: 36). Meillassoux's project in *After Finitude* is therefore to demonstrate that an absolute that is external to human thought must exist, which by definition would prove that a correlation between thought and the world is not the limit of human thought.

One of Meillassoux's definitions for what he calls 'strong correlationism' (which is a model of thinking that rejects any attempt to disprove the correlation by making reference to things that might 'obviously' appear to exist beyond the confines of our capacity to think them) is to say that, 'it is unthinkable that the unthinkable be impossible' (Meillassoux, 2008: 41). Here Meillassoux is telling us that the strong correlationist model categorically rejects and invalidates any attempt (the first 'unthinkable') to say anything about whether or not something that lies beyond the reach of human thought (the second 'unthinkable') is possible or not. Fundamentally, Meillassoux is setting up strong correlationism as a perspective that illegitimises any attempt to say anything about anything that exists beyond the reach of human thought; where anything that goes beyond thought is literally inconceivable, and simply cannot be discussed. This is a complex (and slightly tautological) statement, which is as much concerned with what 'unthinkable' means as it is with the 'unthinkable' nature of what lies beyond thought, which is to say that it is not simply that we 'cannot say anything' or cannot speculate about what lies beyond thought, we formally do not have the capacity to even think about what is beyond thought. Meillassoux's voicing of strong correlationism claims that even thinking about what is outside of thought, but still be a thinking that occurs within the boundaries of what is possible to think, and therefore by definition cannot be said to be engaging with anything outside of thought. However, one of Meillassoux's primary objectives is to forcefully overturn this position and in doing so question what he sees as a problematic aspect of contemporary, "'post-critical" philosophy' (Meillassoux, 2008: 41). We shall go on to look at how Meillassoux destabilises the limitations of a correlational perspective using the concept of facticity, but we shall now briefly look at some of the consequences of correlational thought for music.

Meillassoux's rejection of the correlation, along with Badiou's offsetting of a situation that is presented to thought as opposed to a void that is foreclosed to thought, are both examples of the long-standing philosophical debate about the extent to which the world exists 'for us'. In the context of musical practice, we find this issue being played out when we think about the extent to which a musician is able to make something that is really 'new' as such, and whether they are able to create new experiences for listeners and audiences. To some degree, this is a question of definition, and in the case of an improvising musician, we might want to think about how far an improvisation might be a manufacturing of something that is genuinely new, in terms of its sonic aesthetics for example, or whether an improvisation is simply a gathering and arranging of available materials. From a Meillassouxian perspective however, we can now think about this in

terms of a more foundational principle and apply it to improvisation. If an improvising musician creates a piece of music, then the correlationist position would suggest that in order to make it, the piece must have been conceivable beforehand (in other words, an improvisation as a product of human thought, must have already been conceivable in human thought) which would therefore invalidate its existence as something definitively 'new'; it could only be a recycling of possibilities that were already in the musician's mind. In addition, there is an issue of recognition: if a musician is able to create something that was previously inconceivable, and therefore for our current purposes qualitatively 'new', then how is it that we are able to engage with this music, since anything that is new, by definition would go beyond our capacity to apprehend it.

The philosopher Graham Harman's reading of Meillassoux's work discusses the paradox of the new in terms of the pre-Socratic philosophy of Meno. Meno's paradox, in Harman's words, simply states that, 'we cannot search for something if we already have it and cannot search for it if we do not have it' (Harman, 2011: 130). In the paradox itself (quoted in Harman, 2011: 130), we can certainly see something of a pre-cursor to Badiou's concept of fidelity to a future-anterior, in the sense that Plato's description of Meno's paradox speaks of the contradictory nature of searching for something without knowing what we are looking for, or finding something that we're unable to recognise as the thing that we're looking for. Just as Badiou would not allow us to identify an event or the generic indiscernible (the subject can only 'name' it), Harman and Socrates relate the difficulty of searching for and finding something that we do not understand, for how would we know what it was when we have found it? This sense of a lack of recognition well describes the experience that we may have when we find it difficult to relate innovative and experimental musical works to an existing frame of reference, and there are numerous instances of composers and musicians who have taken their audiences or fellow musicians beyond pre-existing and familiar categories of apprehension. The 'silence' of John Cage's 4'33", the so-called 'Noise Music' of musicians such as Wolf Eyes and Merzbow⁵, and even Ornette Coleman's experimentation with Jazz harmony of the

⁵ In the essay 'Genre Is Obsolete', Ray Brassier discusses noise in the following way: "'Noise" not only designates the no-man's-land between electro-acoustic investigation, free improvisation, avant-garde experiment, and sound art; more interestingly, it refers to anomalous zones of interference between genres: between post-punk and free jazz; between musique concrète and folk; between stochastic composition and art brut.' Having put forward this affirmation of noise as disruptive force and unknown territory, he goes onto problematise 'noise music' as a genre: 'Yet in being used to categorise all forms of sonic experimentation that ostensibly defy musico-logical classification – be they para-musical, anti-musical, or post-musical – 'noise' has become a generic label for anything deemed to subvert established genre' (Brassier, 2007: online). As a result we can see that whilst noise as a genre may be problematic, in that its existence as a style of music undermines its own objectives of disrupting the codes and conventions of musical practice, musicians who produce 'noise' as a disruptive force within and between genres, and even Merzbow himself who could be said to be one of the main progenitors of noise as a practice in and of itself, have at some point, and at times continue to, subvert and confound their own and their audiences' expectations of what constitutes recorded or performed music. As an aside, it is worth noting that the 'noise' group Wolf Eyes collaborated with the improvising saxophonist Anthony Braxton on the album *Black Vomit* (2006), and whilst as a genre description the term 'noise' is acknowledgedly problematic, it can at

late 1950s that we discussed in Chapter One are all examples of the way in which listeners do not always recognise what they are hearing as music, and instead think of it as noise, or as disruptive sound. Clearly, a number of musicians are aware of the uncertainty that their work can provoke in an audience, and in this sense such recordings and performances reflect Cornelius Cardew's idea about an AMM improvisation being a search for responses. In his recollection of a performance by the Onkyo musician Sachiko M, whose approach to improvisation takes the form of generating and modifying sine-waves, the music writer and improviser David Toop tells us,

Sachiko M sits on a theatre stage alone [...] She begins in silence, a silence intermittently pin-pricked by high tones, small clicks, some abrasive electronic bursts [...] Soon there are sections of the crowd given over to shouting, booing and whistling. Sachiko continues, seemingly unperturbed. The sounds she produces are not loud or disturbing in themselves yet they seem to propose something too unsettling for this crowd. (Toop, 2016: 7)

This image of an unsettled crowd reacting aggressively to a music that they do not 'understand' is a familiar story when we consider the history of musical and artistic development as a history of misunderstanding, intolerance and outrage in the face of new aesthetic experiences. Although these are to a certain extent, slightly informal examples of music's ability to unsettle or surprise an audience, the relationship between an audience and their expectations for and their experience of a piece of music is analogous to the way in which Meillassoux problematises the correlationist perspective and its insistence that we are only able to think that which we are already able to think.

1.3 De-correlating improvisation

In *After Finitude*, Meillassoux's investigation of the relationship between the finite and the infinite provides us with the material that enables us to think about whether it is possible to create a music that is genuinely and radically new, and why it is that new sounds and new structures in music should be so unsettling to audiences. For Meillassoux, it must be possible for us to think the unthinkable and within the context of the current study, where improvisation is understood to be a forming of thinking-in-action, it therefore follows that for a musician, it must be possible to improvise, create and perform the unthinkable. We shall now look in more detail about how Meillassoux demonstrates his assertion by turning to his work on 'facticity', and as a result, we can come to understand how, by 'de-correlating' improvisation, we can think of an improvisation as an act of 'real' innovation and disruption, providing further insights into the disruptive potential of improvisation

least be used to describe Wolf Eyes' music as loud, discordant, abrasive and aggressive, although in this instance, their collaboration with Braxton can indeed be seen as an attempt to create a genuine disruptive noise between the worlds of noise music and free jazz.

that we discussed above.⁶ Meillassoux's own response to the paradox of looking for something that we cannot recognise is to undermine what he sees as the finitude of the correlation in two ways, and he conceives of two strains of the correlationist perspective: a 'weak' and a 'strong' 'correlationism' in order to do this. Weak correlationism is for Meillassoux the Kantian formulation of the phenomenal and noumenal realms, where Kant reasoned that there is a world of experience (the phenomenon) as well as a world of the in-itself (the noumenon), but that it is logically impossible for humans to have any access to this noumenon. Strong correlationism is the process of 'absolutising the correlation in itself' (Meillassoux, 2008: 37), which is to say that the correlation between thought and as we have seen, what is thought about, becomes the only thing that can be thought (in other words, this variant will not allow for even the consideration of a noumenon in the way that Meillassoux's reading of Kantian thought permits). As such, the correlationist model would compel us to accept that what is given in experience is fundamentally given for us, and that anything that we imagine to be beyond what is given, is precisely that: simply a product of our imagination. As far as Meillassoux is concerned, correlationism means that any conception of something beyond what is given in experience, is actually only the result of something that is already given in thought, and therefore trapped within foreclosed circle of finite thought.

However, against the logic of the correlation, Meillassoux argues that it is through its own principles that the correlation comes to contradict itself. In order to completely overturn the correlationist position that claims there can be no such thing as the 'in itself', which Meillassoux defines as a 'thing [that is] as it is without me, as much as it is with me' (Meillassoux, 2008: 3), Meillassoux uses the concept of 'facticity' as a means by which to demonstrate the self-contradictory nature of the correlation.

What I experience with facticity is not an objective reality, but rather the unsurpassable limits of objectivity confronted with the fact that there is a world; a world that is describable and perceptible, and structured by determinate invariants [...] Facticity thereby forces us to grasp the 'possibility' of that which is wholly other to the world, but which resides in the midst of the world as such. (Meillassoux, 2008: 40)

Facticity is therefore a way of presenting the problematic nature of thinking about the limits of thought itself and asks us to consider how it is that we can use thought to think about something that exists beyond the confines of thought. Another way of putting this is to say that facticity enables us to foreground the tension between understanding that we are being presented with a world that is not necessarily an objective reality, but at the same time, that any means of accessing a reality that might exist outside of that presented world must come from within that world. As such, Meillassoux uses facticity to identify and emphasise the inherent self-contradiction of the correlationist position, by

⁶ In the context of this chapter, the word 'real' will denote something that has an existence that is not defined or governed by human thought's capacity to think that thing, in other words, it has an existence that is outside of any thought-world correlation.

showing that the logic that supports the correlation must by definition simultaneously cancel it out. Brassier's interpretation of Meillassoux's work on facticity suggests that it can be used to articulate a slightly different way of conceiving our lack of knowledge about the grounds for knowledge itself. What is useful about Brassier's commentary is that, rather than simply saying that we can have a knowledge about the presented world on its own terms, and that we can say nothing about how it comes into being or how it works, he instead contrasts 'empirical' knowledge of the world, with what we could call 'factual' knowledge of the principles of knowledge.

Contingency is empirical and pertains to phenomena: a phenomenon is contingent if it can come into or out of existence without violating the principles of cognition that govern phenomena.⁷ Facticity is transcendental and pertains to our cognitive relation to phenomena, and hence to the principles of knowledge themselves, concerning which it makes no sense to say either that they are necessary or that they are contingent, since we have no other principles to compare them to.
(Brassier, 2007: 66)

In this way, Brassier begins to open facticity up to scrutiny, going beyond a simple contrast between knowledge about the empirical world on the one hand, and a lack of knowledge on the other, and instead thinking in terms of an offset between knowledge about the empirical world as opposed to knowledge about knowledge itself. With this principle in mind, we can return to Meillassoux's assertion that 'that which is wholly other to the world [...] resides in the midst of the world', in order to engage with the idea that our knowledge about the limits of our knowledge, (in other words our knowledge about our lack of knowledge concerning the grounds for our knowledge) must occur within the domain of empirical knowledge. Although convoluted and tautological, it is important to establish Meillassoux's position here, because it will have a significant impact on how we think about improvisation from this point onward.

Meillassoux's work on facticity presents us with two options as regards the correlation. On one hand, he tells us that if we accept the governing principles of facticity, if we 'absolutise' facticity, we would need to accept that our experience (and knowledge) of the world is only ever of a world that is presented to us, (in other words that it is not 'reality', simply a 'presentation'), but that we can have no knowledge or understanding of how it comes to be presented to us. As a result, this would mean that the correlation itself is de-absolutised; it would become simply a concept 'for us', part of the empirical world that is

⁷ Although Brassier's approach is to site contingency as a property of the phenomenal world of experience, where it would be possible to measure contingent behaviours and occurrences against the 'principles that govern phenomena', as we shall see, Meillassoux uses contingency in a broader sense that is redolent of Badiou's use of the term 'void'. For Meillassoux, contingency functions as a way of referring to something that we have no means of understanding, just as Badiou's void 'names' that which gives rise to the inconsistent multiple, but doesn't describe it. In his use of the term 'necessary contingency', Meillassoux makes it clear that for his purposes, 'contingency' is not simply an empirical concept that is used to describe the behaviour of phenomena, it can also be used to refer to a set of principles that we can have no way of understanding or explaining, as we see in his discussion of facticity.

presented to us, and not an autonomous fact or reality in itself (in literal terms, the correlation would not be 'true'). On the other hand, however, Meillassoux tells us that if we insist on the truth of the correlation (if we wish to 'absolutise' the correlation), then we must simultaneously de-absolutise facticity. However, by asserting that 'facticity is only true for-me', Meillassoux states that the correlation itself must therefore be recognised as being 'nothing more than the correlate of my act of thought' (Meillassoux, 2008: 59), thereby comprehensively undermining the integrity of the correlation itself. Meillassoux's point is that, if we choose to absolutise the correlation, any statement that is made from within the confines of the correlation, or within the empirical world, where this is seen as the limits of what is possible to discuss, then the reach of that statement must itself be limited by the reach of the correlation. Therefore, if the correlationist perspective rejects any statements about anything beyond the correlation, then it must therefore reject its own statements about anything that is beyond the boundaries of the correlation, such as 'absolute' statements of fact. In short, the correlationist's problem is that if the correlation is 'true', then it cannot be true, since any claims about the truth of a correlationist perspective would always have to come from a correlationist perspective. On the other hand, facticity, as a statement about our inability to know what underpins knowledge, is a claim that it is 'true' that there are certain things that we cannot know, but that we can be sure that we cannot know them, and this itself is a form of knowledge about the unknown.

Following Meillassoux's logic, then it must be possible from within the confines of the world that is presented to us, to have knowledge of something that is beyond those confines, even if, as Brassier says that our knowledge is that we know nothing about what is beyond those confines: even a knowledge about a lack of knowledge of what is beyond the presented world, and an awareness that the world that we experience is simply a presentation or a correlation is in itself tangible. Additionally, it is essential that we create a distinction in our thinking about the 'principles of knowledge themselves': we may have no knowledge about what these principles are or how they work, we can however confidently say that we know that we do not know these things.⁸

As a consequence of the de-absolutisation of the correlation, Meillassoux concludes that it must be conceivable to think about an absolute that is beyond thought and which is accessible via thought. In other words, we must be able to 'think' the 'unthinkable'. By absolutising facticity, and by demonstrating the necessary de-absolutisation of the correlation, Meillassoux thereby asserts that what we might take to be the truth of our experience, is in fact merely an aspect of a wider field of knowledge, that includes

⁸ There is something of a re-playing here of Badiou's differentiation of knowledge (of a situation, and what is presented within a situation, as conditioned by the finite) and truth (an interfacing with the infinite via the evental site, and our subsequent fidelity to the truth of the event). Our lack of knowledge or understanding of the principles that underlie knowledge and understanding clearly reflects Badiou's contention that we can only ever name the void (\emptyset), since we simply do not have the means to make any other statements about it. Throughout the discussion of facticity, we can clearly see Meillassoux grappling with a similar issue to Badiou: how do we use thought (something that is finite) to engage with something that is beyond thought (the infinite)?

knowledge about the experiences that we are having, as well as knowledge that we do not know anything about the underlying principles of that knowledge. At the beginning of the chapter, we saw Meillassoux using the concept of 'necessary contingency' in order to frame this (lack of) knowledge about the principles of knowledge. We can now complete this survey of Meillassoux's thoughts regarding contingency, by understanding the way in which facticity works to demonstrate that contingency is a necessary part of our knowledge. We might think that we know the world, but for Meillassoux, what we actually know is that we can have no understanding of what the world is or how it works: that is the necessity of contingency.

If we accept Meillassoux's statements about facticity, then we might also accept that improvisation need not be limited to being an interaction with the world that we are presented with: if the correlation must be de-absolutised, then improvisation can be 'de-correlated'. A de-correlation of improvisation enables us to stop thinking about improvisation as an activity that occurs within a world that we 'think' that we know, and which we might imagine is the total sum of everything that we can know, where we might take our knowledge of musical structures, acoustic properties of sound, physical properties of instruments as examples of the limits of what can be known. Instead we can now think that whilst these kinds of variables might inform our experience, they do not encapsulate what is possible for us to know, and we can use improvisation as a probe and a means to imagine how our experience of the world can be modified by our knowledge that knowledge itself is underpinned by an unknowable contingency.

Improvisation is a curious process in that its success is not necessarily defined by virtuosity or expert knowledge on the part of its practitioners. Instead, we could say that an improvisation is the result of a musician using their ability and knowledge as a means to either explore what is possible within and beyond musical frameworks or to explore and push themselves beyond their own limitations. In this sense, what can often make an improvisation engaging is a musician's willingness to exceed their own expectations of themselves, and as we saw in our example of Sachiko M unsettling and angering an audience, she was able to exceed their expectations of what she should be doing as an improviser and of what kind of form music should take. In chapter two, we discussed an improviser's relationship to the void, the evental site and the generic extension, where, by making a series of finite enquiries and reports about the presence of a fluctuation within the situation, an improvisation was framed as a searching for something (an indiscernible) that the improviser believes to be present (although they cannot discern it). This sense of improvisation as search is reflected in Meillassoux's commitment to opening out thought to the possibility of a non-correlated experience, although in Meillassoux's rendering of facticity, our relationship to an outside of thought is strengthened. Whereas Badiou used the event as a device to facilitate the entry into the finite world of something that had not previously been part of that world, Meillassoux goes further to say that by its very definition, it must be possible that thought is able to access something that exists beyond its own correlational context. In this sense, we can contend that acts of improvisation that challenge our comprehension, that experiment, innovate and discover new musical forms

that go beyond accepted classifications and categories reflect Meillassoux's challenge to correlational thinking. In an interview with David Toop the improvising saxophonist John Butcher speaks of his interest in improvisation as a process of discovery,

I was drawn to those aspects of music where what you're engaged with is a mystery. Through being engaged with it you're trying to discover more about that mystery and particularly what lies beyond the horizon which you can't even glimpse yet. If you go through that process you hope to see that hidden part of the activity. (Butcher, quoted in Toop, 2016: 174)

Here we see Butcher thinking about improvisation as a quest for something that he cannot recognise (a 'mystery') in a place that he does not understand ('beyond the horizon'), which not only conveys a sense of Meillassoux's Great Outdoors, but also brings us back to Meno's paradox, in that Butcher's experiments and his tracking of something that he is aware of but cannot yet grasp very much reflects the problematic idea of trying to find the unknown when we don't know what the unknown looks or sounds like. Butcher goes on to say that,

Very often in the course of rehearsing a gig something's happening in the music and you semi-hear in your head what you'd like to do but you don't know how to do it. Some of the time you will remember that when you're at home and start working on it. It doesn't come overnight, it's a series of very, very small discoveries that add up to something over a period. There was a time I got extremely methodical about it - for about a year of looking at all the possible fingering combinations and discovering the overtone spectrum and then finding which ones you could bring out multiple tones in that overtone spectrum. (Butcher, quoted in Toop, 2016: 174)

In this regard, we can see Butcher's intuition for 'semi-hearing' something in his head as a process of grasping for a sound that he doesn't quite have the faculties to comprehend. This resonates strongly with a de-absolutisation of the correlation, wherein a similarly de-absolutised improvisation must reflect our ability to exceed the limits of what we can already know, or even what a correlationist view of human knowledge would delineate what we are able to know. Butcher's description of something coming into his awareness that had not been there previously captures quite precisely Badiou's idea about making a series of enquiries and reports into the presence of the generic extension. Butcher is now not only able to describe (and play) new tones in the overtone spectrum, but he is also able to account for the process of these possibilities coming into being. However, Meillassoux, by absolutising facticity moves us on from this position, and enables us to adapt our position. Instead of needing to maintain a commitment to the truth of an event, we simply need to remain committed to understanding that accessing an outside to human thought is a necessary function of human thought. Whereas in Badiouian terms, the improviser-as-subject was required to make a decision about the presence of the generic indiscernible, after Meillassoux we can now say that it is impossible that an

improviser could *not* now access an infinite great outdoors beyond the horizon of their finite context. This is not to say that an improviser somehow goes beyond the realms of the correlation in order to bring back disruptive music from the outside, however, when music does disrupt, surprise or unsettle audiences, it is the improviser's capacity to exceed the limits of a correlation between thought and the objects of thought – a capacity shared with every other human – that causes this to happen.

At its core, Meillassoux's work establishes a principle. Whilst he does not provide us with a strategy, or a set of instructions about how to access an infinite beyond the confines of a presented world that we exist in, he does, however, suggest that logically, it must be possible to achieve such a going-beyond. His work is therefore a challenge: a challenge to think of how this happens. This is not to say that we need to invent ways of accessing a great outdoors to thinking, but to reflect on how the things that we do are already instances of thinking beyond the confines of a correlation. Improvisation is just such an activity, which demonstrates that by virtue of its capacity to surprise both the improviser themselves as well as their audience, an improvisation is a reaching into the outside.

As a brief coda to this exploration of Meillassoux's work, we can turn our attention more specifically to the work of John Butcher, whose album *Invisible Ear* (Butcher, 2003) enables us to more readily imagine how a set of performances can emerge from the process of semi-hearing and searching beyond a barely-visible horizon, and make audible certain aspects of our philosophical enquiry.

Four tracks that are particularly suggestive of these ideas, are the pieces entitled 'Cup Anatomical', 'Streamers', 'Dark Field' and 'Bright Field'. To an extent, all four tracks epitomise the process of discovery during rehearsal that Butcher describes; a moment when a sound arrives that takes us by surprise, or that captivates because it was not quite what we expected. Sometimes such sounds can be the by-product of another sound that we are playing – an unwanted squeak that occurs whilst we are trying to play another note – and sometimes whilst we are just running through scales, warm-up exercises, or even just playing without any fixed point of focus. Equally, sounds and ideas can come from deliberately trying to play an instrument in a new, or at least a previously untried way.

The sounds on these pieces each testify to a moment of discovery or realisation on Butcher's part, of something happening that subsequently suggested further study, exploration and refinement. 'Cup Anatomical' is the sound of Butcher rapidly fluttering the saxophone's keys, whilst simultaneously blowing through the instrument raising and lowering that pitch of the airflow without sounding a note, and all the while using the sound of the bubbling spittle that gathers within a saxophone to create extra buzzing and whirring that is both reminiscent of fluttering insects and white noise. 'Streamers' is an improvisation that results from what could very well be the saxophone being held so close to a microphone that feedback begins to sound, but Butcher is careful not to step too far over this threshold, so that there is just enough feedback response to articulate

the sound of the keys being lifted arrhythmically. As with 'Cup Anatomical', although what results could be compared to another sound – in this case, the sound of a tuned metallic percussion instrument, such as a kalimba – this is not simply an exercise in creating a sound effect. What we hear is the sound of Butcher exploring a process, or a phenomenon, and as the piece progresses, he starts to allow the feedback to open out more, so that there is increasingly more of a see-sawing between the percussive sound of the key striking the saxophone's body, and the hooting sound of the feedback response. 'Dark Field' is not entirely unrelated to either of the previous pieces, in that initially, we hear Butcher blowing note-lessly through the saxophone. At times, we can hear short high-pitched notes, as quiet squeaks or squeals, but gradually, as with 'Streamers' Butcher begins to manipulate the keys, giving a similarly tuned, but now quieter, percussive aspect to the piece. Finally, 'Bright Side', is a fuller exploration of the high-pitched squealing sounds result from overblowing into the saxophone's mouthpiece, and at times, as with the multiphonics technique that Peter Evans employs, we can hear two tones simultaneously. In addition, Butcher uses other tonguing techniques, such as flutter-tonguing, which gives the sustained whistling sounds a sense that they are rapidly oscillating, as we hear with electrically produced feedback. Again, whilst it would be a poor representation of Butcher's playing to suggest that 'Bright Side' is simply his attempt at making his saxophone sound 'like' feedback, nevertheless, it may well be the case that this is another example of Butcher's methodical approach; starting at a given point and then working through a set of processes and possibilities in order to make a set of sonic discoveries.

In a more recent set of improvisations with the guitarist Andy Moor, on the record *Experiments With A Leaf* (Butcher and Moor, 2015), we can hear that some of these earlier experiments, have now resolved into techniques that are part of Butcher's sonic palette. During the track 'The Tongue Is A Flame', Butcher employs the feedback-sounding squeal that he explored during 'Bright Side' to counterpoint Moor's low, overdriven guitar sounds, and as Moor uses either a tremolo bar or the guitar's tuning peg to detune the guitar, we can hear Butcher splitting his single note into two intertwining whistles. Similarly, in the track 'Fantasy Downsize', from 4'30 onwards, we hear a brief passage where Butcher makes use of percussive keying, to work alongside Moor's staccato string tapping.

What the four *Invisible Ear* pieces comprehensively show is that, within the context of our discussion of Meillassoux's work, improvisation is a process of coming to know that we don't know something, and of letting-in from outside of our understanding something that we did not completely design ourselves. This is not to say that the sounds themselves are in any way transcendental, or outside of an empirical framework (how can they be – they are simply the results of a set of physical interactions between some mechanical and electronic sound-producing equipment and a human using their mouth, fingers and breath), instead, simply that Butcher may not necessarily driving all of these improvisatory processes and decisions himself. Whilst this conclusion in itself may not be

a huge revelation to the improvising music community, Meillassoux's work gives us a strong grounding for why it might be the case.

Clearly, John Butcher is a musician who has very much invented the way that he plays the saxophone, and, whilst he may not necessarily have been the first saxophonist to make use of many – or indeed any – of these sounds, to an extent he could be said to have evolved his own highly idiosyncratic musical language. Meillassoux's forays into the Great Outdoors, allow us to understand that this is not necessarily just a music according to John Butcher. Something has pressed itself into Butcher's playing technique, and the aesthetic choices that he is making, something that goes beyond his ability to simply author and control all of the sonic choices he has made. As Butcher suggests, it is the half-heard and imagined sounds that can spur further musical enquiry, but equally, it is the sense of knowing that our thought is surrounded by an incipient contingency that reminds us that improvisation is necessarily beyond our control.

2. Disassembling sonic assemblages: Improvisation and the will to contingency

2.1 How we connect: matter makes music

We have now seen how Meillassoux uses a sense of what human thought 'must be like' in order to justify his position regarding human thought's capacity to access something beyond a correlation between itself and that which it thinks about. Having approached this issue from the perspective of thought, we shall now take a similar approach but think about it from a more material perspective, and consider the properties of matter as a way of exploring a similar thesis regarding our relationship with contingency.

If Brassier concluded that Badiou's philosophy had little to say about the Big Bang, the Cambrian explosion, and the death of the sun, then if we turn to a body of work that has more in common with Deleuze and Guattari's approach to materialist thought, then we shall see that there are a number of opportunities to think about improvisation and the production of music in terms of more explicitly physical, sonic and even vibrational contexts. By taking as our starting point Deleuze and Guattari's claim that, 'the living is directly coupled to the individual phenomena of the atom', (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 315), we can begin by thinking of a music and sound as assemblages of interacting forces, as consistent multiplicities that can be regarded as both recognisable unities in themselves, as well as amalgamations of divergent intensities in constant flux. A musical assemblage would be both the product of, and simultaneously a producer of, new intensive flows all the way down to and up from the atomic level, since, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, 'at the core of the molecule, then at the core of the macromolecule, then of the virus, then of the one-celled individual, by subordinating the mass phenomena - one is led all the way to the organism that [...] remains in this sense microscopic' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 315).

In *Earth Sound Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts*, Douglas Kahn documents the way in which sonic, subsonic and infrasonic vibrations have been incorporated by a number of key musicians and sound researchers, in their search to expand the boundaries of music. As part of an assemblage, sound can play a critical part in shaping the way in which that assemblage impacts on the physical world, and Kahn coins the term 'aelectrosonic' to describe the way in which natural forces such as radiowaves, earthquakes and other similarly vibrant matter are sonic phenomena that have been investigated and utilised in the development of musical pieces by composers and researchers.

Where the Aeolian operates between nature and music in acoustics, the Aelectrosonic does the same for electricity and electromagnetism. The character of the sounds in the Aelectrosonic has implications for the history of music, especially avant-garde and experimental music [...] It is also a means to understand how energies move across distinctions of music and not-music, nature

and technology, as prefigured in the winds moving through manifestations of the Aeolian itself. (Kahn, 2013: 6)

Kahn goes on to investigate the development of electromagnetic, atmospheric and other natural sounds as resources for musical compositions and performances, and to consider the nature of this 'Earth Sound Music' from a number of perspectives. Kahn's own view of this phenomenon is that it can be divided into two modes: the mechanical and the Aelectrosonic, where, 'the Aeolian is mechanical music in that it belongs within physics to classical mechanics, as do the sounds of acoustical instruments [whilst] the Aelectrosonic involves transduction across two major states of energy, converting electromagnetic activity into the mechanics of audible sound' (Kahn, 2013: 55). Kahn's work therefore suggests that we can think about music and musical assemblages not just in terms of physical relationships between a musician and their instrument, or with environmental sounds creating physical pressure on their ear drums, but also as assemblages of energy being converted into sound, a literal flow of energies and forces. In this sense, a musical assemblage brings everything into play and we could 'disassemble' a musician to think that their actions are the result of chemical, biological, mental, emotional and physical forces in just the same way as an instrument in an assemblage of physical, mechanical, organic, synthetic materials, and that sound itself (as Kahn suggests) can be an amalgamation of physical and electromagnetic forces: a musical assemblage is any and all of these things and can be seen as a consistent whole because of its capacity to produce a piece of music. Kahn draws on a number of examples to support his view that human interaction with natural phenomena has not only been both the inspiration, but has also provided the sonic material for a large number of contemporary sound and music works. In discussing the work of the composer Alvin Lucier, Kahn tells of Lucier's interest in various naturally occurring sonic phenomena including planetary-scale weather events such as 'whistlers' and the sonic properties of a small room.⁹ Lucier's most famous piece *I Am Sitting in a Room*, which involved the composer recording and re-recording his speaking voice on two tape recorders in order to demonstrate the way in which the acoustic properties of a room alter the sounds in that room, is itself an example of a sonic assemblage, such that human, non-human and environmental properties come together to produce a musical outcome that itself was an expansion of the vocabulary of music.

In a musical assemblage, if the musician themselves is simply one part of a greater play of forces that could include musical instruments, the properties of sound, a performance environment, then we could also think of an improvisation as an 'improvisation-assemblage', where an improviser could be seen as interacting with a similar scale of forces and materials, and where they themselves become part of the assemblage, in order to generate an improvised musical outcome. In an improvisation-assemblage, the musician themselves simply becomes one component amongst many: the wood from which a violin has been carved, the mouthpiece of a saxophone, the reverberation time of

⁹ Kahn informs us that Whistlers are whistling tones that result from lightning dispersing atmospheric gases whilst travelling between the Earth's hemispheres that produce 'purely pitched glissandi' (Kahn, 2013: 109)

a performance space, the mood of an audience, the sounds of a passing train that penetrate a venue's soundproofing, a ringing till, a guitarist's injured wrist, a broken drumstick; all are elements that play a part in the development and exposition of musical form.

Thinking of an improvisation as an assemblage presents us with a variety of opportunities to reconsider what might be happening when we improvise; we can certainly begin to reconsider notions of the improviser as virtuoso musical technician, or as master of their instrument and expert in their field of practice, when we think about the importance of a wide range of interacting forces. The musician and theorist David Toop discusses the assemblage-like qualities of an improvisation, when he suggests that music arises from the dynamic interplay of what we could call in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, 'heterogeneous' elements. For Toop, 'the meeting place of fingers, strings and wood was where the music happened; not in the mind, or any mystical or theoretical place, but in the action of the moment' (Toop, 2016: 275). The sense of human and non-human interaction coming together to produce an improvised musical outcome is certainly a compelling image, and Toop goes on to speak of the way in which musicians, through a sustained performance practice, can form a very physical bond with their instrument, and he suggests that to a certain extent, the musician and their instrument become part of each other.

A tactile bond, body to body, is formed with the personified instrument, devotional object and devourer of time, complex and fraught with other touchings, holdings, intimacies. Over time the body is shaped against and by the instrument, as if merging. (Toop, 2016: 275)

In the book *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*, the improvising violinist Stephen Nachmanovitch tells us that 'the violin bow moves across thirteen inches of string: infinite play in a limited space [it] moves until the meaning is manifest in both fine detail and the total gestalt' (Nachmanovitch, 1990: 195). Nachmanovitch's use of the term 'gestalt' very much reflects the idea of an improvisation-assemblage, connecting the movement of a bow on a violin string to a total musical outcome, and using this image to suggest a limitless range of musical possibilities that are contained within that finite movement. Whilst we might want to think about the limitless possibilities afforded by this 'infinite play' in terms of a Deleuze-Guattarian flow of intensities, we can also modify this idea by turning to another area of thought that has engaged with notions of contingency. Where Quentin Meillassoux used the concept of facticity to enable us to see contingency as the principle component of our knowledge, as we shall see, Nick Land's work opens up the possibility for us to understand contingency as a necessary part of the material world.

In *Thirst for Annihilation*, Land explored the relationships between thought, consciousness and material substance, reflecting on the physical conditions that allow human thought to operate, and regarding thought as a component in an assemblage of material forces. For example, in his discussion of the Nietzschean overman, Land proposes an alternative reading of the will to power. Whilst traditional readings might frame the overman quite

literally as a superior man, for Land, the overman does not ascend to the more-than-human, in a conventional sense, but instead combines with material forces to become 'other-than-human', and he states that the, 'overman is not a superior model of man, but that which is beyond man; the creative surpassing of humanity' (Land, 1992: 11).

If we take this sense of going beyond the human and use it in combination with Kahn's interest in Aeolian and Aelectrosonic forces, we can begin to think about to what extent the production of music could be such a creative surpassing of humanity, and the way in which an improvisation could be thought of as an act of disassembly; of the self and of music. If the production of music is for Deleuze and Guattari the formation of a bloc of affect, then Land's Nietzsche would suggest that in the creation (and indeed experience) of this bloc, then something of substance - a self - is also lost, which evokes a dissipative aesthetic of improvisation. Whilst it might be compelling to think about the binding potential of an assemblage, Land's intuition about the dissipatory tendencies of an assemblage require us to think not only in terms of assemblages 'coming together', but also their tendencies to 'come apart'. As we continue to think through the way in which assemblages can work to create events and outcomes (such as a musical improvisation), we can also begin to consider that it may not simply be the inherent properties of assemblage components that are working together to create these outcomes. Instead, Land's work suggests that an intrinsic contingency is continually pushing through and beyond human control.

In *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, the theorist Jane Bennett uses the concept of 'vibrant matter' to convey the agency of seemingly inanimate matter. Bennett describes electrical grids, power blackouts, large eco systems, and the planet Earth itself as examples of vibrant matter, whose 'parts are both intimately interconnected and highly conflictual' (Bennett, 2010: 23). Although Bennett and Land's projects have separate trajectories, where Bennett is interested in the way that heterogeneous forces come together in order to produce certain types of effect, and Land is more concerned with a more fundamental material contingency that cannot necessarily be retrospectively explained in terms of the outcome of an event, we can use both of their work as a means to begin modifying our view of an improvisation as an assemblage.

In describing the effects of a power blackout, Bennett describes how human intention may be folded into the workings of a greater whole, where there is, 'not so much a doer (an agent) behind the deed (the blackout), as a doing and an effecting by a human-nonhuman assemblage (Bennett, 2010: 28). Although Bennett is initially careful to maintain a distinction between assemblages and organisms, using an organism's ability to self-organise in order to distinguish between 'humans and their (social, legal, linguistic) constructions [and] very active and powerful nonhumans: electrons, trees, wind, fire, electromagnetic fields.' (Bennett, 2010: 24), as her analysis deepens, she begins to explore the question of agency that the power blackout raised, and she asks whether an assemblage, like an organism, has the capacity to self-organise and form a culture (Bennett, 2010: 34). As a result, she theorises that although human agency is normally

held in higher regard than material agency, or even material-human interaction, humans themselves are in fact assemblages of non-human agents, and therefore are not so different from non-human assemblages.

On close-enough inspection, the productive power that has engendered an effect will turn out to be a confederacy, and the human actants within it will themselves turn out to be confederations of tools, microbes, minerals, sounds, and other “foreign” materialities. Human intentionality can emerge as agentic only by way of such a distribution. (Bennett, 2010: 36)

In this last passage, the focus shifts from the agency of the living seen as autonomous, self-propelling phenomena, to the way in which the human, as a ‘confederation of tools, microbes, minerals and sounds’, is in fact constituted as much by non-living, as by living elements. Bennett’s claim that the interactions of nonliving matter and energy are the driving forces behind events such as power blackouts suggests that being alive, is in fact simply a particular form of assemblage and configuration that inorganic material passes through. This nonliving agency is certainly key to the current discussion of an improvisation-assemblage as a collision between nonliving and living forms of matter, and as we shall in our further exploration of Nick Land’s and Ray Brassier’s ideas, it may be the case that what fundamentally connects humans to non-humans is a shared material tendency towards contingency.

2.2 Disassembling the assemblage

In *Nihil Unbound*, Brassier suggests that all life is simply a minor detour away from inorganic matter’s progression towards dissolution; hence the book title’s invocation of an unbounded nothingness. As he works through Freud’s essay ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, Brassier configures an approach to thinking about human thought and unconscious drives in terms of a return to a state of pre-life, as almost something ‘more-than-death’. Having established a context within which we can talk about improvisations and improvisers as assemblages, where an organism becomes enmeshed with what Bennett refers to as ‘foreign materialities’, we can now use Brassier’s work, which in itself draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Land and Meillassoux among others, in order to develop a model for improvisation that ‘surpasses’ the assemblage, and turn to a set of terms that are familiar to the improviser: uncertainty, accident, randomness and contingency. Not unlike Meillassoux, one of Brassier’s chief concerns throughout the book is to establish certain key principles about the way in which human thought operates, and where we have seen Badiou turn to the void, and Meillassoux make use of contingency in order to frame a sense of what lies beyond the scope of human comprehension, Brassier suggests that,

Death, understood as the principle of decontraction driving the contractions of organic life is not a past or future state towards which life tends, but rather the

originary purposelessness which compels all purposefulness, whether organic or psychological. (Brassier, 2007: 236)

In this passage, Brassier's comments about originary purposelessness and death reflect Land's reconstruction of Freud's 'death drive', which Land describes as 'not a desire for death, but rather a hydraulic tendency to the dissipation of intensities [...] in its primary dynamics it is utterly alien to everything human (Land, 2011: 283). One of Land's lasting contributions to philosophical discourse is the idea that humans are not driven by or towards death, but are surrounded by, and infused with non-living matter; a slightly less melodramatic image than death. In the original text, Freud asserts that in terms of the existence and development of human life, rather than life being the result of drives which press for 'change and development' (Freud, 2003: 76), it is in fact the 'conservative nature of organic life' (Freud, 2003: 77) that is a fundamental organising principle. In this regard, Freud suggests that,

[T]he elementary organism did not start out with any desire to change, and given the continuance of the same circumstances would have constantly repeated the selfsame life-cycle; but in the final analysis, so the argument goes, it must be the developmental history of our planet and its relationship to the sun that has left its imprint for us to behold in the development of organisms. (Freud, 2003: 78)

This inherent conservatism would suggest that any assemblage, rather than being the result of a dynamic interplay between matter and forces, is in fact driven by a pre-existing movement towards dissipation. For Freud at least, this primordial state of nonliving, inorganicity is of paramount importance when considering the way in which living things interact. As such, it is therefore critical that we bear in mind this drive to repeat and to return to a former state of being that Freud suggests may be implicit in the human animal.

It would contradict the conservative nature of drives if it were the goal of life to achieve a state never previously attained to. Rather, it must aspire to an old state, a primordial state from which it once departed, and to which via all the circuitous byways of development it strives to return. If we may reasonably suppose, on the basis of all our experience without exception, that every living thing dies - reverts to the inorganic - for intrinsic reasons, then we can only say that the goal of all life is death, or to express it retrospectively: the inanimate existed before the animate. (Freud, 2003: 78)

If the ultimate 'goal' of life was indeed death and a return to the inanimate, then this would enable us to re-configure Bennett's assemblage model as not simply a view of organisms as assemblages, and of assemblages as the consistent cohering of vibrant matter, but instead think of life and creative activity as mere serendipitous by-products of matter's inevitable progression towards inorganic equilibrium. If we turn to Nachmanovitch's view of a musician's creative choices being the result of an evolutionary

process, we can now see that Freud and Land enable us to modify this position somewhat.

We carry around the rules inherent in our organism. As living, patterned beings, we are incapable of producing anything random. We cannot even program a computer to produce random numbers; the most we can do is create a pattern so complex that we get an illusion of randomness. Our body-mind is a highly organised and structured affair, interconnected as only a natural organism can be that has evolved over hundreds of millions of years. (Nachmanovitch, 1990: 27)

Where Nachmanovitch sees evolution and patterning as the intrinsic reason for our inability to create random or accidental performances, improvisations or indeed, events of any kind, Freud and Land seek to look beyond the organic and instead focus their attention on the tendencies of the materials that make up life itself. As such, Freud and Land's ideas suggest a reconsideration of Nachmanovitch's contention that 'hundreds of millions of years' of evolution must have profoundly influenced our creative practice, and Land's work in particular is an encouragement to focus on the way in which human thought might instead be guided and driven by primal inorganic ingredients, ceaselessly bent towards returning to their original inanimate state. This is Land's sense of 'hydraulic dissipation', where Bennett's temporary 'confederations' of 'minerals and sounds', and indeed, organic life itself come to be seen as simply fleeting moments during matter's unending movement back to the inanimate and chaotic.

However, it is not Land's intention to simply repeat Freud's ideas, and simply recast assemblages as death-driven, self-dissolution machines, instead he uses them as a way to think about a different kind of patterning than the one Nachmanovitch imagines; one that recognises lineage and development, but at the same time conceives of a more complex set of drives. In a typically evocative image, Land describes the way in which patterning may come about as a result of impact, collision or even destruction, where he tells us that, 'the osmotic transfusion of saline chemicals from a drop of alien perspiration impacts upon a cluster of epidermal cells as an annihilating copulation' (Land, 1992: 161). Land's intention here is to convey the sense in which a destructive event can also be a creative event, and his phrase 'annihilating copulation' certainly draws on Deleuze and Guattari's work in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the fictional Professor Challenger ('who made the Earth scream with his pain machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 45)) is used to recalibrate experience in terms of geotrauma, such that having an experience of something means to be wounded or scarred by that something. The theorist Robin Mackay further develops this sense of experience leaving a permanent mark or trace, when he suggests that memory and the human form are manifestations of events at a cosmic scale, stating that, 'geotraumatic cryptography must proceed as ultra-genealogy, accessing these memories deep-frozen and imprinted in the body and determining the planetary events which they index' (Mackay, 2012: 21). Whilst these examples strongly communicate the way in which, as humans, we may indeed be influenced, and to some extent unable to break with our physical and evolutionary patterning, Land goes further

and develops a vision for an interpenetration of dead, undead and living matter, where the distinction between human and non-human has already broken down on a non-living, purposeless plane of consistency, telling us that, 'particles decay, molecules disintegrate, cells die, organisms perish, species become extinct, planets are destroyed and stars burn out, galaxies explode' (Land 1992: 205). These visceral images of decay, explosions and dis-integration serve to illustrate the disassembling tendencies of production-as-destruction, and thus help us to understand that what we might take to be an assembling of mineral, microbial and sonic forces in an improvisation, may in fact be a dissolving of consistency into contingency. Elsewhere in *Thirst for Annihilation*, Land gives us a more detailed image of what this cosmic volatility and collision might mean at a human scale,

The process of unbinding that is misleadingly named production takes place within a general field of expenditure [...] Due to the fact that it is initiated by a preliminary loss [of binding], production is always (excessive) replenishment, and not the simple occurrence of plenitude. [...] Rooted in lava and earthquake, the production process is condemned to the hazards of an inescapable volatility. (Land, 1992: 185)

Production thus becomes a process of removing the normal constraints and contexts that hold things together and letting them come apart, for whilst an improvisation as an act of creative production might be an attempt to correct or replenish this loss of form or to simply give form to what is formless, for Land this would always be a replenishing in excess of what is needed. In this way, Land provides us with an image of improvisation that, as an act of disassembly, rather than giving form to a diverse set of forces, energies or intensities, simply generates and releases further volatility and disharmony. For the writer and curator John Corbett, the experience of listening to a piece of improvised music can indeed be a disorienting process that reflects this sense of unravelling, de-structuring, un-'binding' that improvisation precipitates.

Listening to [freely improvised] music in the moment is profoundly elastic [...] Without many of the usual markers, it's hard to know where you are in time, where you've been, and especially where you're headed. (Corbett, 2016: 34)

Corbett describes his experience of listening to improvised music as less 'a matter of not getting lost', but 'an attempt at staying found' (Corbett, 2016: 35), which would suggest that attempting to maintain a sense of orientation and being fixed within time, is to try to ward off the an improvisation's tendency to disorient the listener by unbinding our normal experience of time.

3. Improvisation, contingency and time

3.1 If I could turn back time: Improvisation and time part one

In the following passage, we see Nachmanovitch articulating the idea that the shape and structure of the human hand is a key component in improvisation: not only does it determine the way in which we create and express sounds, but more fundamentally, the characteristics of the human hand have governed and determined the design and construction of musical instruments themselves.

For the musician, of all the structures that impose their discipline on us, the most ubiquitous and marvellous is the human hand. Beginning with the fact that the hand has five digits and not six or four, the hand predisposes our work toward particular conformations because it itself has a shape. The kind of music you play on the violin or piano [...] is intimately influenced by the shape of your hands, by the way they move, by their remittances. The structure of the hand is not 'just anything'; the fingers have certain characteristic relationships, certain ranges of relative movement, certain kinds of crossing, torquing, jumping, sliding, pressing, releasing movements that guide music to come out in a certain way.
(Nachmanovitch, 1990: 82)

Although Nachmanovitch seems committed to the idea that improvisation is ultimately dictated by a musician's physical characteristics, we can again think beyond a straightforwardly linear connection between physical form and musical outcomes, and instead consider the way in which all of the components that Nachmanovitch is making reference to; a piece of music, the movements of hands and fingers, the ergonomic design of musical instruments, the evolutionary development of human appendages; all are traces of the passing of time, and in this sense a human hand could be said to have no more influence over the design of an instrument or the shaping of a piece of music, than any other evolutionary forces that have impacted on the forming of the human hand itself. Land quotes Bataille in order to offer a stark reminder; 'were you to stop a short moment: the complex, the gentle, the violent movements of worlds will make your death a splashing foam' (Bataille, cited in Land, 1992: 174). Much of Land's work in *Thirst for Annihilation* focuses on the way in which human endeavour really can be seen as such a 'splashing foam' in comparison to much larger timescales and a wider field of physical and chemical movements, passages and relationships, and Land is not alone in thinking about different conceptions of time in order re-evaluate human experience.

In his own analysis of *After Finitude*, Brassier acknowledges Meillassoux's contention that the correlation, although not disproved, is certainly problematised by the presence of what Meillassoux calls the 'arche-fossil' (Meillassoux, 2006: 10). The arche-fossil is Meillassoux's way of articulating the fact that a time period which existed prior to the appearance of human life, was populated by objects, such as the arche-fossil, that had an existence that did not in any way rely on someone's ability to either think about or

perceive them. However, Meillassoux admits that our ability to imagine the arche-fossil could indeed be a function of a correlationist world 'for us', in other words, our knowledge of the arche-fossil or of the fossil record are still aspects of our ability to know things, and he therefore simply uses the arche-fossil as a pre-cursor to the more substantial dismantling of the correlation that was discussed earlier. For Brassier, the arche-fossil is a far more potent image that enables him to make use of a wider set of ideas and to further explore notions of time frames that exist beyond the limits of our own. Brassier suggests that the time humans are living in (which he terms 'anthropomorphic time'), is distinctly different to any anterior, or indeed posterior, time, and he uses these different time frames as a starting point from which to launch his own attack on the correlation. Brassier makes reference to the philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard's assertion that, 'after the sun's death, there will be no thought left to know its death took place' (Brassier, 2007: 229), in order to further map out what thinking in terms of post-human, as well as pre-human time could mean, and concludes by claiming that the correlation must 'already [be] cancelled' (Brassier, 2007: 229). This is not to say that once humans have died out that there will simply be no correlation,¹⁰ instead it is a more complex position that involves understanding posterior time in the same way that Meillassoux uses facticity to understand that the world that we experience is only a presentation that, as Graham Harman says, can only be 'described, not deduced [...] it is merely there, and we cannot know exactly why' (Harman, 2011: 29). Once we know that the correlation is not the sum of everything that can be known, and that an outside must exist, then so too must a conception of a non-correlated, posterior time exist within anthropomorphic time.

[T]here is an absolute disjunction between correlational time and the time of extinction, precisely insofar as the latter is not just a localisable spatiotemporal occurrence, and hence something that could be chronologically manipulated (although it is certainly also this), but rather the extinction of space-time. Thus, it is not so much that extinction will terminate the correlation, but that it has already retroactively terminated it. (Brassier, 2007: 230)

As we can see in this passage, for Brassier, what marks posterior time as being utterly different to anthropocentric time, is that time and space as we understand them will cease to exist (or as Brassier suggests, space-time will go extinct). Therefore, his sense that this extinction of space-time will retroactively terminate the correlation does not literally mean that we will experience the collapse of space-time in our own time, but as we saw with Meillassoux's treatment of facticity, once we have allowed for the existence of a non-human posterior time, then it is impossible for a non-human conception of space-time not to exist. In a similar way, Brassier's vision of a past that is perpetually yet to be, is a past that is beyond comprehension, and as with Meillassoux's infinite, we can

¹⁰ Brassier uses the concept of the 'eschatological' extinction of thought (Brassier, 2007: 229) to describe a future situation where nothing will be alive and therefore all thought, correlationist or otherwise, will be gone)

think it, but never arrive at it, it is perpetually at the edge of our understanding. Where Land provides us with a sense of scale, a sobering reminder that the concerns of humans are merely an ephemeral foam in relation to the incomprehensibly vast epochs of time that have brought universes, planets, life and indeed musical performances into being, Brassier's project is more subtle, and does not simply diminish human time in comparison to cosmic time. Instead, Brassier works to establish a means of understanding that cosmic time can permeate human time, and if we turn again to Nachmanovitch, and his suggestion that a musician might also be a composite figure, a product of pre-conscious forces that influence the decisions we make and at the same time part of a network of temporal, spatial and mental connections, we can think about how Brassier's ideas might work within the context of improvisation.

An improviser does not operate in a formless vacuum, but from three billion years of organic evolution; all that we were is encoded somewhere in us. Beyond that vast history, we have even more to draw upon: the dialogue with the Self - a dialogue not only with the past but with the future, the environment, and the divine within us. As our playing, writing, speaking, drawing, or dancing unfolds, the inner, unconscious logic of our being begins to show through and mould the material. This rich, deep patterning is the original nature that impresses itself like a seal upon everything we do are. (Nachmanovitch, 1990: 27)

As with Brassier, Nachmanovitch is clearly interested in the way that human activity is influenced and moulded by a pre-human set of conditions, such as physical evolution, as we have already seen, and in this passage, where he makes reference to 'organic evolution' and 'encoding', there is an emphasis on the way in which our biology also shapes our creative activity. A notable proportion of Nachmanovitch's *Free Play* is spent working through the assertion that evolutionary patterning guides and influences human creativity, but his point here about an improvisation not simply being a matter of individual choice and taste, provides us with an opportunity to think in broader, and more 'speculative' terms. Although concepts such as the 'divine', the 'unconscious logic of being' and 'original nature' are problematic for a number of reasons, not least because there is no formal argumentation that informs Nachmanovitch's work, simply a set of assumptions and intuitions, they can nevertheless help us to articulate the ideas that Meillassoux and Brassier have developed. Whilst defining what constitutes our 'original nature' may prove to be a highly contentious exercise, this allusion is a useful way of framing Brassier's contention that an awareness of a non-human time must already exist within human time. What is curious about Nachmanovitch's use of the phrase, 'the divine within us', is that it suggests that in some way, we are able, by improvising, to enact this non-human time, which enhances our earlier response to Meillassoux's work that it is not simply that we might be able to think the unthinkable, but that we must be able to think it, and that any human activity, such as improvisation, is therefore a manifestation of this thinking of unthinkable. Brassier enables us to expand on this idea and imagine that it is not simply an outside to thought that conditions human activity, but an outside to time, and whereas Nachmanovitch proposes that an improvisation may well be the result of

evolutionary forces over a linear time period, we can now extend this proposition to think that an improvisation is also a playing-out of non-human time within a human conception of time.

3.2 Accidental music: the return of contingency

Both Brassier and Meillassoux's work allow us to think it is possible to conceive of something in thought that is beyond human thought, and having gone on to establish a set of connections to improvised music practice, we shall go on to further explore the way in which improvisation might act as a vehicle that can facilitate an interfacing between the inside and the outside of human thought and time in relation to the work of Reza Negarestani. However, in order to complete this discussion of the relationship between an improvisation and intrinsic patterning, and to reintroduce the concept of contingency, we shall turn once more to the work of Nick Land. Along with Brassier's discussions of 'originary purposelessness', Land also makes use of Freud's death drive in such a way as to suggest that death as the inanimate state to which life returns, is without purpose, claiming that, 'between matter and death there is both a certain identity and an intricate relation, or, in other words: a unilateral difference appending matter to the edge of zero [...] matter is no more simply dead than it is simply anything else (Land, 1992: 111). Here, Land is suggesting that, far from being simply dead matter, the inorganic, or at least non-living, is something far more complex, and his unwillingness to accept that matter is either 'simply anything' or in any way easy to understand reminds us of the importance of remaining wary of overly deterministic interpretations of human development and certainly its relationship to improvised music making.

In one of his more compelling statements, he articulates a range of ideas that can be traced in the work of Meillassoux and Brassier in order to outline what he sees as the fundamentally contingent nature of an accident.

Chance is not a pre-ontological arche-reserve of possibilities, and to think of it as such is [...] reducing chance to randomness once again. A chance has no essence outside its instantiation [...] Chance is not some kind of infra-, super-, or ur-being, and there is no sense at all in which it surreptitiously 'is'. The 'ground' of the accident is even more accidental than the accident itself. (Land, 1992: 158)

Although the claim that an accident comes without precedent seems to be a somewhat obvious point, Land uses the idea of the groundlessness of chance in order to show that 'accident' and 'randomness' are both constructions, and that in order to understand what 'accidental' really means in its fullest sense, we must do to the concept of an accident, what Brassier and Meillassoux do to the correlation: we must destabilise and unground it, and think of it in terms of a Meillassouxian sense of contingency. For Land, there are no drives towards anything, since chance rests on a purposelessness, which as with Brassier's different versions of time, is a non-anthropomorphic, anterior and posterior, purposelessness.

Thus, Land provides us with the means to establish a convergence between Meillassoux and Brassier's positions. To strengthen this convergence, and to generate another useful perspective on improvisation, we can also make use of Peter Hallward's rephrasing of Meillassoux's statement about the necessity of contingency. In the essay 'Anything is Possible: Review of Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude*', Hallward writes, 'nothing is necessary, apart from the necessity that nothing be necessary' (Hallward, 2011: 130), and this statement allows us to return to improvisation and think again about the way in which the improviser as a living organism, and an improvisation as an assemblage are indeed able to reflect and enact the contingency, purposelessness and non-necessity that Brassier and Meillassoux have left us with.

Although as we have seen, Stephen Nachmanovitch's approach and use of terminology can be problematic; as a practitioner, he is able to offer some useful insights into the creative practice of improvisation. In the following passage, he talks about improvisation's relationship to what he refers to as 'life as it is', and again it is this commitment to seeing improvisation as a part of life that is compelling, as it echoes Brassier and Meillassoux's conclusions about non-human time and outside thought.

The free play of creativity is not the ability to arbitrarily manipulate life. It is the ability to experience life as it is. The experience of existence is a reflection of Being, which is beauty and consciousness. Free play is that which makes this experience accessible to the individual. (Nachmanovitch, 1990: 189)

Whilst, as Meillassoux and Brassier have asserted, we can have no way of comprehending the nature of Being, except to say that it is utterly contingent and without any identifiable purpose, Nachmanovitch's intuition that an improvisation is the ability to experience life as it is, allows us to think about what this experience might be, and therefore what the implications might be for improvisation. As Brassier and Meillassoux's work demonstrates, supported by the ideas of Land, Freud and Deleuze and Guattari, our existence does to some extent reflect what Nachmanovitch refers to as 'Being', but what we could more narrowly define within our current context as 'knowledge': a knowledge of the limitations of our knowledge in terms of its relationship to the world that we experience. Whereas earlier, we saw Nachmanovitch suggest that 'we are incapable of producing anything random', we can now understand that our knowledge must be permeated by a thinking that exceeds the correlation between thought and what is thought about and that therefore if improvisation is 'to experience life as it is', then the process of improvising may indeed be a process of engaging with something that is not of the world around us, but can be accessed in the world around us.

3.3 Improvisation and decay: Bringing the outside inside

Our analysis of Brassier and Meillassoux's thought, along with Land's contributions, has enabled us to enlarge our thinking about improvisation and go beyond some of the more

standard approaches to thinking about this approach to creative music practice, as evidenced in the work of Stephen Nachmanovitch. Where Brassier and Meillassoux have presented arguments to substantiate their common claim that it must be possible to think something that is non-correlated, their work is less clear about how this thought might be manifested. Brassier himself problematised Badiou's work on the relationship between the void and the situation, saying, 'ultimately, Being and Event establishes a necessary link between the void of being and the ontological situation only at the cost of severing any intelligible connection between being and the multiplicity of presentation (Brassier, 2007: 111), and to a degree, we face similar complications when thinking about how a great outdoors to thought, or a posterior time, might in practical terms interact with thought. Whilst we have already work through a number of cases that allow us to trace the presence of a non-correlational thought process and activity, we shall now turn to the work of the philosopher Reza Negarestani and consider the way in which, by developing a model of 'nested interiorities' (Negarestani, 2010: 392), his ideas allow might us to think of improvisation as a means of interacting with that which is in thought, but which is not of thought.

In order to develop a context in which to discuss such a passage between thought and an outside of thought, we shall begin by following Negarestani's line of argument in the essay 'Undercover Softness: An Introduction to the Architecture and Politics of Decay', before turning to his work in the book *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* in order to more comprehensively engage with improvisation once more. In 'Undercover Softness', Negarestani discusses what he calls the 'calculus of putrefaction' (Negarestani, 2010: 385), an image that brings to mind some of the ideas relating to death that we encountered in Brassier and Land's work. Negarestani fuses the concept of death and dying with the more well-established image of Leibnizian calculus that Deleuze frequently makes reference to in his work, to convey the idea that the process of decay is never complete, as with an asymptotic curve that continually bends towards zero without ever reaching it. Negarestani presents us with, 'the problem of the infinitesimal persistence of the decaying object, [wherein] it becomes increasingly difficult to say when the process of decay ceases to exist and is supplanted by complete ontological annulment of extinction (Negarestani, 2010: 387), which is something of an inversion of the thanatropic purposelessness that we encountered with Land and Brassier. In place of a living organism that always carries with it traces of its own inanimate and inorganic origins, we can think instead of a living organism in a perpetual, non-dying state of decay that never reaches the final point of extinction, such that death is not so much static, but always, as Negarestani says, 'twisting' (Negarestani, 2010: 388). In this sense, Negarestani is drawing on Georges Bataille's assertion that 'death is not necessary [...] the simple forms of life are immortal' (Bataille, 1991: 32), as a starting point from which to create his own configuration of some of the ideas relating to finitude, assemblages (or compounds) and time that we have discussed so far. To give further substance to this principle of decay, Negarestani states that,

In decay, the infinitesimal persistence of the decaying object marks a limitropic line of transition along which the interiority of one decaying object falls back onto the interiority of its constitutive ideas, and those ideas in turn are undone to other fundamental interiorities whose intrinsic nature is exterior to the decaying object. As the ideas break into their more fundamental but minimal ideas, the infinitesimal persistence of the object becomes asymptotic to the extinction of the object. (Negarestani, 2010: 388)

For Negarestani, the notion of an object persisting at the edge of dissolution is a central issue, and many of his ideas are concerned with establishing a framework within which he is able to justify and account for the asymptotic relation between persistence and extinction. In this sense, Negarestani's ideas about the way in which decay curves towards death but never arrives, are also something of a re-staging of Deleuze's description of the folding of matter in the book, *The Fold*, where Deleuze tells us that, 'A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point which is never a part' (Deleuze, 2006: 6). As Deleuze suggests, what lies at the heart of a fold is simply another fold, and we can see in Negarestani's image of 'infinitesimal persistence' the way in which the interior of a decaying object eventually folds back onto its own exterior, very much following Deleuze's idea of that way that a 'fold is always folded in a fold'. In addition to drawing on Deleuze's work, we can also trace Freud's legacy in the image of an undercover softness, and whilst writing about the potential immortality of germ-cells, Freud quotes the evolutionary biologist August Weismann, saying, 'the mortal part is the body in the narrower sense of the word [...] it alone is subject to natural death [...] the germ-cells, however, are potentially immortal inasmuch as they are capable under certain favourable conditions of developing into a new individual' (Freud, 2003: 84), we can identify another precursor to the idea of a calculus of decay. In the context of the immortal germ-cells, Negarestani's key insight is the way in which, after Freud, death can be seen as a kind of un-living, and that this death-without-dying can be presented as a prime attribute of matter itself. When Freud goes on to further elaborate Weismann's argument, we can clearly see an early voicing of the idea of persistence of a substance, here couched as vision of a unicellular organism that both pre-figures and outlasts the multicellular human subject.

[U]nicellular organisms [are] potentially immortal, death only entering the picture with the multicellular organisms. While the death of these higher organisms is indeed a natural one in [Weismann's] view, that is to say a death arising from inherent factors, it does not rest upon a primal attribute of living matter. (Freud, 2003: 85)

Here we see Freud using Weismann's work to support the idea that whilst death may be inherent for multicellular organisms, this is not necessarily the case for single-cell lifeforms. Whilst this material appears somewhat tangential to the issue of improvisation itself, it not only emphasises a number of the arguments already raised in the chapter that

seek to decentre claims about inherent patterning in human evolution, physical movement and gesture as well as creative freedom, but it also enables us to construct a clear picture of some of the ideas that have influenced Negarestani's work. In a key passage in 'Undercover Softness', Negarestani picks up on a similar point to Freud and establishes the components of his concept for a calculus of putrefaction, by claiming that the 'the course of exteriorisation conforms to the differential fields enveloped inside or extended from the interiorised horizon' (Negarestani, 2010: 391). As a result, we can think of a Moebius strip-like movement between the 'interiorised' and exteriorised horizons that form a link between a unicellular and multicellular organism. Deleuze also helps us to understand this sense of horizons-as-folds between the organic and inorganic in another passage in *The Fold*, when he asks, 'where is the fold moving? As we have seen, it moves not only between essences and existences [but] between the inorganic and the organic in the sense of bodies' (Deleuze, 2006: 137). By linking what he refers to as the 'nestedness of interiorities' to 'decay's process of exteriorisation' (Negarestani, 2010: 392), Negarestani achieves his vision of a relentless, twisting inside-becoming-outside-becoming-inside that he also discusses in the essay 'Notes on the Figure of the Cyclone' in terms of the whirling, unstable consistency inside-outside edge of a cyclone (Negarestani, 2012). The calculus of decay is therefore an image of cyclonic interior-exterior movement and in this way, Negarestani enables us to understand a means by which the ancestral-anterior time that Brassier and Meillassoux speak of is folded into the present via an infinitely convolving series of nested horizons, which is to say that anterior time as infinite interior continually twists itself into the decaying exterior of anthropomorphic time.

In claiming that, 'the course of decay's process of exteriorisation is conducted in accordance with spatial involutions, differential rates and modes of distribution immanent to nested interiorities' (Negarestani, 2010: 392), Negarestani enables us to understand how an immanent infinity can persist inside the finite context of a decaying object, showing that a continuous series of decaying interior horizons are able to perpetually open and out as an exterior that then folds back into itself. The fact that Negarestani frames this involution as being 'immanent to nested interiorities', is of critical importance here, since it opens up the possibility for us to think about the way in which his ideas can be applied to Brassier and Meillassoux's conclusions, and to improvisation, suggesting in a compelling a means to understand how anterior-posterior time can persist within anthropomorphic time, and absolute contingency can exist within seemingly chance occurrences. Also worth noting at this stage, is that thinking about exteriority as a nested immanence to a certain extent reflects Badiou's theory of the event and his use of the power set axiom, which enabled us to generate non-contradictory relationships between a finite situation and a generic indiscernible and the void respectively, such that we are able to account for the presence within a situation of that which cannot be presented within a situation.

We can now turn, again, to Attali's *Noise: A Political Economy of Music* in order to develop a sense in which the creation of music, as an organisation of sound, is analogous

to Negarestani's image of decay. As we saw with Nachmanovitch, Attali does not necessarily present us with facts or 'truths' about music, but his description of the ever-present nature of noise certainly speaks to the concept of nested interiorities. Early on in the book, Attali tells us that,

Our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning, forgetting that life is full of noise and that death alone is silent: work noise, noise of man, and noise of beast. Noise bought, sold, or prohibited. Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise. (Attali, 1985: 3)

In configuring noise in this way, Attali is suggesting that noise is an unnameable presence, an immaterial force that both surrounds and infuses life. Obviously, his reference to death is noteworthy in the context of a number of the discussions in this chapter, although we can see that Attali's project is not a philosophical investigation into the relationship between noise and death. Instead, his work is a claim about the nature of music, in that the production of music is a process that harnesses and organises noise, informing us that, 'music, the organisation of noise [...] reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society' (Attali, 1985: 4). If we think of an improvisation as the organisation of noise, we can imagine the way that noise might infinitesimally persist in an improvisation in the same way that Negarestani uses Leibnizian calculus to describe the perpetual rot of a decaying object. As we have seen, the composer Henry Cowell suggested that 'the "disease" of noise permeates all music' (Cowell, 2004: 22), and in this regard, the spontaneous production of music as a moment-to-moment modulation of the noise-germ into a format or medium that can be recognised as music, such that music becomes a contextualised expression of this raw material. However, Land's reading of production as 'unbinding' adds a greater depth to this image, wherein the non-human, contingent volatility that is noise, is not simply organised through improvisation, it is released. Improvisation as a process wherein a musician engages with an extended range of possibilities and potentialities in order to produce music is therefore not simply the shaping of what was previously dis-organised and without shape, it is an engagement with an immanent and nested noise that allows that interior noise to continually re-organise the exterior. This is the critical distinction that Negarestani allows us to make; which is to suggest that making music is not simply about organising noise, it is a more complex process that involves being organised by noise, by bringing the noise-as-contingency into a human context. Couched in terms of the calculus of decay, an improvisation thus becomes an infinitely decaying, but self-consistent object, where, 'a perpetual deformation [...] does not dismantle the primal formation by erasing its fundamental ontological registers or minimal formal traits, but [...] ceaselessly pushes the formation to new levels of degeneration by infinitely building over and through it' (Negarestani, 2010: 418).

As with Land's thirst for annihilation, and unbinding of volatility, Negarestani's sense that creativity involves a 'degeneration', that allows the unformed and decaying interior of an organised system, structure or organism to reshape and reform what lies outside of it, according to a non-anthropomorphic and contingent set of principles, is itself a redefinition of what a creative process such as improvisation might be. Negarestani enables us to imagine that Meillassoux's great outdoors can be perpetually folded back as a 'great indoors', a non-human indoors that keeps opening onto an outside that is deep within, wherein 'the calculus of decay constitutes the ecology of our interiorised worlds' (Negarestani, 2010: 429). Improvisation, as a folding horizon between interiorised worlds and the exterior world of human experience can therefore be thought of as a process of re-calibrating and reshaping of the sonic properties of that exterior world.

3.4 Out of time: Improvisation and time part two

Along with from this radical 'updating' of Deleuze's theories of the Fold within a context of thanatropic and Speculative thought, Negarestani also explores alternate conceptions of time, another theme that appears in the work of Land, Meillassoux, Deleuze and Badiou. By adapting and reconfiguring Deleuze's notion of Aion and Chronos as an 'ungraspable and cosmic time' and a 'temporal conception of time' (Negarestani, 2010: 403) or 'vital time' (Negarestani, 2010: 404), wherein temporal-vital time describes the human experience of time, Negarestani creates a vision of cosmic time that exists beyond a human, and by implication a correlationist, framework. Cosmic time clearly bears a strong relation to Brassier's, and to some extent Land's, conception of a timescale which is both anterior and posterior to thought, such that we see Negarestani proceed to establish that vital time exists within a context of cosmic time, such that 'the temporal conception of time is an interiorised or bounded form of absolute [cosmic] time' (Negarestani, 2010: 403). In a similar way that we have seen Badiou talk of the structural differences between the finite and the infinite, Meillassoux offset the correlation and facticity, and Brassier strictly delineate between anthropomorphic as opposed to anterior or posterior conceptions of time, Negarestani also states that, 'the cosmic time of non-belonging and pure contingencies can never be fully appropriated or assimilated (interiorised) by vital time and its temporal conception' (Negarestani, 2010: 404). In order to resolve this incompatibility between vital time and cosmic time, Negarestani conceives of a means to bridge the gap between these two forms of time and thus to a certain extent re-stages Badiou's concept of conducting finite enquiries and minimal reports, which enabled the latter to permit the eruption of the infinite within the finite. Whereas Meillassoux and Brassier rely on logical formulation to demonstrate that it is impossible that an absolute cannot exist, Negarestani provides us with a method, or at least an image, of the means by which cosmic time can be apprehended and experienced within the context of vital time.

For Negarestani, the two forms of time are incommensurable, for whilst vital time is only possible because it exists within the context of cosmic time, a contingent and absolute time must by definition be non-graspable by humans. He therefore conceives of a third

form of time, which he names 'the insider conception of cosmic time' (Negarestani, 2010: 406), in order to create a passage between the first two. To allow for the appearance of this insider time within vital time, Negarestani re-applies the logic of Fold, to generate a sense in which the different types of time are nested within each other, and where the insider form of cosmic time manifests as a process of 'putrefaction or decay', again an asymptotic unbinding or unravelling that points towards a 'return toward pure contingencies of cosmic time' (Negarestani, 2010: 407). Although absolute time is only perceivable as a form of vital time, Negarestani suggests that we experience cosmic time as an eruptive force that expresses the 'incommensurable tensions between cosmic contingencies within life and its manifestations' (Negarestani, 2010: 407). Again, we can think of this eruptive volatility in terms of the absolute volatility that Land and Meillassoux discuss, and Negarestani also provides us with his own reading of such a volatility, where he informs us that the 'unfolding of cosmic time's pure contingency through life and by life is expressed by decay as a dysteleological process' (Negarestani, 2010: 407). Dysteleology conveys a similar sense of absolute purposelessness that we have encountered elsewhere, and by using it as a way of describing the effects of decay, we arrive at an image that now connects us to Laruelle's interpretation of heresy, such that we can think of improvisation as a means to dysteleologically and heretically disrupt normal experience. If improvisation as 'insider time' is to work as an unleashing of cosmic time into human time, then David Toop's description of the way in which Derek Bailey became increasingly involved in a freely improvised music practice and moved away from the British jazz and light entertainment circuit of the 1950s and 60s, suggests that the process of improvising can not only bring something into immediate consciousness that generates surprising and unexpected sonic outcomes, it can also create a longer term change in behaviour. Toop discusses how Bailey's playing style shifted almost imperceptibly from being a professional musician with a penchant for improvising in an exploratory way whilst playing show tunes, to someone who was simply no longer able to play successfully in a cabaret or a dance hall, writing,

Over time the person who moved between these two drastically different worlds could no longer disguise his transformation [...] In one instance the manager of the Cabaret Club in Manchester, a jazz fan, rejoiced when Bailey joined the band: at last I'll have something to listen to. After six months he wanted Bailey to leave: I don't know what's happening to you but I don't want to listen to that shit all night. (Toop, 2016: 285)¹¹

¹¹ Worth noting, in this context, are Bailey's own thoughts on this period of change in his life. In the book *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation* (Watson, 2013), in one of the interview excerpts, Bailey informs Watson that 'There's another side to this, of course. My disenchantment with jazz stemmed from the realisation that I couldn't do what the people I admired had done. I'd started in the wrong place at the wrong time, possibly in the wrong race, a conclusion I'd reached much earlier. I wasn't going to be Charlie Christian. After that, it was about playing every fucking thing I could lay my hands to and looking to get rid of some of my musical ignorance.' Watson responds by asking, 'You stopped doing commercial gigs when you found you could make a living by playing art music?', to which Bailey replies, 'Let me try and explain this. I've never thought I could do anything – what I do now or playing commercial music – unless I did it full-time. This is a personal thing: however other people manage it, I couldn't play music part-time. It might

In describing his own practice, John Butcher talked about a process of experimentation with sonic materials and the discovery of new techniques; localised disruptions that enabled him to develop his practice as an improvising musician and to enlarge his instrumental and improvisational vocabulary. However, Toop indicates that for Bailey, a more wholesale change had occurred that meant the very foundations of his musical ideas and approach to playing had been irrevocably transformed. Perhaps this gives the clearest indication of the way in which a disruptive non-human time, working through Bailey's music in the shape of an infinitesimally persistent noise, came to change Derek Bailey into a very different kind of musician, such that what had been outside of him, was now inside.

In *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, a philosophical-fictional exploration of oil, ancient history and global politics, in the context of what can now be recognised as post-Landian Speculative thought, Negarestani first establishes the language that we have seen him go on to use elsewhere in order to describe the whorling, convolving motion of eternally decaying, infinitely porous matter. In creating the concept of Nemat-space, Negarestani conveys an image of a physical environment riddled with holes, also configured as ()hole complex, in order to express the existence within the world of that which is not of the world. In the following passage, we can see Negarestani creating the original framework for insider time that he here refers to as Incognitum Hactenus.

Incognitum Hactenus - not known yet or nameless and without origin until now - is a mode of time in which the innermost monstrosities of the earth or ungraspable

be to do with what the alternatives might be but, mainly, whatever attention I can muster I need for this stuff, exclusively.' (Watson, 2013: 155-6). Clearly, Derek Bailey's relationship with improvised music making was complex, and rooted in a particular combination of cultural reference points and personal experiences. As was acknowledged in the introduction, improvised music making itself has an equally complex relationship with jazz, and in many ways, it might be possible to trace an intersection of these personal and cultural complexities within Bailey's own shifting musical aesthetics during this dance hall period. In another interview extract in Watson's book, Bailey tells us that, 'The guitar-playing Uncle George was an early musical influence. I was interested in what he did, I particularly liked his radio [...] My early musical impressions are very much associated with that guy, his life, because he was a musician – he didn't do what the rest of the family did, which was gruesome! The fucking steel works and all that shit.' (Watson, 2013: 57)

Thus we can see that within Bailey's own musical trajectory, there is a relationship both to his working class roots, which in many ways connects him to some of George Lewis' ideas relating to Afrological impulses within music (Watson informs us that 'as far as Bailey is concerned, "community" is by definition neither exotic nor pre-industrial' (Watson, 2013: 55), in reference to the record *Village Life*, that Bailey made with the South African musicians Louis Moholo Thebe Lipere), and yet at the same time a desire to move on from both the musical as well as the working environments of his working-class background (or, in Bailey's words, 'When somebody says they would rather work in a factory than play music that they don't like or don't believe in, the answer's obvious. It means they've never worked in a factory.' Watson, 2013: 58)).

time scales can emerge according to the chronological time that belongs to the surface biosphere of the earth and its populations. *Incognitum Hactenus* is a double-dealing mode of time connecting abyssal time scales to our chronological time, thus exposing to us the horror of times beyond. (Negarestani, 2008: 49)

Insider time as *Incognitum Hactenus*: a 'double-dealing mode of time' that gives us a stronger sense of the folding and nesting of different types of time. In rendering cosmic time as an 'abyssal' time and colouring this with evocative images of monstrosities and horror of times beyond, Negarestani is clearly casting his ideas within the context of horror fiction, although the fundamental point that he is making here, that coming into contact with something that is outside of a frame of reference is a shocking, disconcerting and barely comprehensible experience, again resonates with much that we have been discussing. In short, *Incognitum Hactenus* and the calculus of decay allow us to understand the way in which an improvisation is an engagement with and a releasing of an infinite, cosmic time into human, vital time, that interferes with normal experience in order to create a sense of time that is at odds with normal clock time, and a sonic experience that, whilst it is firmly bounded by our capacity to know things, is also a disruption of that knowledge; as we saw in John Corbett's description of his experience of listening to an improvised performance, he found it 'hard to know [where he was] in time' (Corbett, 2016: 35).

In a reference to the jazz musicologist Ekkehard Jost's interpretation of the pianist Cecil Taylor's approach to rhythm, Corbett suggests that Taylor's music proceeds via 'swells in volume [that are] calibrated with crests in speed' (Corbett, 2016: 29), improvisation can manufacture new types of time. If we turn to Jost's original extensive mapping of Taylor's use of rhythm in a variety of his pieces, we develop a clear sense of the way in which Taylor's music can create eruptions in sound that create a strong sense of Negarestani's image of decay and insider time. Instead of what Jost describes as the expected 'contrast of tension and relaxation' that we would hear in conventional jazz, he suggests that the pianist replaces it with 'an alternation of tension and stagnation' (Jost, 1994: 69). Such an approach to stretching and freezing time created a very particular aesthetic, one of a number of instantly recognisable features of Taylor's music. However, this is not to say that Taylor's approach to improvising creates music that sounds 'like' the absolute contingency of cosmic time, simply that his music's ability to jolt and reconfigure the structuring principle of musical and rhythmic progression is redolent of Negarestani's dysteleological decay. To take the point even further, such that we can fully appreciate the way in which an improvisation brings to mind *Incognitum Hactenus*, Jost goes on to discuss the way in which Taylor's music also creates a meshing of different aspects of time:

As time went on, Taylor compensated the 'stagnating' motion by a kind of playing whose dynamos impetus arose not from off-beat phrasing but from combining the parameters of time, intensity and pitch, thereby creating a new musical quality, energy [...] Energy is not equivalent to intensity (measure in

decibels) [...] Energy is, more than anything else, a variable of time. [...] the kinetic impulses emanating from Taylor's music are based on the rise and fall of energy. (Jost, 1994: 69-70)

Clearly, the idea of 'stagnating motion' calls to mind the calculus of decay, which in turn evokes Brassier's intuition for a residual state of contingency, or at least the nothingness (Brassier's *Nihil Unbound*) that remains within human life. Similarly, if we think about the 'energy' that Taylor creates as a variable of time, as a partition within a larger inaccessible whole, this also speaks of the way that the irreducible remainder of the primordial deeps, or the folding internal horizon of cosmic time within vital time can become manifest as destabilising, and disorienting experience: almost a re-timing of time. In *Earth Sound Signal*, Douglas Kahn tells us that, 'radio was heard before it was invented' (Kahn, 2013: 1), suggesting that, whilst as a communications tool, radio can be considered to be a human invention, the affective power of radio waves have always affected us, and bound us into an assemblage, prior to our conscious knowledge of the process. Subsonic vibrations and infrasonic radiowaves are fleeting arcs of sonic energy that can be captured and transduced into audible sound, but as with Alvin Lucier's *Whistlers*, these are momentary occurrences that are bound into a trajectory of self-dissolution. Improvisation may well be a similarly transductive process, wherein humans use their instruments as lightning conductors, to capture a moment of freefall of the infrasonic vibrations that provide the architecture of our physical world. Furthermore, an improvisation becomes a thinking-as-music process, an insider time that produces music as a trace of the twisting through and in-between of the vital time of experience and the chaotic time of the great outdoors.

Mark Wastell provides us with a compelling 'sonification' of this idea on the album *Come Crimson Rays*, a series of three improvisations performed, according to the album's liner notes using only a '32 inch Paiste Tam Tam' (Wastell, 2007). Whilst the history of music is littered with examples of music that could variously be described as 'hypnotic', 'meditative', 'contemplative', Wastell's performances on this record are a fascinating document of a music that, to paraphrase John Corbett, is profoundly elastic, which is to say that the three pieces that make up the record – 'Come', 'Crimson' and 'Rays' – are all performances, that once they have commenced, bear very little relation to any sense of beginning or ending.

On the twenty-minute opening track 'Come', Wastell is content to allow the Tam Tam – a large, suspended gong that he sounds using a soft-headed beater – to sound for extended periods, and as the sound starts to decay, he gently strikes the gong again to rekindle the sound. On the second track, 'Crimson', Wastell constantly strikes the gong so to create both a continuous higher pitched, shimmering set of overtones and at the same time and underlying, pulsing fundamental tone. Just audible throughout the track is Wastell's gentle tapping of the metal of the gong itself, although it is clear that the two sounds just described are the key aesthetics of this piece. The cloud-like shimmer of the overtones changes as the piece progresses, but as with the first track, there is no sense

that the change is headed towards or away from a fixed point, instead, Wastell's playing simply allows us to experience the interactions between the various aspects of the Tam Tam's sonic properties. From eleven minutes until the end of the piece at 12'53, Wastell begins to de-emphasise the overtones and we are left with the decaying sound of the lower fundamental note, similar to the performance on 'Come'. The final track, 'Rays', reflects the slow, patient strike-and-wait approach of 'Come', although if anything, Wastell's playing is now even softer. What is clear from the restraint and delicacy involved in his playing at this point is that the sound of the gong, the qualities and complexities of the metal, the way in which subtle changes in Wastell's attack create minute differences in the note's pulse rate, and the speed of the note's decay, are all pushing outward to inform the shape of the music that Wastell is creating. Whilst an instrument's tonal and frequency limitations might often create dynamic, thrilling, uncomfortable, or any variety of listening experiences, what the minutely observable changes in tone allow us to contemplate, is the very kind of outsider time that Negarestani talks about. Whilst humans might make gongs, or saxophones, or guitars, the sounds that we produce with them are not 'of' us, and yet neither are they 'of' the instrument. Wastell's performances on *Come Crimson Rays* are windows of insider time that make it clear that what fills up and shapes human time, is an outside time that refuses to be enclosed within a human frame of reference. Thus Wastell's patient striking of a 32 inch Tam Tam creates tones that are coming into and out of existence, that have relationships with each other, that create difference tones, timbral complexities. Whilst humans have learned to create gongs, with which to activate certain sounds, this is simply a way of framing something that forever pushes itself into our awareness from outside of what we can understand. An improvisation is simply a forcing open of insider time that allows this experience, this playing and listening, to happen.

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Conclusion

With the outside on the inside: musical improvisation according to contemporary materialist thought

This project set out to expand the language that we use to talk about improvised music practice, and to use contemporary philosophical thought to offer new perspectives on musical improvisation, and think through how and why it works.

To complete this process, this conclusion will focus on two key areas. To begin, we shall bring together the principle ideas that have arisen in the preceding four chapters that have enabled us to progress our thinking about improvisation, which will be followed by an examination of two emergent trends in contemporary philosophy that suggest directions for future thought.

1. Matters arising

In many ways, the work of Deleuze and Guattari provided us with an important starting point for some of the key narratives in the study. As such, chapter one introduced the concept of immanence that would go on to underpin the philosophical modelling that we encountered throughout the project. Where Laruelle wrote of a set of 'Philosophies of Difference', we could well frame this research project as an examination of improvised music practice in terms of 'Philosophies of Immanence', in the sense that all of the thinkers that we have encountered have undertaken to explore the way in which human thought and creative practice, in fact, all of life, and even all geological and cosmological movements, can be thought of in relation to an Absolute, or a Real, that is immanent to the movements and changes that we experience in what, in this study, has been variously referred to as the 'empirical world', 'the world of real causes' or the world of 'lived experience'.

Initially, Deleuze and Guattari's work presented us with the idea of an immanent real, a real that is different to the real of lived experience, but in later chapters, the distinction between two different registers of the real was brought into much sharper focus, and we saw Laruelle distinguishing between the Real (with a capital 'R'), or the One, as a non-conceptualisable absolute, and the real (with a lower case 'r') of lived experience. Badiou set up an opposition between a situation and the void, where on the one hand we can have knowledge of a situation, but we can have no knowledge of the void. Finally, Meillassoux set the correlation against the 'great outdoors' of thought, claiming that whereas the correlation principle aims to contain everything that is thought about within the confines of what we are supposedly able to think about, against thought's necessary capacity to 'think the unthinkable'; in other words, arguing that it must be possible to conceive of something that is not simply the product of our own thought processes.

Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, in chapter two, we saw Badiou establishing a divide between what can and cannot be thought, suggesting that, from our vantage point within the world of lived experience, we can have no knowledge of what lies outside it. Although there were clearly fundamental differences between his and Deleuze and Guattari's work, there was more than a passing resemblance between Badiou's *void* and Deleuze's *difference* in the way in which a persistent no-thing or impersonal immanence that pervades and infuses everything was a constant presence in their work. In spite of their differences, we are left with the sense in which both Deleuze (along with Guattari) and Badiou were working to solve a similar problem, albeit from different perspectives and with different philosophical tools.

The first two chapters thus enabled us to position improvisation within the context of immanence, and to think about whether a successful improvisation could be seen as either as a reconfiguring of something that already exists or as a deliberate summoning of something which quite definitely had had no previous existence. Deleuze and Guattari's work generated a context within which we were able to begin discussing how a creative

act can be understood to be an act of disruption; a breaking of given codes and a reconstruction of new ways of understanding and relating to what is given in experience, where de- and re-territorialisation remake the familiar as unfamiliar, whilst for Badiou, being faithful to a truth sets up an artist-creator, or subject-as-improviser, as someone who forces into hearing, something that categorically had not previously been present.

These foundations provided key vectors for the thesis in terms of thinking about how the creative act of improvising might happen, about our role in this making process, and in broad terms, how it is that improvisation could destabilise the familiar codes that listeners might have for appreciating and engaging with a musical performance, thereby forcing us to listen to a piece of music on its own terms: as Deleuze and Guattari say, it must 'stand on its own'.

Peter Hallward describes Badiou's philosophy as being, 'militant in its very essence' (Hallward, 2003: 3), a militancy that materialises via the latter's deployment of 'faith' and 'forcing' in *Being and Event*. For our subject-as-improviser, the matter of believing that something different can happen – that we can make a new (kind of) music – is not only an empowering position to take up in regards to believing in the value of our musical efforts, but in conjunction with the act of forcing, we become able to recognise ourselves as makers of the radically new. This is a valuable perspective for thinking through improvisation, since it allows us not only to recognise ourselves as conduits of something that arrives from the outside of experience and knowledge – in other words, we believe that something different can happen, and we recognise ourselves as the agents of creating that difference - but we can then act on, and respond to this difference (as subject to the 'truth' of an event).

Laruelle picks up a similar theme in his discussion of heresy. It could be said that the heretical decision is a similar militancy in action, a self-aware act of searching and making – the act of forcing in another guise - which is the deliberate, enacting, or performing, of that which cannot be grasped or understood. In Laruellian terms, a creative act, a heresy, is the making of the real, via a cloning of the Real.

Badiou's and Laruelle's work thus provides us with a context for thinking about an improviser as a figure who acts as a channel for the production of the real, a self-aware decision maker and producer of real experiences. For Badiou this is achieved via a fidelity to the truth of an event, whilst for Laruelle the real is produced by cloning the One-Real. Here is where Laruelle's ideas, particularly because of his work on the concept of the Future Christ (where the Future Christ becomes the instigator for a new type of time), can be brought alongside Badiou's and Deleuze and Guattari's work. In a broad sense, there is a common theme that permeates all of their work that concerns a creative process of making something new. Whether this is an act of reterritorialisation, of forcing, or of heresy, a creative act is an authoring of a new aesthetic paradigm, and the simultaneous generation of distortions and disruptions in experience. Simply put, in terms of these

philosophical contexts, an act of improvised music making renders already-existing aesthetic codes and creative paradigms obsolete.

Although our discussions of Deleuze and Guattari's work led to thinking of improvisation as a point of experimentation on and across a plane of immanence, where the twin tactics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation gave a sense of the way in which human actions reshape the environment in order to create new experiences, within a non-philosophical context, we can identify an essential and critically important difference between deterritorialisation and heresy. So whilst deterritorialisation exists within the context of the plane of immanence, and as such allows for an infinite number of combinations and re-combinations between component parts, heresy does not engage with an immanent plane (that engagement is already given), instead the heretic clones unilateral immanence. For Deleuze and Guattari, it would seem that the components are interchangeable given that there is a sense of emergence and return to the plane of immanence; things emerge from one another, deterritorialise one another and therefore immanence itself becomes a constant that underpins and allows for this process to continue. Heresy allows for no such reciprocity. The heretic produces real causes that can in no way be recombined; and as such, each new improvisation is its own, forceful decision-as-practice; a clone of the Real.

Similarly, the discussion of improvisation in terms of Badiou's theory of the event, led us to interrogate the way in which the subject-as-improviser develops a fidelity to a truth that had hitherto not existed within that improviser's conscious awareness. Badiou's explicit claim that 'the One is not', at first sight appears to run counter to Laruelle's approach, although on closer inspection, the real thrust of Badiou's argument seems less determined to abolish any such concept as the Real, simply that the Real cannot be configured in terms of a unified principle: for Badiou the Real is a set of inconsistent multiplicities. Indeed, as previously discussed, Badiou's proposal and critique is chiefly targetted at Deleuze's vitalist vision of the 'univocal' Being, and as we saw, Badiou's main concern appears to be a dissatisfaction with Deleuze's decision to put forward a Real that is both single and multiple at the same time. Again, Laruelle avoids this impasse by asserting a Real within which everything is given, and there is certainly a clear distinction here between the One and the multiple, in that as already discussed, Deleuze's One-All suggests that we can somehow infer a set of characteristics for the One, which Laruelle expressly disavows. Throughout the first three chapters, we can discern something of a theoretical tussle between Deleuze, Badiou and Laruelle, no doubt due to the fact that for a time they were philosophical contemporaries, and as such we could also take Laruelle's marked engagement with the One as the central feature of his non-philosophical model, as yet a further denunciation of Badiou's set-based ontology.

The One-in-the-last-instance, the absolutely non-mixed, radicalises the void of Being, delivers it from the ultimate optical-formal closure (without for all that negating or denying the latter). It is radical immanence, or immanence through superposition. (Laruelle, 2013: 118)

When Laruelle suggests that the One is equivalent to 'immanence through superposition', not only does he harness this aspect of quantum physics to communicate the way in which radical immanence is a state in where all possible futures are available at once, he is also developing a concept that reflects the main concerns of the thinkers whose work features in the final chapter of this study: absolute, radical or necessary contingency. It is worth reiterating at this stage, that whilst the layout of the chapters suggests something of a genealogy of thought, and that indeed to a certain extent, we can identify a sequence of development, Laruelle's ideas do not necessarily prefigure the work we see in chapter four. Although Ray Brassier does indeed work through Laruelle's non-philosophical project as part of his own philosophical research in *Nihil Unbound*, it is clear that many of the ideas relating to contingency, superposition, and absolute randomness have been part of philosophical discourse prior to Laruelle's development of radical immanence.

Having established a framework that reconfigures our understanding of, and our relationship with the Real, Laruelle's other significant contribution to this study are his ideas relating to photo-fiction. As we saw in chapter three, the non-philosophical concept of heresy in some way reflects this concept, but it is the underlying principle, whereby a photo-fiction is the creation of a parallel to the lived world, a world that creates its own codes and principles, that is key to evolving a language for improvisation. As such, we began to think of an improvisation as an example of what Laruelle had termed a 'music-fiction', mapping out the way in which an improvisation creates a set of conditions and a set of principles that are both given in-One, and at the same time no 'of' the world that they were formed in, even though there is nowhere else that they could have been formed. In this way, Laruelle's work does indeed reflect some of the main tendencies that we see in Deleuze and Badiou, firstly by suggesting that the radically immanent One provides the ongoing framework for the lived world, and therefore, as with the Deleuzian concepts of the virtual and the plane of immanence, which, unlike the truth procedure, there is no requirement for a mathematically-enabled engagement with a Real-Absolute. Secondly, Laruelle reflects Badiou's ideas in that the superposition of the One means that it is fundamentally cut-off from knowledge, in the same way that the void can only ever be named rather than known, which as we have seen, means that there is little point in talking about any potential qualities that a virtual immanence might have, such as intensity or movement. This leaves us with the sense that an improvisation is a cloning of a One that is radically outside of human conception, on the inside of a lived world, not necessarily bringing an unknowable radical immanence into the world, but nevertheless bringing into our awareness something that does not reflect the conditions of its production. Whilst in some ways, this could be interpreted as a simple updating of the idea that a bloc of affect must stand on its own, Laruelle's point is that a photo-fiction, and thus a music-fiction, exists precisely because we cannot experiment with virtual intensities in the way that Deleuze and Guattari describe; we simply clone an unknowable Real, thereby setting up the conditions for an improvisation to disorient, as well as disrupt familiar codes, by not drawing on established musical principles and meanings.

In chapter four, Brassier's and Meillassoux's work gave us an indication of some of the key trajectories that have developed under the banner of Speculative Realism, and we were able to establish that to a certain extent, Meillassoux has extended some of the lines of enquiry that emerged from our explorations of Badiou's work, although where the latter configured a finite subject's engagement with a necessarily infinite set that lay outside of the situation in his theory of the event, Meillassoux shifted the offsetting of finitude and infinity in order to contrast the idea of a finite philosophical correlation with an unbounded and unboundable great outdoors. For our purposes, Meillassoux's project showed us firstly, that any correlation between thought and the objects of thought does not exist (in other words human thought must be able to conceive of something that is not simply another aspect of human thought, it must be able to think outside itself) and secondly, that what does exist outside of human thought is necessarily contingent. This latter claim is one of the more complex aspects of Meillassoux's thought, where his ultimate focus is to not only show that, as with Badiou's void and Laruelle's One, what lies beyond human thought cannot be conceptualised, but more centrally, that the things that happen in the lived world are grounded on what he calls a 'necessary contingency', wherein 'contingency is such that anything might happen, even nothing at all' (Meillassoux, 2008: 62). This then is the underlying contention of Meillassoux's argument, which is to express the view that only absolute contingency can be seen to necessarily exist; in simple terms, nothing is necessary apart from the fact that things might or might not happen (or anywhere in between).

[From] absolute necessity of contingency alone we can infer an impossibility that is every bit as absolute - for there is in fact something that this primary atom of knowledge ensures us is absolutely impossible, even for all powerful chaos, and this something, which chaos will never be able to produce, is a necessary entity. Everything is possible, anything can happen - except something that is necessary, because it is the contingency of the entity that is necessary, not the entity. (Meillassoux, 2008: 62)

We can take this as a reflection of Laruelle's concept of determination-in-the-last-instance, in the sense that the superposition-as-undecidability of the One is similar to Meillassoux's rendering of contingency: we can have no understanding of it, all we are able to do is recognise that it exists. Whilst Meillassoux, unlike Laruelle, makes no claims about our ability to perform or enact this necessary contingency, we can, however, draw further parallels between their work. Once we have stepped through the various stages of Meillassoux's thought process, firstly, by accepting that what is produced by human thought is not the sum of all knowledge, and secondly, by applying this axiom to improvisation and understanding that although it is a process that is brought about by human thought, it must therefore remain possible that an improvisation is not entirely under the control of human thought (which we saw in the discussion 'de-correlating improvisation'). We come, therefore, to the conclusion that what is a necessary component of an improvisation is contingency: in fact, this is the *only* thing that can be

said to be a necessary part of improvisation. In sum, one of Meillassoux's lasting contributions to this study is that he has provided us with further evidence to show that knowledge must be able to exceed a thought-world correlate. Although he makes no claims about processes such as deterritorialisation, the truth procedure, the heretical decision or indeed insider time, in many ways, his simple affirmation that it must be possible to think outside of the correlation suits our purposes very well: for an improviser, it must be possible to think, and therefore improvise, outside of ourselves, to go beyond what we already think, and to create things that are genuinely new and unanticipated.

Whilst Deleuze, along with Guattari, introduced us to a context, to a way of thinking about improvisation in terms of immanence, perhaps the key turning point for this project were the consequences of Badiou's delineation between human thought and that which is categorically not of human thought. In some ways, we could see all of the thinkers that we encounter in chapters three and four as developing a response to the challenge that Badiou lays down, in the sense that they share a common agreement that we must be able to think about that which lies beyond the bounds of human thought; but further than this, we must either be able to 'access' it, as Badiou himself attests with his theory of the event, and Meillassoux, confirms with his conviction that we must be able to think the unthinkable, or 'enact' or 'perform' it, as Laruelle, Brassier and Negarestani suggest. We are therefore left with something of a choice: if improvisation is a type of lived thinking, then is it a thinking that accesses the great outdoors, or is it a thinking that cannot but help perform the great outdoors?

Whilst Meillassoux's great outdoors certainly shows more than a trace of Badiou's logical mathematisation of ontology, Brassier and Negarestani move the argument in a different direction, and develop a set of philosophical models and perspectives that suggest that the bifurcation of the finite and the infinite is not able to provide the fullest, or indeed the most human-oriented account of human thought. What these thinkers show is that, fundamentally, our actions cannot help but be connected to a Real that is outside of us. What is around us is not simply a function of our capacity to think or perceive it, quite the opposite in fact: we are part of something that we cannot understand, however, we are able to enact this non-comprehensible Real through our actions; in fact we cannot do otherwise. Throughout chapter four, we made reference to the work of the improvising musician Stephen Nachmanovitch, whose aim was to show that our biological patterning must ultimately prevent us from creating anything that is strictly the result of free choice or a random decision. What Negarestani, Brassier, Meillassoux and Laruelle enable us to see, is that, in fact, it is far from possible that we are not able to create things that, in a sense, are out of our control. Negarestani's concept of 'Incognitum Hactenus' or insider time, along with Laruelle's cloning and photo-fiction, and Badiou's model of forcing, allows the outside to operate within a time frame that we can experience; an image that is particularly useful when thinking of a time-based activity such as improvisation. At its core, all of this philosophical modelling therefore allows us to think that improvising is a means to bring what is outside of human thought onto its inside.

Throughout this research process, what has become clear is that Laruelle, Brassier, Meillassoux and Negarestani are all working on projects that seek to firmly establish the existence of an absolute Real that is independent of human thought, and for Laruelle, that it is possible for humans to not only think this real, but to *enact* this Real in the production of real causes. Badiou certainly offered a way of identifying some of the key vectors in this development process, and by framing this relationship as a bringing into the lived world of experience the non-human contingency of the One, the Real or the absolute, we can see that the heretical decision precipitates non-historical time as the man-in-person and as *Future Christ*, whilst insider time provokes the rupturing of human time by absolute, cosmic time – both related to the impetus that Badiou confers on the act of forcing, a very deliberate act of ‘making something happen’.

Ultimately, this study has enabled us to think through what to some degree are familiar concepts in contemporary thought, the notion of immanence, Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of de- and reterritorialisation, assemblage and the body without organs, Badiou’s mathematical ontology and even Laruelle’s more abstract theory of non-philosophy. These theories have clearly impacted on a number of contemporary thinkers, whose work has provided the grounds for us to reconsider human thought’s capacity to think beyond itself, and therefore think through the possibilities of re-drawing a conception of improvised music practice. As discussed above, we no longer need to be concerned with the either / or of improvisation’s limits: it is neither a bounded repetition of human thought’s self-reflexive world, and a replaying of imprinted genetic memories, nor is it a transcendental leap into a metaphysical realm of pure ideas and sounds. Instead it is a real performing of an absolute Real, improvisation creates real ruptures and distortions in time, not through an assemblage of vital forces, but through replaying and cloning a radical immanence that we are already part of. In sum, this thesis has provided a context - philosophies of immanence - along with a set of positions vis-a-vis the limits of our knowledge, and a set of vehicles via which we are able to either deny perceived limits to our knowledge, or at the very least find new ways to problematise and overcome such limits to knowledge, such as forcing, heresy, facticity and insider time, and thus theorise these ideas in terms of improvisation; thinking through the process of production and identifying a possible cause of improvised music’s capacity to surprise, enthrall, wrong-foot or otherwise engage its audience.

To complete and give this survey a more contemporary aspect, we can now examine two recent essays by Brassier and Negarestani that suggest potential for further development and future research in these areas, where we shall find further interest the idea that what is outside of human thought, may in fact be a necessary and integral part of what is inside human thought.

2. Prometheanism and Inhumanism

When a musician creates music spontaneously, improvising without any predetermined structure without adhering to a set of fixed principles, Bailey calls this 'free' improvisation. However, given the fact that we are limited by our ability to think and act by the constraints of our bodies and our brains, to what extent can we say that a free improvisation really is free? As we shall now see, two recent developments in philosophical thought can enable us to reflect on what such a notion of 'free' might actually mean, and thus provide us with an opportunity to think more concretely about Derek Bailey's claim for a 'free improvisation'.

This study provided us with examples of where music can be seen to be a catalyst, or at least an analogy, for philosophical thought itself, including Badiou's 'Schönberg-event' that we encountered in chapter two (which described the arrival of a new paradigm in Western Classical composition), the child singing in the dark that provides with us the first element of Deleuze and Guattari's Refrain, along with bird song, the synthesiser and becoming-music all of which appear as inspirations and illustrations throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. We have seen Laruelle engage extensively with extra-philosophical practices, including photography, quantum physics and religion, in order to broaden the reach of his non-philosophical project, to the extent that the photographic stance, superposition and heresy have all become core components of his non-philosophical project. And finally, as we shall see later in this chapter, Brassier directly engages with free improvisation itself as a means of thinking through the workings of autonomous rational thought. This study has therefore opened up the possibility of thinking about improvised music practice from a range of contemporary perspectives, and although the task was not without its challenges, developing new ways to think and write about music, was more than possible, and a number of directions in thought were opened up.

As we saw in the introduction,¹ for Ray Brassier at least, what was common amongst the original Speculative Realists was what he identified as their shared 'antipathy' to correlationism. As we have seen, this antipathy has taken contemporary thought in a number of different directions, and from the perspective and trajectories that we have discussed in this study, two further developments suggest themselves as having a continued relevance to improvised music practice: Brassier's 'Promethean project' that he outlines in the short essay 'Prometheanism and Its Critics', and Reza Negarestani's *Inhumanism*, as detailed in 'The Labor of the Inhuman'.² Both essays demonstrate an increased focus on the way in which reason, whilst it is a human, and therefore *real* process,³ by its very nature *must* be able to create real and substantive change in the world. What is more, and what is therefore particularly significant to a study that is

¹ See page 4

² Both essays appear in *Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, published in 2014

³ Here again, we can bring to mind Laruelle's differentiation between the Real as absolute and the real as lived and empirical world of experience. Hence in this context, human thought is seen as a 'real' process

concerned with thinking about the potential of an improvising musician to genuinely innovate, is that for both Brassier and Negarestani, human reason is by definition more than a simple re-run of the biological patterning that we have seen Nachmanovitch alluding to.

In the essay 'A Plea for Prometheus', Alberto Toscano frames Prometheism in terms of systems of political thought, and argues that 'the Promethean act' is a thought which is focused on destabilising what he regards as a synthetic subdivision between an 'infinite "super-power"' of 'divine (or political) authority' and 'human mortality' (Toscano, 2009: 254). Clearly, we have seen the separation of the infinite and the finite as a necessary component of both Badiou's and Meillassoux's work, but for Toscano, such a division is problematic and should be replaced with a rendering of human thought that fully and formally embraces its situatedness. As such, Toscano suggests that we stop 'thinking in terms of *infinite* demands, which, as finite entities, we can always be excused from fulfilling, and think instead of *absolute* or *unconditional* demands' (Toscano, 2009: 254). These 'absolute' and 'unconditional' demands are the real and actual contexts that we as humans are faced with as a result of our being living organisms that engage with an empirical world, and whilst Toscano's reading of Prometheism forms part of an established project in political thought that dates back to Marx, we could well apply his sense of absolute demands to the practice of making music, where instead of using finite resources in order to engage with an infinite set of possibilities, we can instead think of a musician's humanity as being 'sufficient' to the task in hand. This sense of sufficiency is important and Toscano makes it clear that, 'the demands and prescriptions that a "Promethean" politics carries are not [...] infinite and unfulfillable; they are specific but unconditional demands made on our capacities that, although certainly limited in kind, are often more than sufficient' (Toscano, 2009: 255). Whilst Toscano does not undertake an extensive exploration of what form this kind of human sufficiency might take, he does however provide us with a context that enables us to carry on thinking beyond the speculative outcomes suggested by Meillassoux, and which suggests a narrowing of focus that can help us to give shape to the more practice-oriented, but nevertheless somewhat abstract non-philosophy of Laruelle. For whilst non-philosophy is manifestly a thinking of both the Real and the real that does not seek to create an absolute or synthetic bifurcation between the two, by thinking 'from the real-human' instead of from the Real-One', as Prometheism suggests, we may come closer to a thinking 'from' improvisation.

With this rough sketch of Prometheism in mind, we can now turn to Brassier's and Negarestani's own more recent explorations of rational thought in terms of their respective Promethean and Inhuman projects. Brassier informs us that, 'Prometheism is simply the claim that there is no reason to assume a predetermined limit to what we can achieve or to the ways in which we can transform ourselves and our world' (Brassier, 2014: 470). Clearly, he has modified the project's terms of engagement somewhat in relation to the way in which Toscano presented the argument, here denying any limits on human thought with a simple refusal of finitude, although as we shall see, Brassier's position does seem to be closer to Toscano's than the above statement suggests. Negarestani presents

us with an inhumanism designed to establish that the bounded human condition, as with Toscano's Prometheanism, is not only in and of itself capable of producing a rational thought that is without limits, but that this is fundamentally what human thought is: a necessary agent of real change. For Negarestani therefore, inhumanism 'is a commitment to humanity in the entangled sense of what it means to be human and what it means to make a commitment - it is a rational project' (Negarestani, 2014: 443), which suggests that we are never more than human when we see ourselves in terms of the inhuman.

Negarestani conceives of the inhuman as an impulse that creates 'catastrophes' and 'ruptures' in order to progress and create new expectations and boundaries for human thought (Negarestani, 2014: 450). In a series of statements that call to mind his earlier work on *Incognitum Hactenus*, where this 'insider' time made possible the emergence of non-human, cosmic, absolute time at a human scale, Negarestani develops an image of reason and rational thought that renders it as an autonomous and 'discontinuous' 'content of humanity'.

The discernment of humanity requires the activation of the autonomous space of reason. But since this space - qua content of humanity - is functionally autonomous, even though its genesis is historical, its activation implies the deactivation of historical anticipations of what humanity can be or become at a descriptive level (Negarestani, 2014: 450).

This functional autonomy implies a kind of necessary exponentiality, not quite the necessary contingency that Meillassoux described, where only contingency itself was seen as being a necessary component of the Real-Absolute, but Negarestani does present us with a version of reason that is not predictable, such that its activation has the potential to create unexpected outcomes for human development. In this way, we see Negarestani developing an image of reason as both part of the human and at the same time something of a steersman, or possibly even a Deleuzian probe head, where, by almost splitting off from itself, human thought re-orientates and guides itself towards unimagined futures; *Incognitum Hactenus* as insider *thought*.

Inhumanism is the labor of rational agency on the human. But there is one caveat here: rational agency is not personal, individual or even necessarily biological. The kernel of inhumanism is a commitment to humanity via the concurrent construction and revision of the human as oriented and regulated by the autonomy of reason (Negarestani, 2014: 446).

What is interesting here is that rather than creating a limit-point between the finite and the infinite, as we have seen in Badiou and Meillassoux, Negarestani identifies a split within thought itself, such that the human capacity to think both outside of itself and in on itself, whilst never leaving itself is a move to overcome the finite / infinite divide that otherwise presents us with the problem of using thought to engage with something that is beyond thought.

Where Negarestani invokes a self-radicalising insider thought that uses the 'in' in the inhuman, to outline an enlightened humanism that can oppose what he sees as an attempt 'to degrade humanity either by confronting it with its own finitude, or by abasing it before the backdrop of the great outdoors' (Negarestani, 2014: 427),⁴ Brassier draws on natural science, and thinks in terms of what he describes as the 'PRE'-human so as to perform a similar overhauling of human thought. In the short essay 'Unfree Improvisation / Compulsive Freedom' that was presented as part of a performance with the noise musician Mattin, Brassier suggests that in order to generate a more accurate understanding of what the 'free' in free improvisation might mean, then we should examine the notion of 'self-determination' in terms of two human behaviours: pattern-governed behaviour, and rule-conforming behaviour. It is worth quoting Brassier's formulation at length here, where he states that we should,

view freedom as an act of self-determination where it is not the self that exerts a determining power through its act, but rather the act that determines itself. In order to make sense of this, it is necessary to understand the reflexivity at work in the notion of "self-determination" not as that of the self acting on itself but instead as that of the act acting on itself. I will use the word "act" to mean this act acting on itself. The ability to act is composed out of two distinct strata of behaviour: that of pattern-governed behaviour on one level, and that of rule-conforming behaviour on the other. The act results from the superimposition of these two levels; i.e., from the superimposition of rule-conforming behaviour onto pattern-governed behaviour. It is the product of the intrication of these two levels, but it cannot be reduced to either (Brassier, 2013 online).

With this complex formulation, Brassier is suggesting that freedom emerges as an autonomous, ungoverned force as a result of the intermeshing of these two more 'rudimentary', governed processes, where pattern-base behaviour is a biological drive, whilst 'rule-conforming behaviour is the relaying of culturally acquired dispositions' (Brassier, 2013 online). Brassier's point is that as organisms with biological and environmental drives, we do indeed, as Nachmanovitch suggests, repeat the 'rich, deep patterning [of our] original nature that impresses itself like a seal upon everything we do are (Nachmanovitch, 1990: 27), and conform to the dictates of our surroundings, which would bring into question the extent to which we are able to make a 'free' choice whilst freely improvising. However, in a move that reflects Negarestani's claims about the autonomy of human reason, Brassier offsets the way in which a freedom of thought or expression might come about. For Brassier, the result of the collision between pattern repetition and rule conformity is the autonomous 'act', where we see a thought as an act,

⁴ For Negarestani, inhumanism is a commitment to what he refers to as 'enlightened humanism' (Negarestani, 2014: 427), and is an affirmation of human 'sapience': our capacity to do more than simply repeat our biological patterning and programming. As such, rational thought is seen as our uniquely human ability to take things as true and to make things come true (what he describes as 'the mark of a believer' and 'the mark of an agent' respectively (Negarestani, 2014: 432)).

just as we could think of a musical gesture as an act. We came across a similar perspective in Laruelle, where cloning was a performing of the One. In this instance, we now have a free act as a performing of autonomous reason, of the human capacity to think freely, to create experiences and to precipitate change. It is worth noting here that in constructing this formulation, Brassier makes a (potentially knowing) reference to the well-used phrase that we discussed in chapter one,⁵ wherein established jazz musicians tell younger players that in order to improvise well, then they must 'learn the rules and then forget them'. Brassier tells us that,

[O]ne must acquire the ability to conform to a rule before one can become able to act because of a rule: the ability to obey is the prerequisite for the ability to command [since] mechanisms must acquire the ability to represent the rules governing their own behaviour in such a way as to perceive the governing pattern as such (Brassier, 2013 online).

This becoming aware of the fact that we are motivated by rule-conformity is clearly the first part of developing an autonomous response, and whilst Brassier emphasises that it is important to recognise that this self-awareness does not constitute freedom as such, it is nevertheless an essential part of enabling free action to occur. As he says, 'this recognition changes the rule from a constraint into a motivating reason for action' (Brassier, 2013 online), which allows us to track in a similar way to Negarestani, the emergence of a force, of a property that is *of* the human, but that simultaneously acts *on* the human.

To complete this plotting of the emergence of the autonomous act, we can turn to Brassier's discussion of free improvisation within this context, which provides us with a similarly enhanced conception of what this freedom might now involve. Again, it is worth quoting Brassier at length in order to have a full sense of what he means and how his argument works.

The ideal of "free improvisation" is paradoxical: in order for improvisation to be free in the requisite sense, it must be a self-determining act, but this requires the involution of a series of mechanisms. It is this involutive process that is the agent of the act—one that is not necessarily human. It should not be confused for the improviser's self, which is rather the greatest obstacle to the emergence of the act. The improviser must be prepared to act as an agent—in the sense in which one acts as a covert operative—on behalf of whatever mechanisms are capable of effecting the acceleration or confrontation required for releasing the act. The later arises at the point of intrication between rules and patterns, reasons and causes (Brassier, 2013 online).

⁵ In chapter one, this point was raised with reference to Lee Konitz and Ornette Coleman, where the learning and forgetting of rules was compared to the process of learning how to write with a pen, such that the act of using a pen becomes less and less noticeable, and instead we are able to turn our focus to what is being written *with* the pen

The 'free' act of improvisation is therefore the result of the 'unfree' improviser creating the conditions for the free act itself to arise and be released, and this sense of the self (or the improviser) being the secret agent, speaks directly to Negarestani's claim that in order for autonomous reason to be activated then 'historical anticipations' must be deactivated, such that human thought becomes a facilitator and an instigator of an autonomous, free act, rather than the producer in the strictest sense.

Following these various arguments and operations, we now have a conception for freedom of thought and action that suggests that it is precisely *because of* our genetic patterning that we can, and indeed *must* be able to create real causes that have real effects in the world. Our ability to recognise that we are influenced by genetic patterns and subject to environmental conditions is a necessary part of this process and, as Brassier says, 'recognising the un-freedom of voluntary activity is the gateway to compulsive freedom' (Brassier, 2013 online). Negarestani voices a similar perspective, stating that, 'to be free one must be a slave to reason. But to be a slave to reason (the very notion of freedom) exposes one to both the revisionary power and the constructive compulsion of reason (Negarestani, 2014: 458), and it is noteworthy that both thinkers speak of the 'compulsive' nature of freedom and autonomous reason, which is to say that in being human, we are 'bound' to be free. In the 2007 essay 'Genre Is Obsolete', we see Brassier beginning to pre-figure some of these ideas that have now been presented within the context of Prometheism, and he articulates a view of musical creativity that reflects a similar kind of boundedness, and locatedness in terms of a human capacity to create new musical forms and genres. What is clearly at issue for Brassier, as well as for Tom Smith the leader of the group *To Live and Shave in LA* whose music Brassier discusses, is the fact that creation of music is not so much to do with creating form out of an infinite set of variables (which in itself reflects an ongoing narrative within the Promethean and Inhuman context), but instead that the creation of new music arises out of an offsetting of a bounded set of 'impossibles', a set of variables and possibilities that are incompatible and cannot exist together. Brassier's initial focus is the way in which Smith uses the term 'PRE' to describe *To Live and Shave in LA's* approach to genre, saying that,

[T]he only banner which Smith is willing to affix to Shave's work is that of what he calls the 'PRE' aesthetic. PRE is 'a negation of the errant supposition that spiffed-up or newly hatched movements supplant others fit for retirement [...] PRE? As in: all possibilities extant, even the disastrous ones' (Brassier, 2007 online).

Smith's (and Brassier's) use of the word 'PRE' suggests that thinking about musical creativity as never-ending process of radical innovation misunderstands two fundamental issues relating to creative practice. Firstly, setting a finite human in opposition to an infinite set of possibilities, becomes another way of suggesting that a musician stands in the face of 'the totality of possibility' which, as 'a synonym for God, [...] we must

renounce' (Brassier, 2007 online). In other words, as with the Promethean move away from the subject's engagement with infinite truth or thought's opening onto a great outdoors, as with Toscano, we can think in terms of the human-musician being adequate to the task of creating music. Brassier goes on to say that,

[T]he only available (uncompromisingly secular) totality is that of impossibles. If all possibilities are extant, this can only be a totality of impossibles, which harbours as yet unactualised and incommensurable genres (Brassier, 2007 online).

Not only does this statement suggest that, as far as a creative or improvising musician is concerned, the creative choices available to them are limited, but it also points towards the way in which Brassier's 'Compulsive Freedom' emerges from the interaction of bounded and rule-driven behaviours. 'PRE' is very much the key term here, because it is an acknowledgement of the way in which autonomous rational thought and creative acts arise by virtue of the fact that we are rule-driven and limited organisms, and not because we are somehow able to transcend these limitations. In suggesting that, 'PRE could be understood as Smith's response to a quandary concerning musical innovation', Brassier recognises that,

The imperative to innovate engenders an antinomy for any given genre. Either one keeps repeating the form of innovation; in which case it becomes formulaic and retroactively negates its own novelty. Or one seeks constantly new types of innovation [but] it is never enough to keep multiplying forms of invention; one must also produce new genres within which to generate new forms. Noise becomes generic as the form of invention which is obliged to substitute the abstract negation of genre for the production of hitherto unknown genres (Brassier, 2007 online) .

As such, Brassier is making the point that within a given genre, innovation for innovation's sake rapidly ossifies and simply becomes another recognisable trope within that genre. At the same time, if one chooses, or attempts to reject genre entirely, instead focusing on pure innovation (which could otherwise be seen as the production of meaningless noise so as to avoid capture within any genre boundaries), then this too collapses into a genre in and of itself, where 'noise' simply becomes one of a number of aesthetic variables. Any attempt to forego the human limits of musical creation would thus result in the production of increasingly anodyne and generic music, whereas the acceptance of a rule-bound and PRE-generic compulsion allows for the emergence of an autonomous, and therefore radical creative practice.

As Brassier goes into further detail about the group's performance practice, we can begin to understand how these ideas can connect to a wider set of issues that relate to the production of improvised music.

[J]ust as Shave's sound usurps formlessness by incorporating an unformalisable surplus of sonic material, Smith's words embody a semantic hypertrophy which can only be

transmitted by a vocal that mimes the senseless eruptions of glossolalia (Brassier, 2007 online).

This senselessness of sound and vocal delivery emblematises both Smith's original intuition for a PRE-generic approach, as well as Brassier's more detailed proto-Promethean narrative; the radically new and disconcerting arises from a harnessing of the absolutely human in terms of a meaninglessness produced by an overabundance of sonic material and vocalisations. Not only does this surplus remind us of trumpeter Peter Evans' interest in creating 'information overload' (Evans, in Hunter, 2008) that we discussed in chapter three⁶, but it also connects us to David Toop's description of a performance by the improvising vocalist Phil Minton.

Listening at Cafe Oto to the vocal trio of Sharon Gal, Elaine Mitchener and Phil Minton I witnessed his body's pulling back and leaning to the side, the voice a mutter stream of dissociated almost language, a virtuoso repression of sense. Improvising vocalists work in this way at the edge of words or within words, resistant to words. Sound metamorphosis scatters discarded word-from cocoons to float at the edge of cognition. Categories, difference, the particular, all blur into possibilities of non-verbal polyphony; writing has no words to describe a withholding of words (Toop, 2016: 45).

Toop's focus on Minton's physical movements and his feeling that he is listening to an 'almost language' resonates closely with what Brassier has been discussing. In this passage, we are presented with an image of the vocalist hovering at the edges of his humanity, bringing into being sounds that are of human origin but which offset and countermand normal communicative and musical codes. Toop's description of Minton's 'virtuoso repression of sense', is very much to the fore here, since this gives us a graphic image of the way in which the vocalist can be seen to have both learnt and forgotten the rules of music making and communicating, and at the same time is acting as a 'secret agent' to precipitate the emergence of a radical, and therefore *rational*, disruption to the progression of music and thought.

Whilst Brassier provides us with a means to think about the act of improvising as an example of compulsive freedom and disruptive reason, we can turn once more to Negarestani's presentation of a slightly different perspective, in order to draw this brief discussion of Prometheanism and Inhumanism to a close. Although Negarestani suggests that, as with Prometheanism, Inhumanism itself is also a project, for him it is a practice that evolves over time, and cannot necessarily be discerned in individual instances.

Liberation is a project, not an idea or a commodity. Its effect is not the irruption of novelty, but rather then continuity of a designated form of labour. Rather than

⁶In chapter 3 we saw Evans articulating his desire to play the trumpet 'as much as possible', and his interest in creating an 'information overload'.

liberation, the condition of freedom is a piece-wise structural and functional accumulation and refinement that takes shape as a project of self-cultivation (Negarestani, 2014: 464).

As with Toscano, there are clearly a number of political overtones that feed into Negarestani's work, and the sense in which 'liberation is not a commodity' very much speaks to the latter's commitment to not only defining inhumanism both as a political as well as a philosophical programme. However, the key insight for us is the way in which Negarestani sees inhumanism as a 'piece-wise accumulation and refinement' that is not so concerned with producing moments of freedom, but looks instead to a more sustained production of a self that understands its own inherent freedom and autonomy. There are strong echoes here of Derek Bailey's framing of his own practice as an improviser in terms of an unbroken continuum, that we discussed in chapter two.⁷ For Bailey, his playing was not so much about the moment-to-moment personal expression that constitutes a live or recorded improvised music performance, but instead, it was a lifelong commitment to developing a practice; not so much the production of 'free' music, but the 'freeing' of music and of the self over time. For Negarestani, the sustained development of rational thought is a necessary commitment to keeping 'irrationalism' at bay, and in another statement that is redolent to Bailey's commitment to process, he tells us that 'the sufficient content of freedom can only be found in reason [...] In a strict sense, freedom is not liberation from slavery. It is the continuous *unlearning* of slavery' (Negarestani, 2014: 465). This continued 'unlearning' is therefore also something of a sustained watchfulness, and as with *To Live and Shave in LA's* Tom Smith, the imperative here is to avoid irrationalism by falling prey to a way of thinking that falsely promises freedom. Whilst a commitment to unlearning and thinking in terms of the PRE-generic may seem to run counter to a sense of development and progress that we would normally associate with a musical practice, Derek Bailey was very much aware of the need to remain vigilant to becoming ensnared in formulaic approaches to improvising. As discussed in chapter one, part of Bailey's practice came to involve maintaining an awareness of the way in which his interactions with certain musicians had the potential to take on certain features, and become in and of themselves habit-forming, thereby losing what had originally been interesting about those interactions. Again, as we have already seen him suggest, '[once] you start playing the music, you stop improvising' (Bailey, 2004: 47).

In a similar way, the guitarist and educator Joe Morris, whose work and ideas we explored in chapter three, also discusses the importance of a sustained practice and an adherence to discipline as a means of unlocking creative processes. As an educator, Morris' suggestion for musicians who are wishing to develop an affinity for improvised music making, is that freedom in performance is the result of sustained care and rigour, rather than an impulsive action; in other words, freedom is not a musician simply playing

⁷ In chapter 2, we saw Mark Wastell and Brian Marley using Bailey's description of his own practice in order to form part of the title of their edited volume of writing about improvised music practice, *Blocks of Consciousness and the Unbroken Continuum*

whatever they 'feel like' playing. In describing his motivations for writing *Perpetual Frontier: The Properties of Free Music*, Morris tells us that,

It is a meta-methodology, or a methodology that can be used to construct a methodology. It does that by describing properties – things that are always used and are always adjusted in every methodology within Free Music [...] I use *methodology* because free music has formal elements and informal ones, each reliant on the other to become the whole (Morris, 2012 online).

Where Negarestani suggests an ongoing commitment, Morris presents us with a methodology, a process that views the components of improvised music practice as elements within a framework that can contribute to the production of a music that is 'freed' from conventional expectations of form and content. Morris seeks to enlarge our view of what improvisation is and what it can achieve, and in other notable echo of Negarestani's interest in a long-term project that avoids easy capture by short-term irrationalism, Morris speaks of the way that the practice of 'free music' is not only concerned with the production of particular instances of surprising or captivating sounds and structures within a performance, but has a wider interest in the manufacture and development of platforms, environments, languages and instruments:

Free music is an art form that has been made by individuals [...] who *invented* the way they play their instruments and *invented* platforms on which to play that music, based on whatever aesthetic value they thought mattered to them [...] In free music, artists synthesise, interpret, and invent material. But invention to some degree is the goal. And invention can be accomplished by the discovery of a new synthesis or new interpretation (Morris, 2012 online).

In this way, Morris demonstrates a commitment to the contexts that surround the production of free music, in a sense, he is interested in the production of the production processes themselves, an interest that we see reflected in Brassier's detailing of the human subject's facilitation of the conditions that allow for the emergence of rational thought. In summary then, Morris' commitment to practice encourages us to remain open to an ongoing process of development and change that will allow for the continued production of a freed, 'PRE' music.

The idea of that undiscovered place, one that enlightens someone or enhances the life of the player or listener, is not a finished concept. It's a perpetual frontier. By determining to leave things open-ended in concept and still allow for a better understanding of how things can be done, not just why things should be done, we allow for the possibility that more will emerge (Morris, 2012 online).

As a result of these perspectives, we can very much think of free improvisation or free music practice, as a grounded and entirely human experience, that at its root is a means to invent 'conditions of freedom', in other words further invention that is free from any

form of necessary patterning or predetermination. Brassier and Negarestani's work enables us to think in ever more detail about improvisation as a located practice that, whilst it continues to reflect Laruelle's non-philosophical ideas relating to heresy and cloning of the One, becomes an ever more human activity; thinking *from* the human, rather than *from* the One. Clearly, we are now a considerable distance away from correlationism, where human thought was locked in a self-reflexive relationship with its own ability to understand and think the world; inhumanism and Prometheanism insist that by our very nature we must always be able to think beyond, and thus develop ourselves. For Brassier,

Prometheanism is the attempt to participate in the creation of the world without having to defer to a divine blueprint. It follows from the realisation that the disequilibrium we introduce into the world through our desire to know is no more or less objectionable than the disequilibrium that is already there in the world (Brassier, 2014: 485).

In other words, Prometheanism understands that the disequilibrium that is inherent in human thought is the means by which human thought transforms itself into something more than it was, is a completely human, natural process, and our participation in 'the creation of the world', as a parallel for the production of new music, is also an ongoing commitment to our *ability* to think that a new music is possible. To adopt Sadie Plant's phrase, improvisation thus becomes a 'radical gesture',⁸ a radicalisation of thought and of practice *against* themselves which enables us to bring out an insider thought and thereby continue to create the world.

Having explored and examined at length such a broad set of philosophical strategies and conceptual developments, we can indeed come to understand that a new language for talking about musical improvisation is possible. The theoretical innovations of Deleuze, Guattari, Badiou, Meillassoux, Brassier and Negarestani have enabled us to expand our conception of what improvisation is, to the extent that we can see it as a musical practice which is driven by our capacity to think beyond the limitations of thought itself. As such, improvisation is a 'lived thinking', or in Laruellian terms, a thinking according to playing: a thought process that is activated by our engagement with physical, sound-producing objects, a set of rules and principles that inform our decisions about what sounds to make, as well as our capacity to respond to sonic and other environmental stimuli.

Following the recalibration of improvisation in terms of Badiou's theory of the event, Meillassoux's assertion of a great outdoors to thought, Laruelle's work on fiction and heresy, and Brassier and Meillassoux's work on the relationship between absolute time and human, or vital time, we can also see that improvisation has the capacity to disrupt accepted codes and practices by forcing, what we could call in Badiouian terms, a re-count, or even a reformatting of what is given in terms of what had previously been

⁸ After Plant's book on the Situationist International entitled, *The Most Radical Gesture*

impossible to foresee or anticipate. Thus improvisation reminds us that what is contingent, is not simply the unexpected, but the unimaginable.

And finally, Negarestani's theory relating to Inhumanism and Brassier's work on Prometheism have now shown us that thinking, at its core, is a disruptive process, and thus, if thinking is a constant process of 'out-thinking' ourselves, then it follows that improvisation, as a thinking-in-action, enables us to 'out-improvise' ourselves.

3. Coda

To bring this study to a close, I would like to end with a personal anecdote. Throughout this project I have taken a deliberately distanced approach with my writing style, in order to give the project a necessary formality that can allow for the greatest clarity in terms of unfolding and applying the philosophical perspectives that have been explored. However, the further that I have taken this research, the more I have found that a particular personal experience presses itself into my thoughts.

Whilst studying jazz improvisation and contemporary and electronic composition as a postgraduate student, without being asked, one of my tutors at the conservatoire took it upon himself to tell me his reasons for disliking, and indeed for disapproving of free improvisation. As far as he was concerned, composition allowed a composer to break with ingrained or unconscious impulses and create music that was 'really' free of human habit, whilst free improvisation itself was like, 'going for a twenty-minute walk from your house everyday'; sooner or later, you would be bound to run out of new places to discover and the whole exercise would inevitably become repetitive and boring. However, as we have seen throughout this concluding chapter, perhaps given particular focus in Brassier and Negarestani's recent work, my former tutor's concerns were ungrounded for two reasons. Firstly, both improvisation and composition are both human activities, the product of human thought and an engagement with a set of principles governing musical practice and a set of music and sound-related tools that are ready to hand. In this sense neither improvisation nor composition are any more 'free' than the other, they are both simply different types of human activity. However, what this study has shown us is that this very locatedness as a human activity enables us to see improvisation, as with composition, as something that is not simply a result of unfree decision making. As Meillassoux and Brassier have shown us, improvisation cannot help but be part of a thought that is able to go outside of itself, whilst Laruelle would enable us to see an improvisation as an act of heresy, the creation of a music-fiction that, as with Negarestani's claims about insider time, creates ruptures within human experience: for Negarestani, disruption is caused by allowing a time that is outside of human time to appear inside it, whereas for Laruelle, an improvisation as a performing of the One, clones the Real-Absolute, we are the point of determination that is radical immanence. All of these thinkers have worked to show us that what is outside of thought can also be on the inside of thought, and that a repeated journey of twenty minutes must therefore always harbour the potential to open up to the unknown and the contingent, as Badiou reminds us, the void is always out there. If we return finally to Brassier's Promethean project, he tells us that,

The sin of Prometheism then consists in destroying the equilibrium between the made and the given - between what human beings generate through their own resources, both cognitive and practical, and the way the world is, whether characterised cosmologically, biologically, or historically. The Promethean trespass resides in *making the given*. By insisting on the possibility of bridging the ontological

hiatus between the given form the made, Prometheanism denies the ontologisation of finitude (Brassier, 2014: 478).

Prometheanism thus conveys the sense in which the improviser is able to make the given, making changes to the world that in turn create changes for other humans, and that improvisation, as autonomous thought in action, can be seen to be genuinely *free*. Improvisation as a Promethean practice, by collapsing the familiar into the unfamiliar, by pushing us to the limits of our capabilities, by opening us onto new types of time and creating ruptures in experience, is the spontaneous creation of music through live performance, that remains within and yet always beyond our reach. Insider time, great outdoors, actually free improvisation.

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